

# MRS!

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA'S MULTIPLE RESPONSE SYSTEM

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March 2009

## Innovation Profile: Breakthrough Series Collaborative

We are fortunate to have a lot of innovative work being done by child welfare agencies across North Carolina. A great example of this is the Casey Family Programs' Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC), a change planning and implementation process that reflects our state's family-centered principles of partnership and System of Care values.

### The BSC

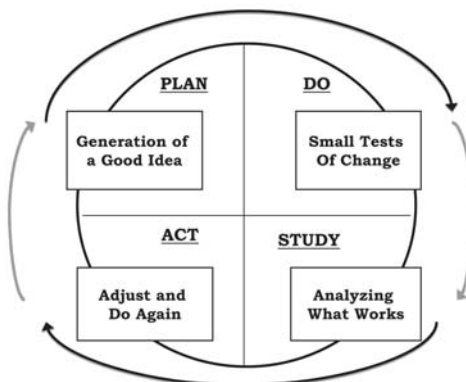
A groundbreaking quality improvement methodology, BSC was developed in 1995 by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI). It has been used extensively in the health care field. BSC uses small-scale, rapid tests of change. Rather than focus on system-wide change efforts, BSC makes change efforts immediate and manageable—literally asking people to consider, "what can you do by next Tuesday?" Changes are measured and monitored closely so that successes can be expanded quickly and failures are not replicated.

Casey Family Programs, a national foundation dedicated to improving child welfare outcomes, brought the BSC methodology to the field of child welfare in 2001 when it partnered with IHI to conduct a BSC for public child welfare agencies for "Improving Healthcare for Children in Foster Care." Since that time Casey has BSCs for public child welfare agencies across the country on "Recruiting and Retaining Resource Families" and "Kinship Care." Catawba County DSS has been involved in all three of these BSC projects, and other North Carolina counties have been touched by BSC as well.

### Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycles

Perhaps the most noteworthy difference between BSC and the usual work done by public agencies is in the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles it uses to test and implement changes. Public agencies tend to be very good at planning for changes. They typically spend a significant amount of time planning and then they move to implementing. The PDSA method allows

ideas to be tested in small increments, where the consequences are minimized before



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## MRS Meetings

*Due to travel restrictions, until further notice monthly MRS and System of Care meetings will take place via conference call. For key information for upcoming calls, see below.*

### March 18, 26, & 31

Call times: 10-11:30 a.m.  
Call-in number:  
(219) 509-8020  
Access code: 956303

### MRS Questions?

If you have questions regarding the implementation of any aspect of MRS, please contact Holly McNeill 828/757-5672 holly.mcneill@ncmail.net

For future meeting dates consult the MRS Calendar on Google at <http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=multipleresponsesystem@gmail.com>

## Training Dates

### Adoptions in Child Welfare Services

#### May 19-22

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

### Effects of Separation and Loss on Attachment

Contact: Judy Prophet  
 704/545-9512  
 (fax) 704/ 573-4802

#### March 23-24

Kinston

#### May 27-28

Greensboro

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### Comments?

Contact Patrick Betancourt, Child Welfare Services, NC Division of Social Services, 2408 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC 27699-2408, Courier: 56-20-25, 919/334-1104; patrick.betancourt@ncmail.net

### Online

[www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs)

a change is rolled out to an entire agency, jurisdiction, or system. In fact, teams are encouraged to try new ideas immediately, without any planning effort. One of the mantras in the BSC is “never plan more than you can do.” Since small ideas are tested in rapid succession less time is spent on planning and more time is spent learning from real practice in action (NRCFCPP, 2004).

PDSA cycles have been used in Catawba and other North Carolina counties—for example, Kay Kent’s article in this issue describes how she used the PDSA to focus on “Recognizing and Honoring Differences” in her work at Buncombe County DSS. To learn more about BSC, consult the following:

- Casey Family Programs <<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Projects/BSC/>>
- 2004 webcast from the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning <<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/webcasts/index.html>>

### References

Nat’l Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice & Permanency Planning. (2004). *The breakthrough series collaborative methodology* [webcast]. New York: Hunter College School of Social Work. <<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/bsc-webcast-handout.pdf>>

## Important New Child Welfare Legislation

On October 7, 2008, President Bush signed into law H.R. 6893, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351). This law amends titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act to provide support to some relative caregivers, provide for Tribal foster care and adoption access, and improve incentives to promote adoption. Major provisions include:

- Extending & expanding adoption incentives thru federal fiscal year (FFY) 2013
- Creating an option to provide kinship guardianship assistance payments
- Creating an option to extend eligibility for title IV-E foster care, adoption assistance, and kinship guardianship payments to age 21 beginning in FFY 2011
- Phasing in the de-linking of adoption assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) eligibility beginning in FFY 2011
- Providing federally recognized Indian Tribes or consortia with the option to operate a title IV-E program beginning in FFY 2010

The Children’s Bureau provides guidance on the new Act through the following:

- ACYF-CB-PI-08-05, available at <[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/pi/2008/pi0805.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/2008/pi0805.htm)>
- ACYF-CB-IM-08-03, available at <[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/im/2008/im0803.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/im/2008/im0803.htm)>

Additional materials will be posted to the Children’s Bureau website in the coming months. P.L. 110-351 can be found online at <[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:h6893enr.txt.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:h6893enr.txt.pdf)>

A draft compilation of the revised Social Security Act also can be found on the Children’s Bureau website at <[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/cblaws/safe2008draft.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/cblaws/safe2008draft.htm)>

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## Recognizing and Honoring Differences

by Kay Kent, Buncombe County DSS

"When Dr. King said, 'Not everyone will cross over' he was not referring to religion, but *civil rights*."

This powerful and educational statement was shared with me by one of my clients as a result of Buncombe County's "Recognizing and Honoring Differences" PDSA developed for the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC). I have been excited to be a part of our agency's BSC since the onset, but I could have never anticipated the impact it would have on my social work practice in such a short time.

After hearing one of the speakers in Minnesota make a statement about how important it is to simply acknowledge differences, I thought, "How could I have missed such a simple concept over a career of 12 years in social work?"

I realized that because I had worked with so many families over the years, I made the assumption that I understood their differences. I had never really asked about their specific opinions or points of view that might be a result of their race or culture. Instead, I was just gathering information related to risk and safety and mandated demographics. I immediately knew that acknowledging and honoring cultural differences would be my first PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) as a CPS line worker.

I returned to my team and shared my enthusiasm about this concept and we worked out the logistics and put this idea in the PDSA format. I developed a script (see box below) to use with families of a different race or culture in which I acknowledged that we were different and made sure that families had the opportunity to express how they felt about having me as their social worker.

Wow! Within the first week, the first few responses I obtained were so relevant and powerful I knew this PDSA was a success. I also *continued next page*



## Training Dates

### Introduction to the Monthly Foster Care Contact Record

This 90-minute, self-paced online course is continually available. To take it, simply log on to <http://www.ncswLearn.org> and access this course via the Personalized Learning Portfolio (PLP) / Online Courses section of the website.

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### CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services

#### March 17-20

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

#### April 21-24

Asheville  
Contact: Amy Campbell  
910/677-0460  
(fax) 910/677-0468

#### May 19-22

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

### Social Worker/Client Narrative

In engaging with clientele of different cultural/ethnic/racial backgrounds, the social worker (line worker) will engage in the following conversations during initiation of CPS assessments:

1. Inquire about and acknowledge any cultural/ethnic/racial differences and, if applicable, ask family members if they are comfortable with social worker managing their case if there is a difference.
2. Ask the family if there is anything about their cultural/ethnic/racial background which family feels SW needs to know.
3. Ask the family if there is anything in general they would like to know about SW's culture to better understand SW's viewpoint.
4. Advise the family that SW does not want to assume he or she understands the family if they are of different background.
5. Share with all families that SW/agency is trying to better acknowledge and understand cultural/ethnic/racial differences.

## Training Dates

### **Methamphetamine: What a Social Worker Needs to know**

This self-paced online course is always available. To take it, simply log on to <http://www.ncswLearn.org> and access this course via the Personalized Learning Portfolio (PLP) / Online Courses section of the website.

### **Introduction to Supervision for Child Welfare Services**

#### **Starts March 11**

Asheville

Contact: Amy Campbell

910/677-0460

(fax) 910/677-0468

#### **Starts March 25**

Fayetteville

Contact: Amy Campbell

910/677-0460

(fax) 910/677-0468

### **Child Development in Families at Risk**

Sessions of this online course start on the following dates. To learn more about this course or to register, go to <http://www.ncswLearn.org>.

March 10

March 17

March 31

April 21

May 12

## **Recognizing and Honoring Differences** *from page 3*

developed an anonymous survey (with a postage paid envelope) the family could use to provide additional feedback. The responses were not addressed to me, to assure the family their responses would not impact their case decision.

The opening statement of this article, in which my client referenced Dr. King, was given as a result of his explaining that he had overcome having problems or feeling barriers with white people. He stated that because of Dr. King and others fighting for civil rights, he can now go to a magistrate and explain his side of a charge without fearing he would be immediately judged

*Using the script, I can literally feel barriers melt and doors of communication open. Families are empowered by the fact that I care enough to ask.*

or locked up. He has a right to equal representation. He went on to say that Dr. King was of the opinion that people of color would be given equal opportunities, but that not all people of color would take advantage of this. He stated he believes this is the case, but he has seen change and he had no problem that I was a white social worker. His mother and son were also present and gave their own perspectives. She talked about her youth and the struggles she had growing up in the South. Her grandson stated he didn't think there is a difference at all in how people who are of a different color are treated.

I engaged with another African America woman that week on a different case who stated she was actually glad that I was white, as it had been her experience in the past that people of her own race that were in higher, authoritative positions often judged her and criticized her for living in public housing and getting assistance. But even more surprising, she stated that her father is white. How many times had I assumed I knew a client's race or ethnicity, or simply relied on the information the last social worker had provided in the case file? Later, a woman from El Salvador described her background as a child living with a large extended family, her childhood experiences and the lack of opportunity for education, and specific to the case, the disciplinary practices used in her home.

I continue to learn daily about the families with whom I work. I have expanded the script to acknowledge any differences such as religion, tradition, or heritage that, had I not asked, I would have never known existed. I am seeing that even families of my same race have differences that affect their point of view. When I engage with families using the script, I can literally feel barriers melt and doors of communication open. Families are empowered by the fact that I care enough to ask and truly want to understand them better.

Let me repeat: how could I have missed this simple concept for so long? I have begun to share my experiences and successes with others. I hope everyone who reads this article will consider implementing this script as part of their toolkit for engaging families. In only two months, I have learned so much. I cannot fathom the positive effects this PDSA will have over the remainder of my career.