

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

Child and Family Services Reviews End of Biennium Report

2003-2005 Biennium

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEWS END OF BIENNIUM REPORT 2003-2005 BIENNIUM

BACKGROUND

In 1992, the North Carolina General Assembly directed the N.C. Division of Social Services to conduct reviews of county child protective services programs once every biennium. The intent of these reviews was to strengthen the Child Protective Services (CPS) delivery system statewide and to document the county agencies' achievement of the level of practice identified in the Standards for Children's Services (Standards). In 1996, Standards were developed for Child Placement Services programs also. The CPS program review was expanded to become an all-inclusive Children's Services review. The intent was to strengthen the delivery of all children's services programs statewide and to document the county agencies' adherence to Child Protective Services and Child Placement Services Standards. Both Standards and the review process were developed with the involvement of the Children's Services Advisory Committee, which was made up of county departments of social services (DSS) and Division staff.

Each biennium brought changes and improvements to the review process. During the 1998-2000 biennium, several new aspects were added to the review process and resulting reports. In addition to case record reviews for compliance with the Standards, outcomes data analysis was added to look at trends in each county's child protective services, foster care and adoption programs. Each county DSS was asked to include discussion in their self-surveys about improvements made by the agency since the previous review, strengths identified by the agency, their use of data resources for self-evaluation and areas that the agency needed to improve. Highlights of this information were included in the Biennial Review report, which was submitted to the county by the Division following the conclusion of that county's review. The process for the 2000-2002 biennium shifted more focus to measuring outcomes.

After the Federal Child and Family Services Review in March of 2001, and the State's entrance into Program Improvement Status, the Division suspended biennial reviews in July 2001. Staff from the Division spent the next two months completely redesigning the review protocol, process and instruments to mirror the Federal Child and Family Services Reviews. The redesigned process, complete with protocol and instruments, was implemented in October 2001, after a successful pilot review of two counties using the redesigned process in September 2001. What was formerly known as the Biennial Review became the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). In addition to adapting the federal review

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instrument for North Carolina's use, these reviews include input from community stakeholders' surveys and interviews with parents, placement providers, age-appropriate children, social workers, supervisors and other professionals involved with the families. County DSS staff pair with the state reviewers in reviewing records, conducting interviews and rating the items and outcomes. Full team debriefings are conducted on each case, as in the Federal Review process. The subsequent reports continue to include data analysis related to the outcomes and the agency's selfanalyses of strengths, areas needing improvement and community issues. Formal Program Improvement Plans are required from each county in any outcome area that does not meet substantial conformity.

Between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2005, Child and Family Services Reviews were completed on all 100 county DSS agencies. In addition to the CFSR, five quarterly reviews were also completed on Mecklenburg County DSS' Youth and Family Services Division during the same time period. After the state's Program Improvement Plan was approved by the US DHHS, Administration on Children and Families in December 2001, the state began submitting guarterly reports on the Child and Family Services Reviews with cumulative results from the reviews completed during the previous guarter. In August, 2002, the Division implemented the revised federal review instrument in the state's Child and Family Services Reviews. The basic outcomes did not change with this revision. However, there were changes to some of the instructions for rating the items and outcomes. Also, some of the items under Permanency Outcome 1 were changed. In July, 2003, the federal government released a second revised review instrument, which the State adapted in December, 2003. The revision included additional clarification and instructions to the items that federal reviewers had raised during the reviews of states and did not affect the criteria used for rating any of the items or outcomes. The revision reduced the number of items rated under Outcome Safety 1 from 3 items to 2 items after Item # 1 under Outcome Safety 1 (Assessment of Intake Decisions and Thoroughness of Investigation) was incorporated into what is now Item #3 under Outcome Safety 2 (Services to the Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and to Prevent Removal). This revision also reduced the number of items being rated on the instrument from 24 items to 23 items. The Division also rewrote the CFSR protocol at that time to add clarification as a result of questions that arose during the previous biennium. There were no significant changes to the protocol itself.

The purpose of North Carolina's Child and Family Services Review process is to ultimately assist in realizing the goals, mission, vision and desired outcomes for the state's Family Support and Child Welfare Services system. The reviews provide a mechanism for evaluating the Children's Services System's response to children and families; for identifying management, training, system and policy issues; for recognizing

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

strengths in practice; and for making recommendations to strengthen the delivery of all children's services programs statewide. Each county is reviewed every two years.

The process is designed to measure outcomes and practice. The process is intended to provide public accountability for all 100 county Departments of Social Services and for the Child Welfare system statewide. The process is also intended to help provide ongoing measurement of the state's progress towards meeting all seven-outcome areas.

The **Goal** for Family Support and Child Welfare Services in North Carolina is to achieve Self Sufficiency, Permanence and Well-Being for Families through a Family Centered Approach;

Our **Mission** is to ensure safe, permanent and nurturing families for children;

Our **Vision** for Family Support and Child Welfare Services is to build a system that accomplishes the following:

GOALS, MISSION, AND VISION FOR FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

- Community-Based Support for All Families -that promotes the family's ability to cope with difficult situations and resolve family problems.
- One Coordinated Assessment Process -that involves the family in a comprehensive evaluation of their strengths and needs.
- One Caseworker or Casework Team -that ensures everyone is working together toward a permanent plan for the child.
- One Single, Stable Foster Care Placement -within the child's own community that provides temporary stability until a lifelong home for the child is achieved.
- A Safe and Permanent Home within One Year -for all children for whom a County Department of Social Services has legal custody or placement responsibility.

The Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section also supports and embraces the following six Family Centered Principles of Partnership, which is the foundational philosophy of the Multiple Response System (MRS):

- Everyone desires respect
- Everyone needs to be heard
- Everyone has strengths
- Judgments can wait
- Partners share power
- Partnership is a process

The underlying beliefs of a Family-Centered approach to Child Welfare are as follows:

- Safety of the child is the first concern
- Children have the right to their family

- The family is the fundamental resource for the nurturing of children
- Parents should be supported in their efforts to care for their children
- Families are diverse and have the right to be respected for their special cultural, racial, ethnic and religious traditions; children can flourish in different types of families
- A crisis is an opportunity for change
- Inappropriate intervention can do harm
- Families who seem hopeless can grow and change
- Family members are our colleagues
- It is our job to instill hope

The six Principles of MRS are seen throughout the 7 strategies of MRS which allows agencies to achieve safe, permanent and nurturing homes for children. The 7 strategies of MRS are:

- Collaboration between Work First and Child Welfare Programs
- Implementation pf a Strengths-Based, Structured Intake Process
- A choice of two approaches to reports of Child Abuse, Neglect and/or Dependency
- Coordination between Law Enforcement Agencies and Child Protective Services for the Investigative Approach
- A redesign of In-Home Services
- Utilization of a Team-Decision making approach in Child and Family Team Meetings
- Implementation of Shared Parenting meetings in Placement cases

In an effort to achieve the goals, mission, and vision for Family Support and Child Welfare Services, the reviews measure the following outcomes through a combination of outcome data analysis for each county and assessment of practice from the case record reviews that are conducted on site:

Outcome Safety 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect

- Item 1: Timeliness of initiating reports of maltreatment
- Item 2: Repeat Maltreatment

Outcome Safety 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

- Item 3: Services to the family to protect children in the home and prevent removal
- Item 4: Risk of harm to children

Outcome Permanency 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

• Item 5: Foster care re-entries

CHILD AND FAMILY

SERVICES

REVIEW OUTCOMES

AND ITEMS

MEASURED RELATED TO

OUTCOMES

- Item 6: Stability of foster care placement
- Item 7: Permanency goal for child
- Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with • relatives
- Item 9: Adoption •
- Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living • arrangement

Outcome Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

- Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement
- Item 12: Placement with siblings
- Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care
- Item 14: Preserving connections
- Item 15: Relative Placement
- Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents •

Outcome Well-Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

- Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents and foster parents •
- Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning
- Item 19: Worker visits with child
- Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)

Outcome Well-Being 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Item 21: Educational needs of the child •

Outcome Well-Being 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

As a part of the state's Program Improvement Plan, benchmarks were

- Item 22: Physical health of the child
- Item 23: Mental health of the child

identified for each outcome area that the state would have to meet through its Child and Family Services Reviews of county DSS agencies. The THE STATE agreement with the federal government in the Program Improvement Plan PROGRAM was that the state would come out of Program Improvement Status in any **IMPROVE**outcome that the state met or exceeded the benchmark for that outcome in MENT PLAN two consecutive reporting quarters. Outcomes Safety 1 and Permanency 1 also had to meet or exceed identified benchmarks for five of the six NATIONAL National Data Standards in order for the state to come out of Program Improvement Status in those two outcomes in addition to meeting the Child **STANDARDS** and Family Services Review benchmarks. One of the requirements of the Program Improvement Plan was that Mecklenburg County's Youth and

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Family Services Division would be reviewed each quarter. After the first two reporting quarters, the state had exceeded the benchmarks for all of the outcome areas through the Child and Family Services Reviews as outlined in the Program Improvement Plan.

In addition to meeting the negotiated benchmarks for the outcome areas for the Child and Family Services Reviews, the Program Improvement Plan also set benchmarks for the National Data Standards for the state to meet or exceed in order to successfully exit program improvement status. These benchmarks for the National Data Standards related only to Outcomes Safety 1 and Permanency 1. North Carolina successfully rectified all areas that were in non-conformity and successfully met all requirements of the Program Improvement Plan in June, 2005.

NUMBER OF Because of the in-depth review process and inclusion of interviews with persons relevant to each case, the number of cases to be reviewed in each CASES REVIEWED category had to be limited significantly. The sample is selected from the universe of cases in the program area under review for each county. The universe includes all children and all families whose cases were open for services during the period under review. Sample cases must have been open for Child Welfare Services (either CPS Case Planning/Case Management Services or Child Placement Services) a minimum of 60 days during the period under review, even though services may be closed at the time of the on-site review. Additional samples are also selected for review from reports not accepted for investigation and from Investigative Assessments that were either unsubstantiated or substantiated and closed without further services. The selection process for cases to be reviewed is designed to ensure that cases are randomly selected. Following are the numbers for cases to be reviewed in each category, depending on the size of the county:

> **Level III counties** have six Placement cases, six Case Planning/Case Management cases, six cases that were either unsubstantiated or substantiated and closed, and twenty reports not accepted for Investigative Assessment.

> **Level II counties** have four Placement cases, four Case Planning/Case Management cases, five cases that were either unsubstantiated or substantiated and closed, and twelve reports not accepted for Investigative Assessment.

Level I counties have three Placement cases, three Case Planning/Case Management cases, four cases that were either unsubstantiated or substantiated and closed, and eight reports not accepted for Investigative Assessment. In general, Level III counties are the larger counties in the state. Level II counties are the medium sized counties, and Level I counties are the smaller counties in the state.

END OF BIENNIUM RESULTS

As of June 30, 2005, the second biennium ended using the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process and instrument. All 100 county Departments of Social Services were reviewed, and Mecklenburg County's Youth and Family Services Division was reviewed six times, one being the regular CFSR, for a total of 105 reviews between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2005.

Please note that there are 2 attachments to this report, attachment A and attachment B. Attachment A includes the 21 reviews (20 counties as Mecklenburg was reviewed twice) that took place between July 1, 2003 and November 30, 2003, prior to revisions to the review instrument that became effective December 1, 2003. Attachment B includes county reviews that took place between December 1, 2003 and June 30, 2005, after the December 1, 2003 revisions were in place.

Attachments A and B list the counties reviewed in chronological order. In both attachments, a "0" under an item indicates that the item was rated as an "Area Needing Improvement" for the county. A "1" under an item indicates the item was rated as a strength. An "NA" under an item indicates that item was not applicable for the county's review. Attachments A and B also list the number of items that were rated as "Strengths" and the number rated as "Areas Needing Improvement", as well as the percentage of items that were rated as strengths. The number of outcomes achieving Substantial Conformity and the percentage of outcomes achieving Substantial Conformity is also listed in both attachments A and B.

A "Y" under an outcome area indicates the county achieved substantial conformity in that particular outcome. An "N" under the outcome indicates that the county did not achieve substantial conformity for the outcome listed in that column. County levels are included in both attachments.

It is important to maintain the perspective that individual outcome ratings are based on a relatively small sample of records that are measured against a high level of performance expectation. Any record selected for review is presumed to be representative of all agency records with regard to adherence to statutes, policies and standards. A significant modification of the review process is the opportunity for reviewers to expand the record review to include interviews with persons who are important to the case and who can provide supporting, corroborating, and clarifying information that may not have been evident in the record. In previous biennial reviews, case documentation was the sole determinant of agency compliance with law, policy, and standards. Since implementing the new CFSR process in 2001 which mirrors the federal review process, interviews with children, parents, foster parents, social workers, and other community persons and professionals may be used to validate case documentation or serve as confirmation of agency activities that may not have been clearly documented in the record. In addition, this review process is much more focused on specific outcomes for children and families, rather than a more procedural approach.

It should be understood that an outcome rated as "in substantial conformity" does not indicate there is no room for improvement. Conversely, outcome rated as "not in substantial conformity" does not indicate that much excellent work has not been done.

The items needing the most improvement statewide include the four items related to Safety Outcomes 1 and 2. Also, Item #7 under Permanency Outcome 1, related to the appropriateness of the permanency goals for children and meeting the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements for filing for termination of parental rights (TPR), is a significant area needing improvement statewide. When rating Item #7, during the Child and Family Services Reviews, <u>15 of the most recent 22</u> months is used, which is the Adoption and Safe Families Act criteria for terminating parental rights. It should be noted, however, that according to North Carolina law, when a child has been in care for <u>12 of the most recent 22 months</u>, a petition to terminate parental rights should be filed, or the court order should note one of the allowable exceptions for not doing so. The allowable exceptions include:

- the child is being cared for by a relative, and the permanent plan for the child is custody or guardianship with that relative;
- the agency has documented a compelling reason for determining that a TPR would not be in the best interests of the child, or
- the agency has not provided the services deemed necessary for the safe return of the child to the home.

Finally, all four items under Well Being Outcome 1 are areas needing improvement statewide. Well Being 3, Item #3, which deals with children receiving adequate services to meet their mental health needs, is also an area that needs special attention, as well as Permanency Outcome 1, Item #9, which deals with timely adoptions for children with the permanency goal of adoption. In the remaining items, the review results indicate that most or all of the counties are performing strongly. As during the last biennium, no county failed to achieve substantial conformity in all outcome areas. **CONCLUSION** The Division appreciates the counties' investment of staff and time in making these reviews a valuable learning tool for both county DSS staff and the Division. These efforts contribute to the statewide focus of preparing for the next federal Child and Family Services Review. Ultimately, continued progress towards improvement in all outcome areas contributes to the ability of North Carolina's child welfare system to successfully provide for Safety, Permanence and Well Being for all children and families that are served by that system.

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVEWS 2003/2005 BIENNIUM

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NORTH CAROLINA CIHLD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVEWS 2003/2005 BIENNIUM

County	Last Day of	Level	s	afetv	1	5	Safetv			Per	mane	ncv					Per	mane	ncv				We	II Bei	na		Well B	eina	w	ell Beir	na	Total out	
county	Review		-	tcome	e 1		itcome	2				tcome							utcome						tcom	<u> </u>		Outco			utcome	of 23	
			Iter		SC			SC			Iter				SC				m #			SC		Item			SC	Item #	-	-	m #	"Needs	
			#1	#2			#4		#5	#6		#8	#9	#10		#11	#12			#15	#16		#17	#18		#20		#21			#23	SC	Improvement"
RICHMOND	3/7/2005	1	1	1	Y	0	1	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	0	1	1	1	Ν	1	Y	1	1	Y	2
SAMPSON	3/14/2005	2	0	1	N	0	0	N	NA	1	1	1	1	NA	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	0	1	1	1	N	1	Y	1	1	Y	4
HYDE	3/21/2005	1	0	1	N	0	0	N	1	1	0	1	0	NA	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ŷ	0	0	0	0	N	0	N	0	0	N	12
BUNCOMBE	3/28/2005	3	1	1	Y	0	1	N	NA	0	1	1	1	NA	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Y	1	1	Y	2
GRAHAM	4/4/2005	1	0	1	N	1	1	Y	NA	1	1	1	1	NA	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	0	0	N	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	3
MOORE	4/11/2005	2	1	1	Y	1	0	N	1	1	1	1	NA	NA	Ý	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	1
GASTON	4/18/2005	3	0	0	N	0	0	N	NA	1	1	1	1	1	Ŷ	1	0	1	1	1	1	Ŷ	0	0	0	0	Ň	1	Ŷ	1	1	Ŷ	9
MITCHELL	4/25/2005	1	1	1	Y	1	1	Y	1	0	1	1	1	NA	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Ŷ	1	1	Ŷ	1
TRANSYLVANIA	4/25/2005	1	1	1	N	0	1	N	NA	1	1	1	1	NA	Ý	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	1
PERSON	5/2/2005	1	1	1	Y	0	0	N	NA	1	1	1	NA	NA	Ý	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	0	Ý	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	3
HARNETT	5/9/2005	2	1	1	Ý	1	1	Y	NA	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	0
CURRITUCK	5/24/2005	1	0	1	N	0	1	N	NA	1	1	1	NA	NA	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Y	1	1	Y	2
FRANKLIN	5/31/2005	1	1	1	Y	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	1	NA	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Y	1	1	Y	0
POLK	5/31/2005	1	0	1	N	0	1	N	NA	1	1	1	1	NA	Ý	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	2
ANSON	6/7/2005	1	1	1	Y	1	1	Y	NA	1	0	1	1	NA	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	1
ASHE	6/7/2005	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	NA	1	1	1	NA	NA	Y	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	Ý	1	1	Ý	0
CLAY	6/14/2005	1	1	1	Ŷ	0	1	N	NA	1	1	1	1	NA	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	Ŷ	1	Ŷ	1	1	Ŷ	1
DUPLIN	6/20/2005	2	1	1	Ý	1	1	Y	NA	1	1	1	NA	NA	Ŷ	1	1	1	1	1	1	Ý	1	1	1	1	Y	1	Y	1	1	Ý	0
STOKES	6/27/2005	1	0	0	N	0	0	N	NA	1	0	1	NA	NA	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	Y	0	0	0	0	N	1	Ý	0	1	N	10
Total # of Items	0/21/2000		34	13		46	-		0	7	19	. 1				. 0	•	. 3	•	. 2			21	29	33			5		6	13		Average
Rated as Needing	1		01	10		-10	20		v		10	· · ·	0	Ŭ		0		0	-	-			21	20	00	00					10		3.54
Improvement	, 																																0.01
Applicable items			84	84		84	84		19	84	84	79	64	18		83	81	84	84	84	82		84	84	84	84		83		84	84		
						• •																	<u> </u>										
Total # of Items			50	71		38	64		19	77	65	78	58	18		83	80	81	82	82	79		63	55	51	51		78		78	71		
Rated as Strength	าร								-																								
J	-																																
Percent of Items			60%	85%		45%	76%		100%	92%	77%	99%	91%	100%		100%	99%	96%	98%	98%	96%		75%	65%	61%	61%		94%		93%	85%		
Rated as Strength	าร																																
Total # of Outcome	es				46			36							64							82					53		78			70	
Achieving Substan	tial																															-	
Conformity																																	
Percentage of Out	comes				55%			43%							76%							98%					63%		94%			83%	
Achieving Substan																																-	
Conformity																																	
Note: NA indicates	that the Item	was not	applica	able to	any o	of the	cases	pulled	for tha	t cour	nty's re	view																					
Note: Mecklenbur																																	
A "0" in a column							rated a	as "n	eeding	impro	oveme	nt.									1								1				
	1" in a column indicates that the item was rated a "Strength																																
A "Y" in a column								rmitv																					1				
																											· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·						