

MRS!

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA'S MULTIPLE RESPONSE SYSTEM

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January 2008

Study: Frontloading Services Reduces Repeat Child Maltreatment

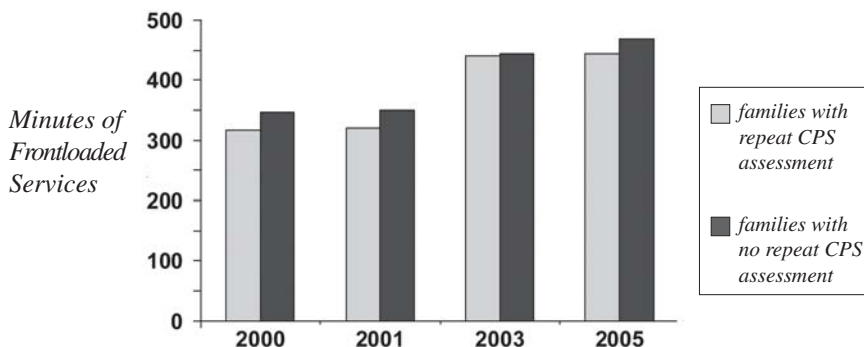
The Multiple Response System approach became the standard for child welfare practice in North Carolina two years ago, in January 2006. That may feel like a long time ago to you, but because system change on the scale of MRS usually takes quite a while to be reflected in administrative and outcome data, in research and evaluation terms January 2006 is as close as yesterday.

The evidence shows that frontloading services is a good practice, one that clearly has a positive effect on families.

Fortunately for North Carolina, Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy has been analyzing data from the 10 counties that began implementing MRS in 2002, so we already have a sense of how MRS affects some child welfare outcomes. According to Duke's Nicole Lawrence, one of the key findings so far is that, compared to counties that were not yet implementing MRS, the 10 pilot original counties (Alamance, Bladen, Buncombe, Caldwell, Craven, Franklin, Guilford, Mecklenberg, Nash, and Transylvania) spent more time delivering services to families early on in their involvement with CPS, which reduced the rate at which families were reassessed by CPS. The extent to which agencies "frontloaded" services was measured using data from SIS day sheet records.

continued next page

Mean Minutes of Frontloaded Services Delivered to Families in the 10 MRS Pilot Counties, 2000-2005



MRS Meetings

Meetings will be held from 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

East

Jan. 24
 Sampson Co. DSS
 Clinton

Feb. 28
 Pitt Co. Cooperative Ext.
 Greenville

Central

Jan. 29
 Randolph Co. DSS
 Asheboro

Feb. 27
 Southside Library
 Winston-Salem

West

Jan. 16
 St. John's Episcopal
 Asheville

Feb. 19
 St. John's Episcopal
 Asheville

For details about meeting locations and directions, contact Holly McNeill 828/757-5672 holly.mcneill@ncmail.net or consult the MRS Calendar on Google at <http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=multipleresponsesystem@gmail.com>

Training Dates

Shared Parenting

March 17-19
Charlotte
Contact: Bonnie English
704/395-2110
(fax) 704/395-2101

April 14-16
Asheville
Contact: Lou Decker
828/670-5050
(fax) 828/670-5053

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Comments?

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Online

www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs

Frontloading Services continued from page 1

The figure on the preceding page takes a closer look at the frontloading of services in the 10 MRS pilot counties. For each year, the bar on the left indicates the average number of minutes of frontloaded services received by CPS-involved families who were the subject of another CPS assessment within 6 months. The darker bar on the right represents the average number of minutes of frontloaded services received by families that did not receive another CPS assessment.

The figure reveals that the longer they implemented MRS, the better agencies got at frontloading services. In the 10 pilot agencies, between 2000 and 2005 the average number of minutes of frontloaded services received by families that did not receive a repeat CPS assessment increased by 35%, from 347 to 469 minutes. Frontloading of services to families in the other group increased during this period as well.

It is also interesting to note that the gap between the number of minutes of frontloaded services received by the two groups decreased over time. In 2000, the families who experienced another CPS assessment received 9.4% fewer minutes of frontloaded services than those who did not. By 2005, that difference shrank to 5.6%.

How Much Is Enough?

Is there a specific amount of frontloaded services a family must receive to reduce the chance it will have another CPS assessment? Yes. In their 2006 MRS Evaluation Report, Nicole Lawrence and her colleagues concluded that on average, a family needs a minimum of 10 hours of frontloaded services before the likelihood of a future CPS assessment is lowered. Please note—this figure is an average and should serve only as a general guide to practice.

The Bottom Line

Overall, the evidence suggests that the MRS strategy of frontloading services really does help reduce repeat child maltreatment. Organizing and facilitating access to services early in the CPS process may truly be the key for supporting families and helping them achieve safety and stability for their children.

To Learn More

Consult the following resources to learn more about the impact that MRS is having on child welfare practice in North Carolina.

- *MRS Evaluation Report to the NC Division of Social Services 2004*
<www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/mrs/docs/MRS%20Evaluation%20Report%202004.pdf>
- *MRS Evaluation Report to the NC Division of Social Services 2006*
<www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/mrs/docs/mrs_eval_rpt_6_30_06_all_combined.pdf>
- *MRS Evaluation Pilot 10 Fact Sheets 2007*
<www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/mrs/docs/FS_AL_10_Pilot_Counties.pdf>

On average, families in the 10 pilot counties who received more minutes of frontloaded services had fewer incidences of repeat CPS assessments.

MRS Evaluation Fact Sheets

At the request of the NC Division of Social Services, this year Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy released county-specific fact sheets describing the performance of the first 10 MRS counties (Alamance, Bladen, Buncombe, Caldwell, Craven, Franklin, Guilford, Mecklenberg, Nash, and Transylvania). Drawn from data collected in the Central Registry and on the MRS Case Tracking Form, the fact sheets provide snapshots of each individual pilot county and how it compares to the other 9 original MRS counties in a variety of areas, including:

- **Child Safety Measures.** Includes rate of CPS assessments, rate of substantiations, and percent of families with repeat CPS assessments.
- **Family Assessment Track.** Includes data about percentage of cases assigned to the family assessment track and a breakdown of findings from the family assessment track.
- **Primary Contributory Factors.** Describes the percentage of cases with specified factors and the number of repeat CPS assessments associated with the various factors.
- **Timeliness of Response and Time to Case Decision.**

Fact sheets for the original 10 MRS counties can be found on the Division's web site at <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/mrs/docs/FS_AL_10_Pilot_Counties.pdf>

The Next 10 Fact Sheets

Duke's MRS evaluation team has already begun work on the next round of MRS fact sheets. This time 10 counties that were part of the second wave of MRS implementation have been selected: Alexander, Brunswick, Chatham, Durham, Harnett, Haywood, Iredell, Jackson, New Hanover, and Pasquotank. Although these 10 counties are a special focus this year, all 100 counties will receive fact sheets at the end of this fiscal year.

Seeking Your Input

The Division and Duke University want the MRS fact sheets to be evolving documents that help counties monitor MRS implementation. Because of this, over the next few months the team from Duke will solicit feedback about the kinds of measures North Carolina county DSS agencies would like to see included in the next round of fact sheets. Nicole Lawrence will be attending several MRS meetings each month—this will be a good opportunity for your agency to give input into the fact sheet contents and to keep abreast of evaluation efforts. In the meantime, if you have suggestions or questions please contact Nicole at 919/668-3282.



Data Quality Alert!

Our analysis of MRS and child welfare outcomes can only be as good as the data we have. Counties that don't enter all data from the DSS-5104 and DSS-5106 forms will garner little relevant information from their MRS fact sheets. What's more, poor data quality can undermine efforts to evaluate MRS statewide. Please help us improve outcomes for families and children by ensuring everyone in your county methodically and consistently enters all data on these and other DSS forms. Thanks!

Training Dates

Child Forensic Interviewing

To register contact:

Clarence Lamb
919/733-7672
(fax) 919/733-9204

Feb. 18-22
Fayetteville

April 7-11
Charlotte

May 12-16
Asheville

June 23-27
Greensboro

CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services

February 19-22
Fayetteville
Contact: Amy Campbell
910/677-0460
(fax) 910/677-0468

March 25-28
Asheville
Contact: Lou Decker
828/670-5050
(fax) 828/670-5053

April 1-4
Greensboro
Contact: Elaine Highsmith
336/954-1747
(fax) 336/954-1750

May 6-9
Beaufort Co. DSS
Contact: Amy Campbell
910/677-0460
(fax) 910/677-0468

May 20-23
Kinston
Contact: Betty Williford
252/520-2413
(fax) 252/520-2417

Partnering with Relative Caregivers: Our Children's Most Natural Support

by Krista Kindley, Forsyth County DSS

When a relative agrees to care for children who need to be placed temporarily outside their home, social workers often sigh with relief. We think to ourselves, "Thank goodness these kids can be with someone they know!" Then we begin working with the parents and children to achieve reunification.

In the process, we can unintentionally fail to recognize the unique needs of the relative caregivers, our children's most natural support. They courageously agree to parent someone else's children without the same kind of support received by licensed, nonrelative foster parents.

What do we know about relative caregivers and their needs? Research tells us that generally they are single, older, and economically disadvantaged. The parenting responsibilities these aunts, grandparents, cousins, and siblings unexpectedly take on can increase their financial and emotional stress. For example, they often feel:

- Embarrassed their relatives are unwilling or unable to parent these children
- Intimidated by the vagueness and "power" of our system
- Confused about the length of time the children will be with them
- Tense because they suddenly find themselves forced to adjust their schedules to the demands of service systems and the children's needs
- Anxious due to bewildering eligibility processes (Medicaid, TANF, etc.)

Forsyth County's Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP)

In recognition of the different needs of relative caregivers, in 2003 and 2007 Forsyth County DSS pursued and received grants from the Brookdale Foundation. The fruit of these awards is Forsyth's **Relatives as Parents Program**, or RAPP, which aims to strengthen relative caregiver families by providing support and helping them navigate and access complex service systems.

Through support groups and family activities, RAPP provides networking, information, and social opportunities that eliminate the isolation kin care providers sometimes experience. Group topics include legal issues, IEPs/special needs/ADHD, mental health services, child support, discipline techniques, respite, and more.

To bridge service gaps, RAPP uses interns to conduct caregiver assessments and helps relatives complete eligibility paperwork. To further alleviate financial strain, RAPP sponsors yearly school supply drives and holiday assistance projects. It also meets emergency needs during the child's transition to the relative placement.

RAPP succeeds because it is family- and community-centered. Program development processes incorporate direct input from relative caregivers. Special services are developed through collaborative relationships between the agency and the community. These efforts serve as a preventative, supportive service structure that strengthens family systems, prevents placement disruption, and supports permanence.

RAPP, which won a 2007 Best Practice Award from the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services, could be replicated in your community. For more information, contact Krista Kindley (Kindlekl@forsyth.cc, 336/703-3677).

Training Dates

Coaching in the Kitchen: Guiding Parents through Teachable Moments

To register contact:

Donna Walters-Pearson
828/433-7187

(fax) 828/430-8762

April 1-3
Cumberland Co. DSS

May 28-30
High Point

Supervisors Strengthening Staff Performance: Managing Transfer of Learning in the Work Place

To register contact:

Donna Walters-Pearson
828/433-7187

(fax) 828/430-8762

Charlotte Class
March 18-19
April 22-23

Greensboro Class
April 30-May 1
June 3-4

In the Best Interest of the Child: Making the Most of Visitation

To register contact:

Judy Prophet
704/545-9512

(fax) 704/573-4802

Charlotte
Feb. 26-27

Kinston
June 9-10