March 8, 2023

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES,

ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Workforce Study

REQUIRED ACTION: __ Immediate  X Time Sensitive  __ Information Only

The child welfare system in North Carolina and nationally is experiencing a crisis in workforce recruitment and retention. Statewide, the annual turnover rate of child welfare social workers is above 30%, with some counties grappling with half or more of their staff leaving every year. One consequence of North Carolina’s child welfare workforce crisis is the increase in each worker’s caseload. While the state has set a standard caseload for CPS Assessments of 1 worker per 10 families, more than 70% of counties have experienced at least one month of CPS caseloads that exceeded this standard over the past two years. Because caseloads do not encompass the entire scope of work included in child welfare workers’ duties, NCDSS issued a Request for Proposals to conduct a comprehensive workload study for better analysis of how workload contributes to turnover and impacts outcomes for children and families. With the workload study data, NCDHHS-DSS will be able to better identify and address disparities in workload among counties and support consistency in practice statewide.

The goals of the study are:

- To understand the routine activities conducted by child welfare staff within each program and at various levels of each program to fulfill their duties.

- To understand the time needed to complete all mandated and/or generally recommended practice activities.

- To estimate the time required to engage in these mandated practices and, to the extent practicable, to include consideration of state-of-the-art practice that is reflected in national standards and developing initiatives in the field.

Each group of staff has specific duties and functions guided by policy and procedures. Additionally, each group’s fulfillment of the assigned duties and functions is influenced by numerous case-specific factors. A few examples include the number of children in a particular family; the geographical distances between case participants; and the complexity of the child’s needs.

After extensive review of proposals, a reputable firm was selected, with a projected date of completion in October 2023. NCDHHS-DSS contracted with Public Consulting Group, LLC (PCG) to conduct a study of caseloads,
supervisory ratios, and the workloads of identified staff, leaders, and administrators. This will include, but not limited to the following child welfare program areas:

- Intake
- CPS Assessment
- CPS In-home/Family Preservation
- Permanency Planning/Foster Care
- Adoption
- Foster Family Home Licensing
- Leaders at the state level

PCG has reviewed our policy manuals and created a draft list of case types and tasks that staff complete. The next phase of the process is to conduct focus groups with county staff. The purpose of the workload study focus groups is to identify and validate the range of activities that must be completed to manage a case successfully and in accordance with policy. During the focus groups, PCG will walk through the draft case types and tasks list and work with participants to confirm the activities completed on a day-to-day basis have been identified and that the descriptions listed are accurate. We ask that participants for the focus groups include new and seasoned caseworkers and supervisors from small, moderate, large, rural, and metropolitan counties. Also, administrative support staff whose responsibilities are specific to child welfare.

**NEEDED ACTION**

Directors need to identify 1 to 2 child welfare staff to participate in the session applicable to your agency’s region (referenced below). Each participant must register by clicking on the link: [https://forms.office.com/g/jTBfeC8TLf](https://forms.office.com/g/jTBfeC8TLf)

<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>2:00pm-5:00pm</td>
<td>Buncombe DSS 35 Woodfin St, Asheville NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>8:30am-11:30am</td>
<td>Caldwell DSS 2345 Morganton Blvd SW, Lenoir, NC 28645</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Richmond Community College (Cole Auditorium) 1042 West Hamlet Avenue, Hamlet, NC 28345</td>
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<td>Wilson DSS 100 Gold St NE, Wilson, NC 27893</td>
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<td>Duplin Cooperative Extension 165 Agriculture Dr., Kenansville, NC 28349</td>
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<td>8:30am-11:30am</td>
<td>Bertie DSS 110 Jasper Bazemore Avenue, Windsor, NC 27983</td>
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If you have questions about the workforce study, please contact LaShonda S. Pickett, Workforce Coordinator at lashonda.stanley-pickett@dhhs.nc.gov or 919-588-0170.

Sincerely,

**Peter L. West**

Peter L. West,
Section Chief for County Operations
Division of Social Services
North Carolina Regional Support Map

Regional Support Approach
North Carolina’s seven (7) regions are designed to increase county collaboration, expand direct service programs, and improve accessibility to NCDSS resources and staff statewide.

Region 1
Buncombe
Cherokee
Clay
Graham
Haywood
Henderson
Jackson
Macon
Madison
Mitchell
Polk
Swain
Transylvania
Yancey

Region 2
Alexander
Alleghany
Ashe
Avery
Burke
Caldwell
Catawba
Cleveland
Gaston
Iredell
Lincoln
McDowell
Rutherford
Watauga
Wilkes

Region 3
 Alamance
Caswell
Chatham
Davidson
Davie
Durham
Forsyth
Guilford
Orange
Person
Randolph
Rockingham
Stokes
Surry
Yadkin

Region 4
Anson
Cabarrus
Harnett
Hoke
Lee
Mecklenburg
Montgomery
Moore
Richmond
Robeson
Rowan
Scotland
Stanly
Union

Region 5
Edgecombe
Franklin
Granville
Greene
Halifax
Johnson
Nash
Northampton
Pitt
Vance
Wake
Warren
Wayne
Wilson

Region 6
Bladen
Brunswick
Carteret
Columbus
Craven
Cumberland
Duplin
Jones
Lenoir
New Hanover
Onslow
Pamlico
Pender
Sampson

Region 7
Beaufort
Bertie
Camden
Chowan
Currituck
Dare
Gates
Hertford
Hyde
Martin
Pasquotank
Perquimans
Tyrrell
Washington