



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

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Albert A. Delia, Acting Secretary

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Child Welfare Services Section
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October 15, 2012

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ATTENTION: DIRECTORS AND CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

SUBJECT: QUALITATIVE CASE REVIEWS AND CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) PRACTICES

The Division would like to raise awareness of recent information related to the Qualitative Case Review portion of a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system that has been disseminated through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

During this past year, ACF provided states an opportunity to provide comments on revisions to the CFSR process and development of a CQI system; these comments have been synthesized by the American Public Humane Services Association (<http://www.napcwa.org/Home/docs/CommentsonCFSRFederalRegisterNotice.pdf>). ACF has also recently released an Information Memorandum (IM) ACYF-CB-IM-12-07 (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1207.pdf>) that provides guidance to states on "establishing and maintaining Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) systems..." that incorporates many of these comments.

Qualitative case reviews are just one piece of evaluating the effectiveness of practice. The Division seeks to learn more from, and share with, county staff how to structure qualitative case reviews in a manner that leads to continuous service delivery improvement. With that in mind, the Reaching for Excellence and Accountability in Practice (REAP) effort has positioned our state to develop a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system. ACF have defined CQI as "the complete process of identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and problems and then testing, implementing, learning from and revising solutions...it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of staff at all levels of the agency, children, youth, families and stakeholders throughout the process." This is perfectly in line with our work under REAP. This will include, but not limited to, a qualitative case record review process.

To gain a better understanding of how REAP can fully incorporate the critical elements of a CQI process the Division would like to hear from you through a series of focus groups to explore in more detail what you are doing to evaluate the quality of your child welfare services as we look at revision to our current CFSR Case Review Process.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

Physical Location: Albemarle Building • 325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27603-5905

More specifically we would like to know,

- Who, what, when and how you evaluate the quality of child welfare services delivered in your county including case record reviews
- How the information learned is applied to practice and what are your experience/results that tell you what is working and what are the challenges
- What are your suggestions for building a statewide quality case record review system that would support a CQI model under a REAP framework and consistently track statewide data

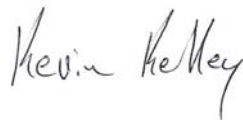
It is our hope that if you are not currently conducting quality case record reviews that you leave the focus group with an understanding that quality case record reviews are one of many critical elements in any CQI system. Additional elements need to be included in the assessment of an agency performance, and ultimately, help to inform that agency as to improvement steps to be taken.

Attached you will find the questions we will use to begin the focus group discussion. We anticipate that each will take about an hour and a half and we hope that by providing these questions in advance will assist you in identifying those who should attend. It may be helpful to think in terms of Director's, Program Administrators, or those familiar with the current case record review process that you currently have in place. This may also be a good opportunity to involve a community partner or parent partner. Below is a schedule of where and when these focus groups will be held. Please attend any session that your schedule will allow. Should you have questions regarding this effort, please contact Terri Reichert at terri.reichert@dhhs.nc.gov (919) 334-1106.

Focus Groups

Date	Time	Location
Oct. 22	10am – 1 pm	Haywood County DSS, 157 Paragon Parkway, Suite 300, Clyde, NC 28721
Oct. 29	10am – 1pm	Richmond Community College, 600 Mclean Street Laurinburg, NC 28352
Oct. 31	10am – 1pm	Pitt County DSS, 1717 W. Fifth Street Greenville, NC 27834
Nov. 6	10am – 1pm	New Hanover County DSS, 1650 Greenfield Street, Wilmington, NC 28402
Nov. 8	10am – 1pm	Caldwell County DSS, 2345 Morganton Blvd., SW, Suite A Lenoir, NC 28645
Nov. 9	10am – 1pm	Rowan County DSS, 1813 East Innes Street, Salisbury, NC 28146
Nov. 26	10am – 1pm	Robeson County DSS, 120 Glen Cowan Rd. Lumberton, NC 28360
Nov. 28	10am – 1pm	Wake County Eastern Regional Office, 1002 Dogwood Dr., Zebulon, NC, 27597
Nov. 29	10am – 1pm	Beaufort County DSS, 632 W. 5th Street, Washington, NC 27889

Sincerely,



Kevin Kelley, Section Chief
Child Welfare Services

Attachment: Case Review Protocol

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Jack Rogers
Child Welfare Services Team Leaders

CWS-12-12

Case Review Protocol

The purpose of the regional focus group is to begin discussion about the revival and structure of the case review process. The questions below are intended to start a conversation.

1. County Case Review Process

- Does your agency have an internal case review process in place to collect specific case-level data for assessing agency performance?
- Do you have dedicated staff responsible for internal case reviews?
 - If so, how is staff trained for this role?
- Do case reviews include the completion of individual interviews specific to each case, such as the child/youth, birth parent, caregiver, caseworker or supervisor, and as indicated, health, mental health and other service providers, educators, and guardian ad litem (or child's attorney)?
- Are there policies, written manuals, and instructions to assist in standardizing completion of the review instruments and the implementation of the case review process?

2. Use of case review results

- Do supervisors and field staff understand how results link to daily casework practices; results are used by supervisors and field staff to assess and improve practice?
- How does your agency currently use the information gained through internal case reviews to improve its performance?
- Does the county translate results (trends, comparisons and findings) for use by stakeholders and disseminate the results through understandable or reader-friendly reports, websites, etc.?

3. Use of data

- Do you have specific outcomes or achievements that you regularly measure and evaluate?
 - If so, what data sources do you use?
- How does your agency currently use the information gained through data sources to improve its performance?
- Are agency decision makers, courts, tribes, and other stakeholders involved in analyzing and understanding the data and in providing feedback on analysis and conclusions?

4. State Case Review Process

- What works well with our current case review process?
 - What doesn't work well?
- What would an effective case review system, that promotes and measures continuous quality improvement (CQI) and positive outcomes for children and families in child welfare, look like?
- Should data or measures from state child welfare databases be used in a case review monitoring process? what measures are important for county accountability?
- What role should the Division play in establishing goals for improvement and monitoring performance?
- What role should other stakeholders, such as families, courts, clients and other child-serving agencies play?