REAP
Child Welfare Training & Technical Assistance
Reaching for Excellence & Accountibility in Practice

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What does REAP stand for?**

   Reaching for Excellence and Accountability in Practice.

2. **What is REAP?**

   REAP is a continuous quality improvement (CQI) approach done in partnership with all levels of county DSS staff, families and youth served, and community partners. Major components of REAP include:

   > *REAP is a CQI framework within which everyone in the community involved in helping children and families shares responsibility for improving outcomes.*

   - *A monthly Data Dashboard provided to each pilot county,*
   - *Completion of a Child Welfare Community Assessment and Child Welfare Achievement Plan, and*
   - *Implementation of a CQI model.*

   REAP provides a framework within which everyone in the community involved in helping children, youths, and families shares responsibility for improving outcomes. More information on specific components and technical assistance available to pilot counties will be provided in upcoming online meetings and an orientation session.

3. **What is CQI?**

   CQI, or continuous quality improvement, is the process of identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and problems and then testing, implementing, learning from, and revising solutions. In using the REAP approach, counties and their community partners identify data, analyze and interpret the data, and use those results to bring about change.

4. **Who invented REAP?**

   REAP was not invented. It evolved from a desire to improve outcomes for children, youths, and families. With the assistance of Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center (ACCWIC), the NC Division of Social Services enlisted the help of county and state child welfare professionals and university and community partners to formulate the structure and evolving process now known as REAP.

5. **Is REAP a new child welfare initiative?**

   REAP builds on the principles and strengths of previous child welfare reforms such as Families for Kids and MRS; however, REAP is intended to evolve and grow with county agencies as they learn more about their outcomes and adapt their services.

6. **How is REAP different from other child welfare models?**

   REAP is not a time-limited initiative or a specific practice model for a specific unit at DSS. Rather, it is an ongoing way of improving practice and services throughout the agency based on data and targeted outcomes.

7. **What does REAP mean to me as a DSS staff member?**

   Ultimately everyone in the community will share in the benefits of improved outcomes for children and families. In REAP counties, DSS staff will receive training, support, and technical assistance in order to:

   - *Use the six principles of partnership to support collaboration within and outside of the agency.*
   - *Modify structures and practices to implement outcomes-focused work.*
   - *Use data on a continuous basis to improve outcomes.*
   - *Engage community partners in all aspects of quality improvement.*

8. **How long does REAP take?**

   Like all CQI approaches, REAP is an ongoing process of assessment, innovation, and evaluation. REAP is not intended to end. REAP provides a framework for DSS agencies to consistently seek feedback on their services and review the data to determine both what they are doing well and where they can improve. It may take six months to a year to become oriented to REAP and complete an initial Community Assessment and Achievement Plan. This is just the beginning of adopting continuous quality improvement across program areas.

9. **What is the REAP TA Gateway?**

   The REAP TA Gateway is being developed as an online system to help the Division of Social Services respond to the technical assistance needs of the counties. County staff will be able to request technical assistance through an online portal. Division staff will respond to and track requests, allowing for the state to track its own services and outcomes. The goal is for the counties to receive the assistance requested in an efficient, timely, and consistent manner. We expect the TA Gateway to be available for use in 2013.

10. **Where do I find the data for REAP?**

    The REAP Data Dashboard is emailed to pilot counties on a monthly basis. For more information, county-level child welfare outcome data for all North Carolina counties can be found on the UNC Management Assistance website (http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/). Client-specific data for each county DSS is available through the Division's Data Warehouse.

11. **What if I do not understand the data?**

    REAP pilot counties will receive training in understanding and using their county data in order to complete the REAP Child Welfare Community Assessment and Achievement Plan, and for ongoing CQI efforts. Agency staff can register for the training "Becoming an Achievement-Focused Child Welfare Agency" on ncswlearn.org. Pilot counties can also request technical assistance from the Division by emailing nccwta@dhhs.nc.gov or by contacting 919-733-4622.

12. **Does REAP take the place of the CFSR?**

    Quality case reviews are an important element of an effective CQI process. The CFSR has served as the existing model for qualitative case reviews in NC. The CFSR informs the CQI process, and will continue to do so for REAP. In fact, REAP has the ability to provide more valuable information to a county through the Child Welfare Community Assessment and the Child Welfare Achievement Plan. Participating counties do not need to submit a self survey in advance of their CFSR or to develop a Program Improvement Plan. Any areas needing improvement can be addressed within their REAP Child Welfare Achievement Plan.

13. **Who are REAP partners?**

    REAP partners are those agencies and individuals in a community who are invested in improving outcomes for children, youths, and families. REAP partners should include birth and foster families and foster youth to the greatest extent possible; they may also include Administrative Office of the Courts staff, law enforcement

representatives, representatives from public schools and public health, medical and mental health professionals, and family advocacy groups. County DSS staff may recruit specific people based on the outcomes being targeted and the strength of existing relationships in the community.

14. **What if our agency struggles to get youths and families involved?**

Many agencies struggle to involve these key partners in the process of assessing and planning agency programs. Some agencies have had success using LINKS coordinators, foster home licensing workers, and child placement workers as liaisons who can identify and recruit participants based on their existing relationships. Agencies such as NC Families United and SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out) can also help engage families and youth as advocates. Flexible meeting schedules are also important to ensure service recipients are at the table.

15. **How can my agency keep community partners involved in REAP? In past collaborative efforts, interest fell off after one or two meetings.**

To keep partners involved, be clear about the overall goals for your agency, and the specific role and time-line for each person and each work group. You also want to share updated data regularly so each group can see progress being made or take part in corrections and adjustments. Pilot counties will receive training and tools for community engagement.

16. **Should my agency involve the media, and if so how?**

Agencies may involve the media depending on the comfort level of internal and external community partners. In general, media outreach can be a useful strategy for publicizing agencies' efforts to improve outcomes and services. It can also help to create a more proactive media approach by sharing good news and educating the public, rather than reacting only to emergencies and negative publicity.

17. **How do I get technical assistance for implementing REAP?**

Technical assistance (TA) is one of the benefits of REAP. Every pilot county will have an agency leadership team that works with Division consultants to support initial REAP implementation. There are also opportunities for peer-to-peer networking and consultation with other pilot counties. Eventually requests for assistance from the Division will be made through the online REAP TA Gateway. Appropriate TA requests will be coordinated through the Division and may be provided by someone from the Division or its partners (e.g., experts from a university or community-based agency). Pilot counties can also request technical assistance from the Division by emailing nccwta@dhhs.nc.gov or by contacting 919-733-4622.

18. **When will all counties be involved in REAP?**

All Departments of Social Services will be given the opportunity to apply to become a REAP county. Expansion REAP counties will be chosen based on the agencies' readiness to begin implementation and the availability of resources to train and support REAP counties. The expectation is that all 100 counties will have the opportunity to implement REAP.

For further information about REAP, contact Rita Bland at rita.bland@dhhs.nc.gov.