

# **Child Protective Services Pilot Project – Final Report**

**Session Law 2015-241, SECTION 12.C.11.(b)**



**Report to the  
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and  
Human Services  
by  
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

**March 1, 2016**

## **Reporting Requirements**

Session Law 2014-100 directed the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), to coordinate with the Office of Information Technology Services, Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC) to establish and implement a Child Protective Services Pilot Program to enhance coordination of services and information sharing. Three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) was appropriated to support the development and implementation. Session Law 2015-241 directed the continued collaboration between the DHHS and the Department of Information Technology (previously known as the Office of Information Technology Services) to enhance the pilot to include the:

- (1) Development of a dashboard linking the family to the child.
- (2) Integration of additional DHHS and other State department data sources to build a more comprehensive view of the child and family, including:
  - (i) Matching the child to the caretaker;
  - (ii) Linking child, family, and address information; and
  - (iii) Integrating Criminal Justice Law Enforcement Automated Data Services (CJLEADS) data to determine if the caretaker or someone living in the house is a sex offender or has a criminal history.
- (3) Development of a comprehensive profile of a child that includes demographic and caretaker information and indicators of other services, including, but not limited to, prior assessments of the child, eligibility for food and nutrition programs, Medicaid, and child care subsidy.

Pursuant to legislation, DHHS Division of Social Services was directed to submit its findings and recommendations in a final report on the Child Protective Services Pilot Program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on the Health and Human Services by March 1, 2016.

## **CPS Pilot Approach**

The State has an abundance of data but information is siloed and not easily accessible for the county case worker. When a report is “screened in”, intake will assign an assessment case to be reviewed by an assessment social worker within 24 hours for abuse and 72 hours for neglect and dependency. Cases can also be designated as immediate if the danger to the child is significant. All assessments require a home visit and in most instances the county case worker may not have information as to who is in the home before going out to initiate the report. The county case workers are unable to make connections about the child and the family’s history that are key for safety planning decisions made in the field. The objective of the Child Protective Services (CPS) Pilot is to integrate State data to provide a unified view of a child and the family, which would enable case workers to perform their jobs more efficiently and improve the health and safety of children.

To ensure the CPS Pilot will meet the needs of the counties, county departments of social services have engaged in the software development life cycle to provide feedback and recommendations. The phases of the software development life cycle include requirement gathering and analysis, design, implementation/coding, testing, deployment and maintenance. During the requirements gathering and analysis phase, DHHS identified data sources available within the Department, and met with other state departments to identify what information is

accessible and available. Counties participated in a series of child welfare listening sessions across the state and shared information that would be insightful to know prior to the child protective services assessment. These sessions included county child welfare agencies, county public health agencies, county emergency services, law enforcement, local school systems, guardian ad litem, and medical and mental health professionals. The recurring theme in all sessions was that county departments of social services are seeing many second and third generations present in child protective services, and substance use is cited in the majority of child protective services cases.

The implementation/coding phase incorporated an analysis of the DHHS source system data, the development of a visual representation of an easy to read dashboard of information and a proposed series of screens for user feedback. To assist in the design, DHHS contacted the North Carolina Association of County Department of Social Services (NCACDSS) Child Welfare Committee chairpersons and counties with Integrated Social Services Systems (ISSI) to request participation in a series of Joint Application Design (JAD) sessions. Participants in the JAD sessions contributed to making decisions as to what data and how the data should be presented to the front line case workers completing the child protective services assessments.

The testing phase of the CPS Pilot has been split into two steps – a proof of concept, followed by the release of an application for use in the field. The proof of concept was delivered for testing on February 9, 2016. An assessment is underway to verify the data linkages and evaluate the functionality and usability. While the CPS project team (DHHS and GDAC) completed testing, the NCACDSS chairpersons and counties with ISSI evaluated the proof of concept and will be providing feedback prior to the application's deployment for use in the field. The counties represented in this review include participants from Buncombe, Catawba, Cleveland, Guildford, Mecklenburg, Richmond, and Scotland.

Testing concluded in February and user feedback will be incorporated into a final design for the application dashboard. Assuming no significant changes to the application are necessary, deployment for use in the field of the CPS Pilot Application will begin July 2016. During this rollout, the technical infrastructure will be assessed to understand what is needed for a statewide expansion to support all 100 counties and approximately 2,500 users. This assessment will be completed within six months of the initial application rollout. Statewide expansion may require funding necessary to support the infrastructure and maintenance.

Upon the CPS Pilot Application rollout, DHHS will establish a feedback mechanism to identify how the application can be improved to provide additional information. The CPS project team will prioritize this information into modifications that can either be absorbed during production or modifications that will require additional resources. The initial \$300,000 allocation supported the development of a CPS Pilot pursuant to S.L. 2014-100, Section 12C1.(e). The long term goal is to provide information for the purposes of improving the outcomes of children.

## **CPS Pilot Details**

The CPS Pilot links basic demographic and service information from multiple State data sources to give a dashboard of person demographics, history of events, related associations, and address history. The CPS Pilot follows a phased approach to implementation: 1) proof of concept and 2) pilot application. Subsequent phases will continue to build on the foundation components for future functionality.

The CPS Pilot includes the following:

<b>Features</b>	<b>SL 2015-241</b>	<b>Proof of Concept</b>	<b>Pilot Application</b>	<b>Future Functionality</b>
Dashboard linking family to the child	✓	✓	✓	
Matching child to caretaker	✓	✓	✓	
Links to child to family and addresses	✓	✓	✓	
Sex offender warning icon to household	✓	✓	✓	
Criminal history warning icon to household	✓		✓	
Profile of child with demographic and caretaker information	✓	✓	✓	
Indicators or flags for prior child assessments*	✓	✓□	✓□	
Indicators or flags for eligibility for DHHS programs**	✓	✓□□	✓□□	
Tracks DHHS services provided to children across counties		✓	✓	
NCID integration		✓	✓	
Tracking mechanism to support user access audit reporting		✓	✓	
Flexible web application design (for use on any device, smart phone, tablet, laptop, desktop)			✓	
Interface with NC FAST child welfare case management system	✓			✓

\* Child assessment limited to data within Central Registry and Child Placement & Payment System

\*\* Eligibility information limited to SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, and Child Care Subsidy

## **CPS Pilot Implementation Plan**

<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Proof of Concept</b>	<b>Pilot Application</b>
<b>Go Live Date</b>	February 2016	July 2016
<b>User Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opened to limited number of users for verification and validation of data.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DHHS will plan and implement approach of roll out to users.</li></ul>
<b>Data Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DHHS legacy systems and NC FAST</li><li>• Sex Offender Registry from CJLEADS</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other Criminal History from CJLEADS</li></ul>
<b>Data Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DHHS – snapshot of a point in time as of last update sent to GDAC 1/18/2016</li><li>• CJLEADS – snapshot of time</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DHHS – incremental updates as specified by the data provider (nightly, weekly, monthly)</li><li>• CJLEADS – nightly updates</li></ul>
<b>Device and Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited application connection to IP addresses associated with DHHS and county DSS offices.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application connection to <b>ANY</b> IP addresses.</li><li>• Access available on any device (mobile, tablet, laptop, desktop).</li></ul>
<b>Audit Reporting</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• User access audit reporting.</li></ul>

## **Findings and Recommendations**

The CPS Pilot Application will provide case workers with access to needed information and will likely become one tool of many they will use to evaluate the needs of the child. It is important to note that access to information does not replace the human interaction necessary to serve the child, rather it will provide case workers with information to make better decisions.

During the 2015 Child Welfare Listening Sessions across the state, counties shared their need to understand criminal information and child protective services history to adequately assess the needs and safety of a child. This tool provides information on any device (mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop), allowing case workers access to child protective services history and events across all counties. In addition, the CPS Pilot Application also provides access to information on the child's household, including DHHS services received as well as any links to the NC Sex Offender Registry that should be considered in regards to child and family safety. Understanding who is in the household and what services the household is receiving allows a case worker to review a case from a family perspective.

The integration of CJLEADS data will be included in the CPS Pilot Application release, DHHS will assist GDAC in determining how and what CJLEADS data should be transformed into meaningful information on the CPS Pilot Application dashboard. As required in Section 12C.11.(b), DHHS and GDAC will coordinate with NC FAST to interface this tool with Project 4, child welfare case management system, as part of the future functionality phase of implementation.

During the requirement gathering and analysis phase, the project team identified the need for additional information associated with the integration of data from Local Management Entity – Managed Care Organizations, Department of Public Instruction, Juvenile Justice, and Department of Motor Vehicles. DHHS and GDAC will collaborate with these agencies to determine how and what data should be transformed into key data on the application for future releases. For example, a future release may include indicators of other services, including mental health or substance use disorders. Incorporating additional data sets from other agencies will require resources and legislation to allow information sharing across systems.

Until pilot implementation, assessment of infrastructure needs, and analysis of data integration requirements have been completed, no specific recommendations can be provided.