

MRS Conference Call Notes
August 2011

Counties Participating 8/18: Beaufort, Davidson, Davie, Guilford, Moore, New Hanover, Scotland, Union, Yancey.

Counties Participating 8/23: Davie, Mitchell, Nash, Orange, Person, Pitt, Swain, Wilson.

Counties Participating 8/24: Alexander, Catawba, Chatham, Harnett, Hoke, Jackson Pasquotank, Pender, Stokes, Swain, Yadkin.

Agenda

- Letters from the Division
- Working with Parents that are Incarcerated:
 - What are challenges?
 - What resources have you found helpful?
 - What kinds of activities have you included on Service Agreements for these parents?
- Does your county use a 4 day work-week or any other flex schedule?
 - How does your County handle Comp/Overtime?
 - What are the questions you face in considering work schedules for Child Welfare social workers?
- Any other discussion

News from Raleigh

Letters:

- CWS- AL-06-11: Overview of the recent legislative changes that came out of the long session. Always important for us to stay aware of changes from the General Assembly.
- CWS 20 -11: Regarding IVE cost review. A pilot program that NC is taking part in. Also keep an eye on the CW list serve as some of the information sent out (SIS numbers) was inadvertently incorrect and the corrections were sent out over the list serve.
- CWS 19-11: DCD letter with the training calendar for July-December for this year. <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/dcdl/famsupchildwelfare/cws-19-11a1.pdf>
- CWS 18 -11: DCD letter regarding rules change for licensing and adoption pre-placement assessments - rules took effect August 1st.
- CWS 17-11: DCD letter regarding the youth engagement focus groups. Asked counties to do them a couple of years ago and got excellent responses from youth across the state. Asking folks to consider continuing this. The Division was fortunate enough again to have foster care youth interns this summer. Includes a letter from one of our interns telling of her experience in one of these groups.

Other Announcements

- Another helpful link - SIS change notices:
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/rim-01/chg/>

Working with Parents that are Incarcerated

- Handout in the file share pod (with the letters) for Dads who are or have been in prison – document you might use to give to dads in prison that might help them navigate the system.

Challenges/Possible Solutions

- Have trouble getting the administration at the facilities let them talk to the incarcerated family member.
- Hard to work a case plan when they are incarcerated – difficult to get them services.
 - Usually most facilities have some sort of substance abuse treatment, parenting classes available.
- How can we include them on the service agreements?
 - Social worker will continue to update the parent.
 - Is there a class in their facility that they can take?
 - Is there some research on the Internet they could do to prepare themselves for involvement in their life?
 - Have sent them paperwork through the mail for them to review and do a write up on how it relates to their child/situation.
- One county asked if anyone had come up with a way to have them pay any kind of child support? No one had any experience with that.
- Making contacts within required timeframes is a challenge.
- Obviously easier to make contacts with people in county jail, but how to you maintain contact if they are in a facility out of county?
 - Some went through the inmate's case manager and were able to set up regularly scheduled phone calls.
 - County where the prison is located may be busy and have difficulty working with the parent in prison. – may need to prioritize who you really need to see in person and who you can use the phone with.
- The only way one county has been able to communicate successfully with people incarcerated out of state is through certified mail.
- Having real trouble working with inmates in federal prison in NC. Hard to communicate with them, can't go visit unless you go through numerous background checks. Staff was helpful but the bureaucratic regulations were very challenging.
- Have trouble keeping track of when they may move to other facilities.
 - Can use www.vinelink.com which will notify you when there is any change in facility for a particular prisoner.
- Involving them in CFT's:
 - If the incarcerated person can't be there, maybe they have a proxy that could be there.
 - They can also recommend other people in their family that can be a support for the child.
 - What if the non incarcerated parent doesn't want the incarcerated parent's proxy there?
 - This is no different than if mom is the custodial parent and she doesn't want dad there and he is not in prison – that person is still a part of the child's life. Work with custodial parent and ask why. If there is a safety issue be cognizant of that but try to work with all to find a way all can be included.
- Is it beneficial to involve a parent who has a life sentence and will never be out to be a part of the child's life?

- Look at this form the child's eyes. No matter if person will be in prison their entire life, it is the only biological mother or father that the child will ever have.
- But look at all the variables in each situation – was the parent involved in the child's life before being incarcerated? If the parent and child were very involved for years before they were incarcerated, then it is important to maintain the connection.
- CFSR – what would they look for as far as contacts for a parent who was out of county in a facility.
 - When they review those cases they look at the things we have mentioned: the proximity of the parent, what attempts to have been made, the specific situation and the services available at the facility. Each situation is individual. Have seen some very good work in including incarcerated parents in CFTs.
- Quality Improvement Center for non-resident fathers has some good ideas: <http://www.fatherhoodgic.org/>
- Practice notes did an edition of working with parents in prison: http://www.practicenotes.org/vol7_no1.htm

Flex/CompTime

- One county has teams that pair so they have an on and off week. So there is the option of working a 4 day work week.
- The problem with having rigid 4 day work weeks (such as every Friday off) there are things that come up on the case that they need to be able to do. Or if you have to take Wednesday off, what if court in your county is on Wednesday.
- Some feel that 4 day work week makes a lot of sense, but to have different days off.
- Supervisor agreed with this and admits it is more work on the supervisor to get the workers to submit the days off they want and ensure coverage but it is worthwhile.
- One county is doing it with just investigators – they have partners so one of the two partners is always there. Occasionally the supervisor has to cover something but in general it works well.
- Be careful what you ask for, because many of the workers are so exhausted after the 4 ten hour days they spend all their day off sleeping.
- Has helped with the comp time – has almost done away with it for these workers.
- Does also cause some issues as the regular staff may become resentful that it is now harder for them to take off Fridays because coverage has to be maintained.
- One county can have one or two late nights and then have a day to take off early if they want to do that.
- Also becomes a challenge for supervisors.
- Some counties have tried it and gone back to regular hours.
- People in Catawba take middle of the week days that really like the work week breaking up.
- Alexander lets employees flex as needed as you were just describing.
- A county asked for counties that are trying this. Holly knew of:
 - Wayne has said that all county offices will be closed on Fridays.
 - Nash is open 5 days but has flexed so some workers who work 4 days.
 - Cherokee has several options; 4 day, 4.5 day, or 5.
 - Gaston has started 4 or 4.5 day.

September Meetings: 12th, 19th 29th

Will hear from two work groups: Simplification and Supervision.