



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

JOSH STEIN • Governor

DEVPUTTA SANGVAI • Secretary

LISA TUCKER CAULEY • Division Director, Human Services

May 16, 2025

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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

**SUBJECT: INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT POLICY UPDATES TO ALIGN WITH SOP AND
SDM CHANGES**

REQUIRED ACTION: ☐ Information Only ☒ Time Sensitive ☐ Immediate

NCDHHS DSS has worked over the past five years to implement the North Carolina Practice Model. That Model is based on a foundation of Practice Standards, Safety Organized Practice and the Structured Decision-Making (SDM) tools, all designed to support the work that our child welfare workforce does every day to provide services to achieve Safety, Permanency and Well-Being for children and families who are impacted by our system. This work has required substantial revisions to child welfare policy to align with the new tools, changes in North Carolina statute, law and rule and to comply with federal guidelines. The new tools and policies have been built into the PATH NC system to give our workforce the tools and support they need to do this critical work.

In order to manage the staggered entry of counties into PATH NC, NCDHHS DSS developed policy manuals for each process to ensure that practice is consistent regardless of whether the county has entered the information system. The first manual includes policy in a format that represents and follows the processes built into PATH NC for Child Protective Services Intake and Assessments (found on the Child Welfare Services website for CWS Policies/Manuals under the heading **PATH SDM Tool Manuals**). The manuals currently being used by all 100 counties have also been revised to align the changes in practice for counties awaiting entry into PATH NC (found under the heading **Child Welfare Manual**). Both sets of manuals can be found here: <https://policies.ncdhhs.gov/divisional-n-z/social-services/child-welfare-services/cws-policies-manuals/>.

Also, as part of our training plan, the Group 1 Counties have received training on the new SDM tools and Safety Organized Practice and are in the process of receiving PATH NC system training. This training schedule recommended by Evident Change, national consultants and purveyors of the SDM tools, is designed to be provided *"just in time"* so that policy and practice training is delivered just before entry into the system. This sequential approach is also supported by e-learnings already posted on [NCSWLearn.org](https://www.ncswlearn.org).

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The first webinar was held on May 1, 2025. During that webinar, Assessment policy was presented on Temporary Safety Providers (TSPs) that outlined limits to the length of time a child could stay in that setting without court oversight. After further examination of this specific change, the time limits have been removed, and both sets of manuals have been updated and posted. Guidance about the appropriate use of TSPs and the use of the Initial Provider Assessments form found in the "Temporary Safety Provider" section of both versions of the Assessment manual remains in effect.

We are scheduling two additional webinars:

May 28th Child Welfare Policy Changes Webinars- 11-12 pm:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/750031204691118167>

May 29th Child Welfare Policy Changes Webinars- 12-1pm:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7073518289100925534>

Office Hours for supervisors and program managers will be held after each Group is trained, and lessons learned from each Webinar, Office Hours and Group roll out will be used to inform and support subsequent counties as they move into the system. Additional support to counties will be provided through a FAQ that will be updated and distributed after the Webinars and Office Hours are completed.

Sincerely,



Kathy Stone

Section Chief for Safety
NCDHHS Division of Social Services

Cc: Lisa Tucker Cauley, Division Director for Child, Family, and Adult, Regional Support
Adrian Daye, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Practice
Donna Fayko, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Operations
Kimaree Sanders, Section Chief for Regulatory and Licensing
Peter West, Section Chief for County Operations
Heather McAllister, Section Chief for Child and Family Services

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