



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEVPUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

LISA TUCKER CAULEY • Division Director, Human Services

January 15, 2026

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTN: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS/MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: STATEWIDE TRAUMA-INFORMED ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE KICKOFF

REQUIRED ACTIONS: ☐ Information Only ☒ Time Sensitive ☐ Immediate Action

PURPOSE: The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (NCDHHS DSS), in partnership with Benchmarks, is excited to announce and provide details regarding the development, implementation, and statewide coordination of North Carolina's Standardized Trauma-Informed Assessment for children in or at risk of entering foster care, as directed by Session Law 2023-134 (House Bill 259).

North Carolina is launching the Standardized Trauma-Informed Assessment (STIA) to ensure that children entering or at risk of entering foster care receive timely, developmentally appropriate, and clinically sound evaluations. This initiative is designed to identify and address trauma early in the child welfare process, improve placement stability and reduce behavioral health crises and ensure children's needs are accurately understood and met through a consistent statewide approach. The assessment process will align with best practices in clinical assessment, child welfare, and behavioral health and will be implemented through a phased rollout beginning July 2026.

To support successful implementation, North Carolina Standardized Trauma-Informed Assessment Communities of Practice (CoP) will be established as structured forums for cross-system collaboration. The CoP's will:

- Strengthen coordination among child welfare, behavioral health, and related systems.
- Identify and reduce barriers to trauma-informed care.
- Improve referral pathways and service delivery.
- Promote continuous quality improvement and equity monitoring through ongoing data review.

We invite you to the launch of North Carolina's Standardized Trauma-Informed Assessment Communities of Practice, a cornerstone of this statewide initiative.

Date: January 28, 2026
Time: 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Platform: Zoom

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

LOCATION: 1915 Health Services Way, Raleigh, NC 27607
MAILING ADDRESS: 2410 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2410
www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-527-6340 • FAX: 919-715-0168

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Registration is required to attend the STIA Communities of Practice Kickoff Session.

Registration Link:

https://benchmarks.zoom.us/meeting/register/XhWzLKrUQnCvITfc8p_JmQ#/registration

For further information, please contact Larissa Berger, NCDHHS DSS Children's Health and Development Coordinator, at Larissa.Spell-Berger@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

Heather McAllister

Heather McAllister, MSW, LCSW, LCAS, CBIS
Section Chief for Child and Family Services
North Carolina Division of Social Services, Child Welfare
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Heather.McAllister@dhhs.nc.gov

Cc: Lisa Tucker Cauley, Division Director, Human Services, Child, Family, and Adult
Regional Support
Donna Fayko, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Operations
Adrian W. Daye, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Practice
William "Ben" Rose, Lead Regional Director
Kimaree Sanders, Section Chief for Regulatory and Licensing
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Safety and Prevention Services
Meredith Houchins, Interim Section Chief for County Operations

ATTACHMENT: Communities of Practice Flyer

CWS-08-2026