Status of the Implementation of the 2015 North Carolina Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan

SL 2016-94, Section 12C.1.(a)

Report to the

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services

By
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

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Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) submits this plan to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services pursuant to North Carolina Session Law 2016-94, Subpart XII-C. Division of Social Services, Section 12C.1.(a). This report provides a status of the 2015 Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan and its implementation.

Timeline

Per the requirements of the Administration for Children and Families, the timeline for implementation and achievement of the North Carolina Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan is January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2018.

Over the course of the next two years, the approved Program Improvement Plan has specific and measurable, activities and benchmarks that are expected to be completed at varying intervals to ensure the safety of children and families who become known to the county child welfare agency. Please see Appendix A for a detailed list of the activities and their timeframe for completion.

Background Information

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, more specifically, the county child welfare agencies, participated in a review of its Child Welfare Services programs in 2015. During this review, North Carolina was assessed and measured on seven outcomes and seven systemic factors.

Under the domain of safety, permanence, and well-being, the seven outcomes are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The federal expectations for the seven outcomes are based on the use of the case review instrument and protocol known as the On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI). The focus is on local accountability for the outcomes, using state resources to build capacity to train and coach county child welfare agency staff at all levels. Ten county child welfare agencies participated in the case review portion of the Child and Family Services Review in 2015.

The systemic factors refer to seven systems operating within a state that have the capacity, if functioning well, to promote child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The systemic factors are:

- Statewide information system,
- Case review system,
- Quality assurance system,
- Staff and provider training,
- Service array and resource development,
- Agency responsiveness to the community, and
- Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

Measurement on the seven systemic factors is evaluated by the Administration of Children and Families, Children's Bureau staff based on consultation and review of materials submitted.

In 2016, the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau released its final report on the status of North Carolina's performance, noting that the state had failed to meet expectations in each of the seven outcome areas and each of the seven systemic factors.

Following the release of the report, the North Carolina Division of Social Services began collaborating with key stakeholders across the state in the development of its Program Improvement Plan. This collaboration took the form of numerous meetings where root-cause analyses were performed, as well as brainstorming goals and strategies that would help North Carolina meet the federal expectations. The result was North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan--containing five goals, fourteen strategies, and seventy activities--which was formally approved and signed in December 2016, with the effective date being January 1, 2017.

North Carolina has begun the implementation of its Program Improvement Plan. The implementation prescribes that each of the goals, strategies, and activities be managed by workgroups. Under the leadership of NC DHHS Child Welfare Services, there are twelve workgroups convening regularly with their focus on enhancing North Carolina's ability to serve its vulnerable children and families who are experiencing child abuse, neglect, and/or dependency. Workgroups have been established with membership composition involving representatives designated from the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) leadership in Child Welfare, as well as staff from the North Carolina Division of Social Services Child Welfare Services Section Workgroups also contain members from key partners in both public and private agencies serving children and families. Lastly, representatives from several of North Carolina's public and private universities serve on appropriate workgroups.

The Program Improvement Plan Implementation Workgroups are:

1. Policy and Practices
2. Training System
3. Supervisor Academy
4. Technical Assistance Model
5. Family Leadership Model
6. Quality Assurance
7. Permanency Profile
8. Court Engagement
9. Guardian Assistance Program
10. Service Collaboration
11. Diligent Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Parents
12. CFSR-APSR-PIP Stakeholder Engagement

North Carolina continues to receive support from the Administration for Children and Families to ensure the successful completion of its Program Improvement Plan to develop an improved system for serving vulnerable children and their families. This support included a contract with the Capacity Building Center for States, which provides technical assistance to "help public child welfare organizations and professionals build the capacity necessary to strengthen, implement, and sustain effective child welfare practice and achieve better outcomes for children, youth, and families." North Carolina also received support from the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, which is an effort funded by the Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau to help states build capacity for the comprehensive, diligent recruitment of foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

Current Status and Planned Activities

North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan consists of five goals, fourteen strategies, and seventy activities. This content is structured in a matrix of quarters detailing when each activity is due to be completed. To see an official copy of North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan, as well as the current status of each activity, please refer to Appendix A.

Goal 1

Goal 1 states that North Carolina will "improve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being through the establishment of clear performance expectations for practice in CPS Assessments, In-Home Services, and Foster Care services". This goal is written with five key strategies in mind:

- Strategy 1: Strengthen and clarify North Carolina's child welfare policies and practices
- Strategy 2: Enhance the training system to support the consistent application of the revised policies and practices
- Strategy 3: Strengthen the capacity of county departments of social services to sustain the consistent application of the revised policies and practices through the development and implementation of a supervisor academy
- Strategy 4: Strengthen and implement a technical assistance model for NC DSS to provide

support to county staff regarding the consistent application of the revised policies, practices, and training, which will clarify the roles and responsibilities of both state and county staff

- Strategy 5: Develop and implement a state level child welfare family leadership model which will provide "family voice" to inform state plans, policies and practices

Goal 1: Strategy 1

To achieve the tasks detailed in Goal 1: Strategy 1, a Policy and Practices Workgroup was formed in the Fall of 2016 and began meeting in October 2016. One of the first activities completed was the review of policy manuals from other states with the intention of finding a framework that would fit North Carolina's context. This process included reviews of the child welfare policy manuals for Connecticut, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia. Also during the Fall of 2016, the Policy and Practices Workgroup received consultation from Sarah Desmarais, an Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Applied Social and Community Psychology Program at North Carolina State University who has expertise in policy writing. Through the review of other states' policy manuals and in consultation with Dr. Desmarais, a framework was chosen based on the following diagram:
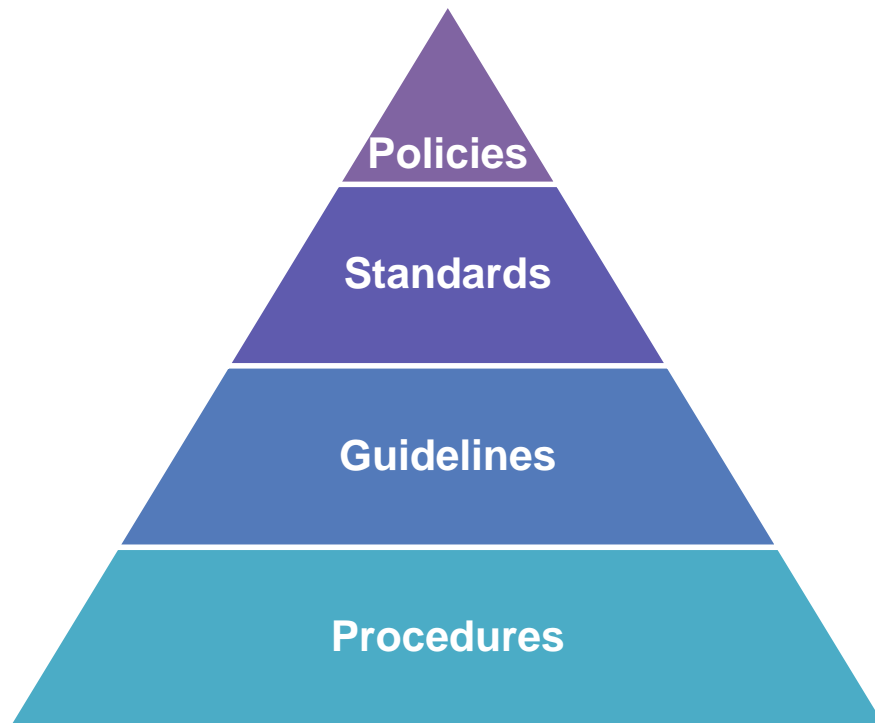
In this context,

- polices are formal, brief statements of requirement(s) that usually have a statutory basis;
- standards are protocols with mandatory action(s) to meet the requirement(s);
- guidelines describe practices or processes, including best practices or recommended practices; and
- procedures are step-by-step instructions for performing the task to ensure compliance.

Once this framework was established, the Workgroup then began the process of reviewing and assessing CPS Intake, CPS Assessments, CPS In-Home Services, and Placement Services policies to map it accordingly. This activity illuminated the current status of the policy manual and served as an initial step towards streamlining the content. The next step was to walk through the child welfare process through the eyes of a child being served by the system. This exercise further identified gaps in policy.

CPS Intake, CPS Assessments, CPS In-Home Services, and Placement Services policies were then reviewed to identify the duplication and inconsistency in language across the multiple sections. The On-Site Review Instrument was used to crosswalk the federal expectations with North Carolina's policies. The revisions of the policy manual were completed on schedule – June 30, 2017.

The Policy & Practices Workgroup continues to receive consultation from the Capacity Building Center for States as it further delves into the revision work. Through this partnership, the Capacity Building Center for States completed a thorough review of North Carolina's safety and permanency policies using both a safety lens and a new worker lens. This review was compiled into an Executive Summary, that was used to inform the work of the Policy & Practices Workgroup.

In June 2017 members of the workgroup conducted site visits to the ten pilot counties in preparation for the publication and implementation of the revised policies. These on-site visits included a pre-evaluation of the existing manual as a means of assessing its current usability, as well as an overview of the revised policies. In July, the revised Child Protective Services Assessment Policy and the Child Protective Services In-Home Service Policy will be distributed to the ten pilot counties. The ten pilot counties will begin using these manuals to inform the daily practice of child welfare social workers. In August, the Child Protective Services Intake and Child Placement Services manuals will be released for immediate use by the Pilot counties. These activities are ahead of schedule as outlined in the Program Improvement Plan, as they were not set to be completed until December 31, 2017.

Goal 1: Strategy 2

Goal 1: Strategy 2 focuses on building the training system to support the consistent application of the revised policies and practices. Given this intention, the activities identified in this strategy are heavily dependent upon the revisions of the child welfare policy manual being completed by the Policy and Practices Workgroup.

The Training Systems Workgroup began its work by reviewing the existing staff competencies for selected curricula associated with CPS Intake, CPS Assessment, CPS In-Home Services and Placement Services (Foster Care), which are the sections of the policy being revised. These core competencies will be modified to align and support the revised policies and the training curricula will be revised to incorporate the modified competencies. This review is scheduled to be completed by September 30, 2017, which is on-schedule to meet the timelines established in the Program Improvement Plan.

In conjunction with the review of the competencies, the group has also:

- Identified data sources that will inform the training systems workgroup,
- Identified desirable training content and delivery,
- Established a review process for curricula,
- Identified CPS In-Home Services delivery practice themes, and
- Identified training content gaps.

The identification and recognition of these items will be used to further strengthen training in the future.

The Training Systems Workgroup was also tasked with developing a series of in-service trainings that county child welfare agencies can use to reinforce consistent practice. The "do it yourself" trainings, or DIYs as they have come to be known, have been developed in partnership with the Family and Children's Resource Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work and with input from North Carolina's Supervision Advisory Committee. Listed on ncswLearn.org under the heading of "Supervisor Resources", the DIYs are designed to help supervisors deliver an in-service type training to staff that is short in duration, but focused on particular topic. The kits provide resources that facilitate the supervisors being able to deliver the training, including PowerPoint presentation, guides, and questions for discussion about each individual topic. NcswLearn.org also employs an evaluation tool to track how many times a course is downloaded. These topics include:

- Incarcerated Parents
- Heroin and Opioids
- Using the Safety Threshold Concept to Enhance Decision Making
- Considerations when Removing a Child from the Home
- Medical Decisions in Foster Care
- Face-to-face contacts
- Collateral contacts
- Diligent efforts to locate and engage
- Making Appropriate Case Decisions in Family Assessments
- Conflict of Interest Cases

The use of the above DIYs is being promoted with child welfare supervisors all across the state, particularly in the supervision courses offered through the NC DHHS Child Welfare Services

section. These DIYs are additional resources to be used by the individual supervisors and are not mandated now. A "Dear County Director Letter" promoting the kits will be released to the county child welfare agencies.

Future DIYs will cover the four child welfare policies that are being revised as a part of North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan—CPS Intake, CPS Assessments, CPS In-Home Services, and Child Placement Services. They are slated to be released in late 2017. Given the nature of these DIYs, the promotion of them will need to be intentional to ensure that supervisors are utilizing them to become better equipped to coach their social workers on the revised policies and practices.

Goal 1: Strategy 3

The premise behind Goal 1: Strategy 3 is that by strengthening the capacity of child welfare supervisors to understand and implement policy and practices, the safety, permanency, and well-being of children served by the system will improve.

The idea of a Supervisor Academy was originated after the second round of Child and Family Services Reviews that started in 2007, when North Carolina implemented a Supervision Advisory Committee. The charter of that group identified supervisors as "skilled practice change agents who improve child welfare services in North Carolina by promoting best practices, consistency, job-satisfaction and retention, and thereby improving achievement of positive outcomes for children and families." As part of this vision, the Committee worked with the North Carolina Child Welfare Workforce Collaborative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social work to analyze best practices in supervision through a survey conducted of North Carolina Child Welfare Social Workers. The results of this study led to many initiatives, one of which was to create a Supervisor Academy. Years of collaboration with the North Carolina Child Welfare Workforce Collaborative, Methodist University, University of North Carolina Family and Children's Resource Program, and the Child Welfare Supervision Advisory Committee resulted in a framework for a beginning course to the academy.

The Supervisor Academy Workgroup has continued to work on developing training curricula based on the identified supervisor competencies. This has results in three new courses being added to the menu of trainings available to child welfare supervisors. These courses will build upon the knowledge that are introduced in the prerequisite course, Introduction to Supervision. The new courses are:

- Nuts and Bolts: Child Welfare Supervision
- Using Data to Improve Agency Practice and Performance
- Using Data to Improve Practice and Performance-Community Partnerships

The Workgroup also drafted a schedule in which the new courses would be presented in four regional sites based on the location of the ten pilot counties and will be delivered beginning in August 2017 and continuing through September 2018. North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan specifically states that eighty supervisors will complete these three courses of the Supervisor Academy during this timeframe. To achieve this number, as well as account for attrition, ninety-

two supervisors have been selected using a random sampling process. The supervisors chosen have been notified of their selection and have registered for the assigned trainings.

Finally, in conjunction with the Capacity Building Center for States, the Supervisor Academy Workgroup established a pre-test evaluation that will also be utilized in a post-test format following the receipt of each course. This will provide results on the effectiveness of the courses in achieving necessary outcomes and will be used to further enhance the courses in the future.

Goal 1: Strategy 4

In 2010, North Carolina received consultation from the Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center (ACCWIC), as it was embarking on its continuous quality improvement initiation known as "Reaching for Excellence and Accountability in Practice" (REAP). During this consultation, North Carolina documented its technical assistance model as it was known at that time. This documented model contained seven levels including:

- Level 1: Informational including policy releases that are the result of changes in law or statute; online manuals; statewide conference calls; webinars; etc. This type of technical assistance is provided on an as needed timeframe.
- Level 2: Assistance requiring a rapid response that is initiated by county and is case specific or program specific regarding policy or practice clarification. This type of assistance is needed with a less than 8-hour response time.
- Level 3: Assistance requiring a formal response that is also initiated by county and may be case specific or program specific and require a content expert. The response time for formal responses ranges from 8 hours to 48 hours.
- Level 4: Assistance in the format of a formal program initiative. The state initiates this type of assistance to address systemic issues such as when state outcomes are not being met by a sector of the state. This type of assistance is provided on an as needed basis.
- Level 5: Assistance that is requested by the county due to address a problem or request for enhancement. This type of request must be completed within 60 days or less.
- Level 6: Assistance that is state Initiated due to issues identified during case reviews; a lack of progress on program development plans; consumer complaints, etc. This type of request must be responded to within 90 days or less.
- Level 7: Intensive technical assistance due to entrenched issues identified with serious concerns for the welfare of children and families; consistent inability to improve performance despite formal plans, etc. The timeframe for this type of assistance includes up to 6 months follow up for sustainability.

The Technical Assistance Model Workgroup reviewed the previously documented technical assistance model for North Carolina. As a part of this review, the Workgroup discussed the various elements of the model and analyzed the components to assess their continued usability. These discussions also concentrated on the gaps within the current model. Additionally, the county child welfare agencies were polled regarding their current impressions of the technical assistance provided by the Child Welfare Services Section; the ways technical assistance was accessed; and any additional suggestions for the revised model. This feedback is being incorporated into the revised technical assistance model for North Carolina.

As of June 30, 2017, the Workgroup is finalizing written protocols for the first four levels of the model and has begun discussing the necessary elements for the successful implementation and sustainment of the model. Once this task is complete, the Workgroup will begin the same process for levels five through seven.

A key component to North Carolina's technical assistance model is the TA Gateway. This is ticketing management system that was built with much assistance from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Beginning October 1, 2017, when one of the ten pilot counties has a question regarding policy and/or practice, a supervisor or above with that county child welfare agency will submit a ticket into the TA Gateway, triggering a response for the assigned Child Welfare Services Section staff member for that day. The assigned staff member will respond to the question based on known policy, protocol, and guidance and will reach out to subject matter experts when appropriate. The information gained during the TA Gateway pilot with the ten counties with serve to inform statewide implementation in 2018.

Goal 1: Strategy 5

North Carolina has long recognized the importance of having "family voice" in its systemic-level child welfare work. Despite this recognition, the state has struggled to find a way to incorporate this into its business model. North Carolina's Program Improvement Plan seeks to institutionalize the notion of having families to advise and lead from their own personal experiences.

As of June 30, 2017, the Family Leadership Model Workgroup has completed a comprehensive review of other state and national programs employing a "family voice" approach to systemic-level work. This included a thorough literature review. The workgroup has engaged in discussions around the infrastructure needed to implement and sustain this type of council. The workgroup has also had the opportunity to experience trainings and review policies in the same way that the eventual Family Advisory Council will be asked to provide input. This exercise provided the workgroup with valuable knowledge regarding what will reasonably be needed for the Family Advisory Council to be effective in its role.

This Workgroup is receiving consultation from the Capacity Building Center for States as it explores, creates, and implements a Family Advisory Council representing all types of family members who are stakeholders in North Carolina's Child Welfare System.

Goal 2

Goal 2 of the Program Improvement Plan states that North Carolina will "improve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being through the utilization of a statewide quality assurance system which will identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system".

This goal contains two strategies that support the achievement to this goal. Those strategies are:

- Strategy 1: Operationalize the state level quality assurance system so that areas of child welfare practice needing improvement are consistently identified and addressed.
- Strategy 2: Develop the protocol and processes by which quality assurance results will be analyzed and program improvement will be implemented and evaluated statewide.

Goal 2: Strategy 1

Beginning February 2017, the Quality Assurance Workgroup convened to develop the communication plan regarding quality assurance in North Carolina. They met monthly to discuss the focus of quality assurance plan as described in the Program Improvement Plan; as well as what their vision for what quality assurance would look like for the state in the future. The current quality assurance tool for child welfare in North Carolina is the use of the federal On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI). This is the federal tool that is used to measure how a state is doing in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The current plan for North Carolina includes the ten pilot counties reviewing an established number of cases based on their percentage of children served of the total population in the state with the State OSRI Team providing oversight to those case reviews. Additionally, the State OSRI Team is conducting case reviews in the other ninety counties using a random sampling methodology. The results from all of the case reviews (pilot and non-pilot) in North Carolina are compiled to produce a report on North Carolina's overall performance.

The discussions about quality assurance in North Carolina also led to conversations about how the use of the OSRI tool fits in with other case review efforts in this state. These discussions provided a great opportunity for the Workgroup to map out an initial plan for a robust continuous quality improvement approach to child welfare in this state.

As of June 30, 2017, the Quality Assurance Workgroup has drafted the required statewide communication plan to all county and state child welfare staff defining quality assurance in North Carolina. This communication plan includes:

- what needs to be communicated and to whom, including quality assurance and case review (OSRI) in child welfare practices in North Carolina; quality assurance practices are necessary to the success of improving outcomes for children; the OSRI case review will be conducted statewide; for the CFSR PIP, the OSRI case review represents quality assurance measures in North Carolina; and data generated from quality assurance OSRI case review is utilized to demonstrate NC Child Welfare Performance.;
- what the appropriate format of the information should be including Dear County Director Letters, Staying Connected Calls, Face to Face Training in Regions (Model the TPSA Training), Director Monthly Meetings, Regional Director Meetings, and Practice Notes, and all state sponsored trainings;
- who should communicate the information including NCDHHS Child Welfare Services section staff, especially the OSRI Team, the Local Support Team, and the CQI REAP Team; and North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Service

- the frequency and timing of the communication, which is dependent upon the information.

The Quality Assurance Workgroup has also supported the development of an on-demand course that is available through ncswLearn.org. The on-demand, online course is designed for child welfare professionals at all levels and explains what North Carolina's case review process looks like using the OSRI, what to expect when an on-site review occurs, and the resources available to county agencies in completing the case reviews. The current availability of this course exceeds the expectations as outlined in the Program Improvement Plan, as it was not due for completion until the end of Quarter 3, which is September 30, 2017.

Goal 2: Strategy 2

The work detailed in Goal 2: Strategy 2 is being incorporated into the provision of technical assistance to North Carolina's county child welfare agencies. Each of the levels identified in the technical assistance model described above in Goal 1: Strategy 4 will address the needs and adequately respond to the case review findings. A request has been made to the Capacity Building Center for States for assistance in the exploration of any technical assistance models from other county-administered states. An initial scan of other technical assistance models was completed as a part of North Carolina's ACCWIC work in 2010, which did not reveal any at that time. A response is expected in the coming days. If technical assistance models from other states are identified, North Carolina will consult with those states and in turn, use that information to further strengthen its model.

Goal 3

Goal 3 focuses on improving "the permanency outcomes for children through collaboration with the judicial system." To address this goal, the following strategies are being implemented:

- Strategy 1: Develop with North Carolina's Administrative Office of the Courts and other judicial partners a plan to engage local court and DSS to address issues of notices to resource parents, timely establishment of case goals, concurrent planning, permanency, and timely termination of parental rights actions.
- Strategy 2: North Carolina Division of Social Services, Indigent Defense Services, Guardian ad Litem, and the Court Improvement Program will provide targeted engagement to county departments of social services and court personnel in judicial districts and counties across the state to support children achieving permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Strategy 3: Implement a Guardianship Assistance Program for all counties in North Carolina, pending approval by the rules process, to support permanency and stability in children's living situations.

Goal 3: Strategy 1

The work of Goal 3: Strategy 1 is being managed by the Permanency Profile Workgroup. As of June 26, 2017, the Workgroup has revised the "Data Dashboard" concept that was employed as a part of North Carolina's Reaching for Excellence & Accountability in Practice (REAP) initiative.

The revised dashboard now contains updated information from the state's CFSR measures, as well as data from the Administrative Office of the Courts J-Wise System. The REAP Data Dashboards can be found on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Management Assistance website: http://sasweb.unc.edu/cgi-bin/broker?_service=default&_program=cwweb.iexp.sas&county=North%20Carolina&label=&entry=2.

The REAP Data Dashboard is published on a public site and thus anyone can use it to view a snapshot of any county's performance on the reported measures. County child welfare agencies use this dashboard to view and manage its performance over a given time period. They also use it to engage in conversations with their community partners, especially the court system, on ways to improve and achieve better outcomes for children and families served by the child welfare system.

The REAP Data Dashboard is just one component of a larger permanency profile that will be created using data from the Online Management System, CFSR data indicators, and Court Improvement Program measures. The comprehensive permanency profile will then be used to engage local courts and county child welfare agencies in discussions addressing issues in not achieving timely permanence for children in the legal custody of the county child welfare agency.

Goal 3: Strategy 2

The establishment of a Permanency Profile feeds directly into Goal 3: Strategy 2 which speaks to the engagement of the court partners and the role they play in the achievement of permanency for children. In the coming months, a workgroup will be convened to begin planning for the technical assistance that will be delivered to the county child welfare agencies and judicial districts. The efforts will focus on improving performance, especially as it relates to the achievement of permanence for children in the foster care system.

Goal 3: Strategy 3

Goal 3: Strategy 3 centers on the establishment of a Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) in North Carolina. This work was built on the framework outlined in Session Law 2013-360. The Guardianship Assistance Program published North Carolina Administrative Rule, as well as policy on March 1, 2017. Both documents govern and support the implementation of this program. The publication of both documents exceeds the timeframe expectations described in the Program Improvement Plan. Additionally, as of January 1, 2017, GAP is an option for permanency for youth at least fourteen years of age but less than eighteen years of age who would otherwise remain the foster care system.

NC DHHS Child Welfare Services section staff conducted ten regional meetings across the state to promote and educate county child welfare workers and supervisors on GAP. This format also encouraged conversations and questions about the correct use of the program. These meetings happened in the Fall of 2016 and were well-attended. As this is still a relatively new concept for

North Carolina, GAP will need to continue to be a topic presented at future meetings and trainings.

Goal 4

Goal 4 aims to "strengthen cross-system service provision to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families". The achievement of this goal will come through three strategies:

- Strategy 1: Establish agreements between county departments of social services and Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) to collaborate on and hold each other accountable for accessible, quality, and timely behavioral health services for child welfare-involved children as well as families involved with child welfare who are referred to the LME/MCOs for services
- Strategy 2: Strengthen and reframe the statewide foster and adoptive parent diligent recruitment plan to support the recruitment of families who meet the needs of the children they serve and who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children served by the foster care program
- Strategy 3: Strengthen the external stakeholders understanding of, and input into the development of, the North Carolina Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) goals, objectives, and annual updates and establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms

Goal 4: Strategy 1

Strategy 1 is being addressed through the Bridging Local Systems Workgroup, which is being spearheaded by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine with funding support from the Duke Endowment. The emphasis of the workgroup has been to identify the best strategies to address issues within North Carolina's service array. Strong consideration is being given to improving timeliness of assessments and initiation of services; improving the accessibility of services within each county so children can remain in their own community or when children do cross county lines, there is coordinated services; and to ensuring the services are individualized to meet the specific needs of families and children.

Regional Leadership Summits have been held in the Partners Behavioral Health Management, Eastpointe, Sandhills Center, and Alliance Behavioral Healthcare regions. The first regional report summarizing the Partners area summit is attached in Appendix B. A Regional Leadership Summit Summary can be found in Appendix C.

The Trillium Health Resources Regional Leadership Summit launched with a region-wide meeting on Monday, June 19, 2017, in Greenville. Subsequent meetings will target the northern, central, and southern counties in the region with the potential for a full-region wrap-up meeting. The Cardinal Innovations Healthcare Solutions catchment area will have two concurrent Regional Leadership Summits on July 19, 2017, in Kannapolis and July 20, 2017, in Chapel Hill. The Vaya Health Regional Leadership Summit will be launched at the Western Regional Meeting of the NCADSS in Asheville, NC in early August.

All of these activities are in accordance with the timeframes outlined in the Program Improvement Plan.

Goal 4: Strategy 2

Goal 2: Strategy 2 recognizes the importance of a quality pool of foster and adoptive parents ready to serve the children in the foster care system. This strategy also had a workgroup known as the Diligent Recruitment & Retention Workgroup to complete the activities outlined in the Program Improvement Plan. Support from the National Resource Center on Diligent Recruitment (NRCDR) was being used to develop a state-level diligent recruitment plan that can be used on the local level to increase the number of foster and adoptive parents available to provide homes for children being served through the foster care system.

The Diligent Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Parents Workgroup conducted three statewide stakeholder meetings, which were held in October 2016 and January 2017. Over 200 attendees representing county child welfare agencies, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, youth, Guardian ad Litem staff, and other key stakeholders participated. The meetings were facilitated by the NRCDR.

Information collected during these stakeholder meetings was used by the Workgroup to determine the most appropriate plan for diligent recruitment and retention in North Carolina. This decision resulted in a statewide plan that provides concrete goals for statewide achievement, consistency, and structure, while also allowing for county-level planning for diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families. In support of this plan, a diligent recruitment and retention template was developed for use by the county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies alike. The Workgroup also formalized a data profile that county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies should use to capture data regarding the children and families served, and in turn this data is to be used to inform the diligent recruitment and retention plan. Finally, the workgroup compiled a list of resources that could benefit the agencies in their recruitment and retention efforts. Please see Appendix D for the full Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan including its three appendices.

The publication of North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment & Retention Plan meets the expectation described in the Program Improvement Plan. It was released to the counties on June 15, 2017 utilizing a Dear County Director Letter, which was sent to all county child welfare agencies, as well as private child placing agencies. The Plan and its appendices were also shared with the members of the Workgroup that created it, as well as, those who attended the stakeholder meetings.

North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan prescribes that the Adoption Indexing Team will remain available to county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies as they develop their own plans. It also details future plans for continued communication

regarding recruitment and retention efforts, which the Adoption Indexing Team will lead.

<u>Goal 4: Strategy 3</u>

The activities described in Goal 4: Strategy 3 seek to "strengthen the external stakeholders understanding of, and input into the development of, the North Carolina Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) goals, objectives, and annual updates and establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms".

This workgroup has not yet begun to meet but expects to do in the coming months. This schedule is permitted as outlined in the Program Improvement Plan.

<u>Goal 5</u>

Goal 5 focuses on enhancing North Carolina's "statewide information system through the development of a child welfare module within NC FAST to improve data quality, consistency, and access to timely statewide data".

Please refer to the separate legislative report for NC FAST for full details on those implementation activities.

County Participation and Involvement

The ten county child welfare agencies that participated in the 2015 Child and Family Services Review are Buncombe, Craven, Cumberland, Durham, Hoke, Mecklenburg, Pitt, Scotland, Wake, and Wilson.

Many of the Program Improvement Plan activities will begin in the ten counties who participated in the case review portion of the Child and Family Services Review, since 50% of the cases used to measure improvement will come from those counties.

The Program Improvement Plan Workgroups have been established with membership composition involving representatives designated from the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) leadership in Child Welfare. These county participants represent the ten pilot counties, as well as many of the remaining 90 counties for a total of 26 counties participating in Program Improvement Activities. Please see Appendix B for details of the participants on each Workgroup.

In addition to participation on the various workgroups, county child welfare staff are participating in pre and post evaluations of policy and trainings, focus groups, and piloting of strategies and activities identified in the Program Improvement Plan.

APPENDIX A

North Carolina: Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Goal 1: Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being through the establishment of clear performance expectations for practice in CPS Assessments, In-Home services and Foster Care services (Safety 1, Safety 2, Permanency 1, Permanency 2, Well-Being 1, Well-Being 2, Well-Being 3, and Staff and Provider Training)
Strategies/Activities:
1. Strengthen and clarify North Carolina's child welfare policies and practices [based on support received from the Capacity Building Center] (Items 1-18, 20)

		Status

a. Review, assess, and revise the current policies and practices including, but not limited to, frequency, consistency, quality and documentation of:
• timely initiations of child protective services
• risk assessments that inform safety plans and services
• concerted efforts to:
  o assess the needs of children, parents and foster parents
  o identify necessary services to adequately address issues relevant to agency's involvement
  o identify necessary services to achieve case goals
  o secure and provide appropriate services (including educational, physical, dental and mental health services)
• meaningful engagement of children, parents and foster parents in the development and ongoing implementation of case plans
• concerted efforts to promote and support positive relationships between children and parents
• meaningful engagement of children, parents and foster parents in the development of timely and appropriate permanency goals
• concerted efforts to achieve permanency goals and promote placement stability
• child, family, siblings and caseworker visits that reinforce the continuity and connections of family relationships
• case decision making including case closures
	Begin Date: Q1
	Completion Date: Q2
		Completed As of June 30, 2017

b. Publish the revised manuals governing child welfare policies and practices	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q3	Begins July 1, 2017
c. Assess and develop capacity for implementation of the revised policies and practices in the 10 OSRI counties	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q3	In progress
d. Implement the revised policies, practices and training in the 10 OSRI counties	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q4	Begins July 1,

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		2017
e. Incorporate lessons learned from the 10 OSRI counties and develop a plan for the statewide implementation of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q5	Not yet started
f. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q5	Not yet started
g. Execute the statewide implementation plan for the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q7	Not yet started

2. Enhance the training system to support the consistent application of the revised policies and practices [based on technical assistance received from the Capacity Building Center in consultation with National Child Welfare Workforce Institute] (Initial and Ongoing Training: Items 26 and 27)

a. Identify the key competencies necessary for the revised policies and practices and compare to current curricula for initial and ongoing training to identify gaps	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q3	Status
		In progress
b. Revise the training curricula and delivery methodology based on the gaps assessment to include the competencies necessary to ensure staff have the basic skills necessary to do their work	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	In progress
c. Strengthen the transfer of learning model for all curricula and mandate the utilization of the transfer of learning tool for county staff to ensure the social work competencies identified in the revised policies and practices are implemented consistently after staff attend training	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	In progress
d. Develop a series of "in-service" trainings (examples include scripted PowerPoints, webinars, role play scenarios, videos, etc.) to be used by county supervisors and training divisions to reinforce consistent implementation of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q5	In progress

3. Strengthen the capacity of county departments of social services to sustain the consistent application of the revised policies and practices through the development and implementation of a supervisor academy (Initial and Ongoing Training: Items 26 and 27)

a. Identify the supervisor competencies necessary to support the consistent implementation of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	In progress
b. Develop the supervisor academy based on identified competencies	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	In progress
c. Develop participant satisfaction surveys and pre-post tools to measure the supervisor's academy's impact on the supervisor competencies in the implementation of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q3	In progress

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	Begin/Completion	Status
d. Randomly select supervisors from the 10 OSRI counties to participate in the Supervisor Academy who have completed the prerequisite course "Introduction to Supervision" (n=80)	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	Completed as of May 8, 2017
e. Implement the supervisor academy beginning with the first cohort of supervisors (n=20) from the 10 OSRI counties	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q7	Begins August 1, 2017
f. Incorporate lessons learned from the first cohort and execute the revised supervisor academy for the remaining 60 supervisors from the 10 OSRI counties (3 additional cohorts of 20 participants per cohort)	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
g. Develop a plan for the statewide use of the supervisor academy using a regional approach	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q6	Not yet started
h. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the supervisor academy	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q6	Not yet started
i. Implement a statewide implementation plan regarding the supervisor academy	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
j. Use continuous quality improvement data from supervisor academy graduates to evaluate the supervisor academy	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

4. Strengthen and implement a technical assistance model for NC DSS to provide support to county staff regarding the consistent application of the revised policies, practices and training [based on technical assistance received from the Capacity Building Center] which will clarify the roles and responsibilities of both state and county staff (Safety 1, Safety 2, Permanency 1, Permanency 2, Well-Being 1, Well-Being 2, Well-Being 3)

		Status
a. Assess the current technical assistance model to support the consistent implementation of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2	Completed as of June 30, 2017
b. Revise the technical assistance model to counties based on the assessment	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q3	In progress
c. Document the revised North Carolina technical assistance to counties model	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q3	In progress
d. Implement the revised technical assistance model beginning in the 10 OSRI counties to identify additional gaps and/or areas that need to be strengthened	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q5	Begins October 1, 2017
e. Incorporate lessons learned from the 10 OSRI counties and execute the implementation plan for the technical assistance model using a regional approach to support the consistent use of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

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f. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the technical assistance model	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q7	Not yet started
g. Expand and utilize the TA Gateway to support the consistent application of the technical assistance model	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Begins October 1, 2017

5. Develop and implement a state level child welfare family leadership model which will provide family "voice" to inform state plans [CBCAP, CFSP/APSR, CAPTA], policies and practices [based on support received from FRIENDS: Family Resource Information, Education and Network Development Services - the National Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention, and the Capacity Building Center for States] (Permanency 2)

		Status
a. Review available family leadership strategies and adopt/adapt components as needed	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2	Completed as of June 30, 2017
b. Conduct a readiness assessment for the state to implement a family leadership model	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q3	In progress
c. Formalize the support mechanisms for family leadership engagement and create a North Carolina Child Welfare Family Advisory Council	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q4	In progress
d. Engage the NC Child Welfare Family Advisory Council on the Community Child Protection Team Advisory Board, policy development workgroups, and other opportunities to support practice changes that promote family engagement	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

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Goal 2: Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being through the utilization of a statewide quality assurance system which will identify the strengths and needs of the service delivery system (Quality Assurance)

Strategies/Activities:
1. Operationalize the state level quality assurance system so that areas of child welfare practice needing improvement are consistently identified and addressed

a. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the quality assurance system based on the use of the OSRI	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2	Status
		Completed as of June 30, 2017
b. Develop and record a webinar to orient all county departments of social service staff to the North Carolina process for use of the OSRI	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q3	Completed as of June 30, 2017
c. State staff will provide Quality Assurance oversight to the staff in the 10 OSRI counties who will review 113 cases (50 In-Home and 63 Foster Care each year) using the OSRI as outlined in the "North Carolina Measurement Plan"	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q12	In progress
d. State staff will review a random sample of 100 cases from the remaining 90 counties (44 In-Home and 56 Foster Care each year) using the OSRI as outlined in the "North Carolina Measurement Plan"	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q12	In progress

2. Develop the protocol and processes by which quality assurance results will be analyzed and program improvement will be implemented and evaluated statewide

a. Explore other county-administered states technical assistance/support models to inform development	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2	Completed as of June 30, 2017
b. Clarify how counties' support needs will be determined and how the state will assist counties with item-specific analysis of the case review findings and addressing any identified needs	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q5	Not yet started
c. Incorporate lessons learned from strengthening the technical assistance model (Goal 1.4) to develop business processes across NC DSS' child welfare teams	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
d. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan to disseminate technical assistance/support activities, protocols and processes	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

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Goal 3: Improve the permanency outcomes for children through collaboration with the judicial system (Permanency 1, Case Review System)

Strategies/Activities:
1. Develop with NC AOC and other judicial system partners a plan to engage local court and DSS to address issues of: notice to resource parents, timely establishment of case goals, concurrent planning, permanency and timely TPR actions (Items 4, 5, 6, 20, 23 and 24)

		Status
a. Utilize OSRI findings from OMS reports, CFSR data indicators and CIP measures to develop a "permanency performance profile"	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q3	In progress
b. Publish state, judicial district level (n=41) and county (n=100) "permanency performance profiles" for key court personnel, county staff, GAL Community, and other key stakeholders to encourage increased collaboration around improving data quality and permanency outcomes	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
c. State DSS and NC AOC staff will facilitate regularly occurring local meetings to review the "permanency performance profile" and develop specific strategies to improve performance	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
d. Include the permanency performance profiles and any strategies developed for improvement in the semi-annual progress report for the Program Improvement Plan	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q8	Will provide in the August 1, 2017 report

2. NC DSS, Indigent Defense Services, Guardian ad Litem and the Court Improvement Program will provide targeted engagement to county department of social services and court personnel in judicial districts and counties across the state to support children achieving permanency and stability in their living situations (Items 4, 5, 6, 20, 23 and 24)

		Status
a. Develop plan with NC AOC and other judicial system partners to provide technical assistance to improve permanency outcomes to counties and judicial districts not meeting performance standards	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q4	Not yet started
b. Provide consultation and support to county departments of social services and judicial districts where data indicates children are not achieving permanency as outlined in the "permanency performance profile"	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
c. Utilize opportunities for collaboration and customized training for social services staff and court personnel in judicial districts where data from the "permanency performance profile" indicates children are not achieving permanency	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q7	Not yet started
d. Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the consultation and training provided as measured by improvements in the "permanency performance profile" for at least 20 counties/8 judicial districts	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

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3. Implement a Guardianship Assistance Program for all counties in North Carolina, pending approval by the rules process, to support permanency and stability in children's living situations (Items 4, 5 and 6)

		Status
a. Propose administrative rules to govern the use of Guardianship Assistance Program funds	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2	Published as of March 1, 2017
b. Publish policy for implementation of the Guardianship Assistance Program	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q2	Completed as of March 1, 2017
c. Develop and provide training to county and court personnel on the application of the Guardianship Assistance Program	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Initially completed in December 2017; Currently continuing
d. Implement the Guardian Assistance Program statewide	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q6	Completed January 1, 2017
e. Review performance data on the Guardian Assistance Program to ensure that it is operating in accordance with rules and policies	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q8	In progress

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Goal 4: Strengthen cross-system service provision to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families (Service Array, Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention, Agency Responsiveness to the Community)

Strategies/Activities
1. Establish agreements between county departments of social services (DSSs) and Local Managing Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) to collaborate on and hold each other accountable for accessible, quality, and timely behavioral health services for child welfare-involved children as well as families involved with Child Welfare who are referred to the LME/MCOs for services (Items 29 and 30)

		Status
a. County DSSs and LME/MCOs will develop written agreements—one between each LME/MCO and the DSSs in their catchment area—which: • Establish standards for how and when DSSs should make referrals of children and adults involved with the Child Welfare system. • Include standards detailed in the LME/MCO contracts with the State Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) for timeliness of assessment and initiation of services, timeliness of utilization management decisions, and individualized service planning. • Establish protocols for how DSSs and LME/MCOs will work together to ensure access to needed services when children are placed outside the LME/MCO catchment area. • Specify how service gaps for children and families involved with Child Welfare will be jointly identified. • Include collaborative or integrated service strategies agreed to by the DSSs and the LME/MCOs. • Establish procedures for tracking the above standards and progress on agreed upon collaborative or integrated service strategies.	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q6	In progress
b. NC DHHS will report quarterly on: • Performance related to standards in the DSS-LME/MCO agreements within each LME/MCO catchment area • Measures of permanency and placement stability outcomes for the DSSs within each LME/MCO catchment area	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
c. NC DHHS staff from DSS, DMH/DD/SAS and DMA will provide consultation to county DSSs and LME/MCOs on a quarterly basis if the agreed upon performance standards to improve outcomes are not being achieved	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

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d. NC DHHS will develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the successes, challenges, and innovative strategies to improve services for children and families as identified by LME/MCO and local DSS teams for continued statewide improvement	Begin Date: Q7 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

2. Strengthen and reframe the statewide foster and adoptive parent diligent recruitment plan to support the recruitment of families who meet the needs of the children they serve and who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children served by the Foster Care program (Item 35)

		Status
a. Utilize the support from the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment to develop a more strategic state-level diligent recruitment plan that can be utilized at both the state and local level	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2	Completed as of June 15, 2017
b. Identify or develop tools that will support ongoing data analysis related to diligent recruitment planning, implementation, and monitoring (at state and county levels and for private agency partners)	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q3	In progress
c. Develop and execute a communication plan regarding the improved diligent recruitment plan to all county departments of social services and private child placing agencies	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q3	Completed as of June 15, 2017
d. State staff will implement key strategies in the improved diligent recruitment plan and provide technical assistance to counties to recruit families who reflect the diversity of children served by the foster care program and who can meet their physical, mental and behavioral needs	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	In progress
e. Provide training on, review and monitor county departments of social services' annual Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) plans to ensure they reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed in their county	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	In progress

3. Strengthen the external stakeholders understanding of, and input into the development of, the North Carolina Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) goals, objectives and annual updates and establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms (Item 31 and 32)

		Status
a. Develop a recorded presentation for external stakeholders regarding the CFSP/APSR and PIP to strengthen their understanding of the goals and objectives and opportunities for ongoing engagement	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q4	Not yet started
b. Consult with foster, adoptive, and kinship parents regarding the CFSP/APSR and PIP utilizing the "Resource Parent Portal" to identify and address any major concerns and engage them in the implementation of the provisions outlined in the CFSP	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q6	Not yet started

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c. Consult with external stakeholders regarding the CFSP/APSR and PIP in cross systems meetings (such as Court Improvement Program's Interagency collaborative, SAYSO Saturday, EBCI meeting, Child Welfare Parent Advisory Council, CCPT Advisory Council, Benchmarks FAR, FFTA, etc.) to identify and address any major concerns and engage them in the implementation of the provisions outlined in the CFSP	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
d. Engage internal and external stakeholders in quarterly "Listening Sessions" (n=6) to inform the development of the CFSP/APSR, ensure feedback loops are established, and to identify issues and concerns related to serving children and families involved in child welfare	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
e. Coordinate with Medicaid, Work First and other federal service programs as needed to address concerns from the Listening Session in the CFSP/APSR	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

Goal 5: Enhance the statewide data quality, collection and dissemination of information regarding services provided (Statewide Information System)

Strategies/Activities
1. Strengthen the statewide information system through the development of a child welfare module within NC FAST (North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology) to improve data quality, consistency, and access to timely statewide data (Item 19)

a. Conduct an analysis of the current business child welfare service functions against the existing Cúram Software to identify gaps	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q1	Status
		Completed June 2016
b. Ensure any revisions to the policies and practices regarding CPS Assessment, In-Home and Foster Care are included in the NC FAST business functions	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q4	In progress
c. Conduct sufficient testing to ensure practice is supported by the software	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q6	In progress

APPENDIX B

Program Improvement Plan Implementation Workgroups

Goal 1. Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being through the establishment of clear performance expectations for practice in CPS Assessments, In-Home Services, and Foster Care Services.		
Strategy	**Internal Members**	**External Members**
1.1 Strengthen and clarify North Carolina's child welfare policies and practices	20 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Durham County • Forsyth County • Gaston County • Lincoln County • Mecklenburg County • Moore County • Union County • Wilson County • Wake County • Capacity Building Center for States
1.2 Enhance the training system to support the consistent application of revised policies and practices	11 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Camden County • Cumberland County • Davie County • Johnston County • Wake County • Capacity Building Center for States
1.3 Strengthen the capacity of county departments of social services to sustain the consistent application of the revised policies and practices through the development and implementation of a supervisor academy	11 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Forsyth County • Guilford County • Henderson County • Northampton County • Rowan County • Methodist University • UNC School of Social Work • Capacity Building Center for States
1.4 Strengthen and implement a technical assistance model for NC DSS to provide support to county staff regarding the consistent application of the revised policies, practices, and training which will clarify the roles and responsibilities of both state and county staff	14 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Cabarrus County • Davie County • Durham County • Forsyth County • Guilford County • Mecklenburg County • Pitt County • Wake County

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1.5 Develop and implement a state level child welfare family leadership model which will provide family "voice" to inform state plans (CBCAP, CFSP/APSR, CAPTA), policies and practices	8 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	- Forsyth County - Richmond County - Wake County - Wilson County - NCSU Center for Family and Community Engagement - Capacity Building Center for States - SAYSO - Youth MOVE - North Carolina Collaborative for Children, Youth, & Families - Prevent Child Abuse – North Carolina - NC Families United - Division of Public Health - FRIENDS National Resource Center
Goal 2. Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being through the utilization of a statewide quality assurance system, which will identify the strengths, and needs of the service delivery system.		
Strategy	**Internal Members**	**External Members**
2.1 Operationalize the state level quality assurance system so that areas of child welfare practice needing improvement are consistently identified and addressed	8 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	- Buncombe County - Cumberland County - Forsyth County - Mecklenburg County - Onslow County - Rutherford County - Scotland County - Union County - Wake County
2.2 Develop the protocol and processes by which quality assurance results will be analyzed and program improvement will be implemented and evaluated statewide	14 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	- Buncombe County - Cabarrus County - Davie County - Durham County - Forsyth County - Guilford County - Mecklenburg County - Pitt County - Wake County
Note: The workgroup assigned to Strategy 1.4 is also assigned to Strategy 2.2.		
Goal 3. Improve the permanency outcomes for children through collaboration with the judicial system.		
Strategy	**Internal Members**	**External Members**
3.1 Develop with the NC AOC and other judicial system partners a plan to engage local court and DSS to address issues of: notice to resource parents, timely establishment of case goals, concurrent planning, permanency, and timely TPR actions	8 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	- Chatham County - Dare County - Forsyth County - Guilford County - Wilson County - UNC School of Social Work - Guardian ad Litem Program - NC Court Improvement Project

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Strategy	Internal Members	External Members
3.2 NC DSS, Indigent Defense Services, Guardian ad Litem, and the Court Improvement Program will provide targeted engagement to county departments of social services and court personnel in judicial districts and counties across the state to support children achieving permanency and stability in their living situations	7 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• NC Court Improvement Project • Guardian ad Litem Program • Indigent Defense Services
3.3 Implement a Guardianship Assistance Program for all counties in North Carolina, pending approval by the rules process, to support permanency and stability in children's living situations		
Note: The work outlined in Strategy 3.3 was accomplished by Child Welfare Services Section staff members and thus the workgroup was never formed.		
Goal 4. Strengthen cross-system service provision to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families.		
Strategy	**Internal Members**	**External Members**
4.1 Establish agreements between county departments of social services (DSS) and Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) to collaborate on and hold each other accountable for accessible, quality, and timely behavioral health services for child welfare-involved children as well as families involved with Child Welfare who are referred to the LME/MCOs for services	6 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• NC Institute of Medicine • Mecklenburg County • Alamance County
4.2 Strengthen and reframe the statewide foster and adoptive parent diligent recruitment plan to support the recruitment of families who meet the needs of the children they serve and who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children served by the Foster Care program	12 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Catawba County • Dare County • Gaston County • Wake County • Wilson County • Yadkin County • Children's Home Society • Methodist Home for Children • Seven Homes • National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment • Foster Parents • SAYSO • Adoptive Parents

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Strategy	Internal Members	External Members
4.3 Strengthen the external stakeholders understanding of, and input into the development of, the North Carolina Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) goals, objectives and annual updates and establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms.	3 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) Children's Services Committee Chairs • UNC School of Social Work
Goal 5. Enhance the statewide data quality, collection, and dissemination of information regarding services provided.		
Strategy	**Internal Members**	**External Members**
5.1 Strengthen the statewide information system through the development of a child welfare module within NC FAST to improve data quality, consistency, and access to timely statewide data	2 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Beaufort County • Buncombe County • Carteret County • Catawba County • Chatham County • Cleveland County • Orange County • Richmond County • Rowan County
Note: The work outlined in Strategy 5.1 was accomplished by NC FAST staff with significant support from Child Welfare Services Section staff members and county child welfare agency staff.		

APPENDIX C

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT REPORT:

PARTNERS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT CATCHMENT AREA

BACKGROUND

Ensuring timely access to behavioral health services is often critical for children, adults, and families involved with their local Department of Social Services (DSS). Getting children, adults, and families into the appropriate behavioral health services requires coordination and alignment between DSS and the local area mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse service system. A lack of alignment and processes to ensure coordination between the two systems, often leads to delays or difficulty accessing effective treatment for some of our most vulnerable residents.

The North Carolina public mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse service system has changed dramatically over the past 15 years, with local area programs that both provided and contracted for services transforming first into Local Management Entities (LMEs) and then into combined LME/Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). In the process, more than 40 local area programs have consolidated into 7 regional LME/MCOs that manage capitated Medicaid funds for Medicaid beneficiaries and manage state and local funds for uninsured and underinsured residents. In many aspects, the relationships between the LME/MCOs and each of the 100 county Departments of Social Services (DSSs) in their catchment areas have shifted and evolved to accommodate the new system through intensive work between the LME/MCOs and their partner county DSS offices. However, the interface between the DSS and the mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse treatment system can be complicated by differing organizational cultures and missions, state and federal requirements, and resource gaps.

INTRODUCTION

The Bridging Local Systems project is a collaborative effort between the NCIOM and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) with the primary goal of facilitating Regional Leadership Summits to engage county DSSs and LME/MCOs in a dialogue exploring strengths, challenges, and strategies for improving the service interface related to children and youth served by the foster care program and adults with disabilities. The NCIOM and DHHS are convening a Regional Leadership Summits in each LME/MCO region in North Carolina between the LME/MCO and the partner county DSS offices in their catchment area. A Statewide Leadership Advisory Committee has also been convened to consider shared lessons and recommendations for statewide action that arise from the regional summits.

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Bridging Local Systems:
Strategies for Behavioral Health
and Social Services Collaboration

The Partners Behavioral Health Management Regional Leadership Summit consisted of four meetings held October 3, 2016, October 24, 2016, January 6, 2017, and February 24, 2016. Summit participants included representatives from the Partners MCO and the departments of social services in Burke, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Surry, and Yadkin Counties. Representatives from the Consumer and Family Advisory Committee, DHHS, and other interested stakeholders such as the NC Child Treatment Program also attended. The Summit meetings were facilitated by Warren Ludwig, a consultant with extensive experience leading pubic child welfare and mental health services in North Carolina.

PRE-SUMMIT SUCCESSES

The hard work of establishing lines of communication and constructive relationships was already well underway between Partners and county DSSs. Rhett Melton, CEO of Partners, opened the first meeting by stating that the name Partners has meaning and that he hopes his organization will hear how they can partner better with the DSSs in their catchment area. Several DSS Directors and representatives praised Partners' efforts to collaborate. While acknowledging the loss of the relationships with the smaller local programs that preceded Partners, all said the efforts of the expanded Partners LME/MCO to reach out to them had made a real difference in the past two years.

The following activities and initiatives already in progress were specifically referenced throughout the summit:

- Partners regional directors were perceived as especially helpful and available to county DSS staff for assistance with difficult cases, even on holidays and weekends.
- Partners staff are co-located with DSS in several counties including Cleveland and Iredell.
- Regular staff meetings or roundtables between the Partners and DSS staff are held in several counties including Cleveland and Iredell.
- Trauma-informed care initiatives are being implemented jointly by DSS and Partners in Cleveland and Catawba Counties.

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

The following were identified as challenges facing Partners and the DSSs:

- Achieving the same progress working together on adult services as had been achieved for children's services. Specifically:
  - Improved communication regarding the state's 2012 settlement agreement with the United States Department of Justice and the Transition to Community Living Initiative (TCLI). How can DSS work with Partners to meet the requirements of the

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Bridging Local Systems:
Strategies for Behavioral Health
and Social Services Collaboration

- settlement without putting individuals for whom they are the legal guardian at risk if they are not ready for community living?
  - o Mental health and substance abuse services are limited for uninsured adults.
- Finding appropriate treatment placements and preventing placement disruptions:
  - o County DSSs and Partners representatives discussed the difficulty in finding emergency treatment placements for children and appropriate treatment placements for hard-to-serve children such as children with additional medical or developmental needs.
  - o Although the two systems have different criteria for evaluating placements, both agreed that placement disruptions have a human cost for the child and a financial cost for both systems.
  - o Local DSSs argued that the differences between the LME/MCO and DSS priorities and criteria for placement need to be resolved. Specifically, DSSs perceived medical necessity determinations required for Medicaid reimbursement as forcing the disruption of stable placements,[1] and slowing the accommodation of emergency placement needs.
- The opioid epidemic has exacerbated the need to make substance abuse treatment services accessible to parents in order to prevent the need to place children in foster care and to promote family reunification.
- Developing high quality shared data to objectively evaluate service needs and outcomes and to guide and measure joint efforts
- Achieving the same level of partnership and collegiality among line staff as had been achieved between the Partners and DSS leadership.

STRATEGIES & ACTION

County-specific Collaborations

The Partners leadership reached out to individual county DSSs between the first and second summit meetings to discuss ongoing and possible future collaborations customized to the needs of each county. The Partners regional directors and county DSS directors set individualized goals and objectives to work on outside the summit meetings. County-specific initiatives being discussed or pursued include:

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[1] All Medicaid-funded services must be determined by a health care professional to be medically necessary to improve or maintain the recipient's health. Screening to determine whether a beneficiary meets the criteria for a particular treatment service must be conducted before the service can be approved for Medicaid reimbursement. Furthermore, as a beneficiary's condition improves, he/she may no longer meet the criteria for a particular level of treatment service and need to step down to a less intensive treatment service.

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- Co-locating therapists to improve access to assessments
- Co-locating clinicians to do parent evaluations
- Holding an opioid summit
- Improving access to level 2 and 3 placements
- Working through some challenging placements and looking together at the utilization management and placement processes
- Re-examining guardianship for adults
- Adult services for children aging out of foster care
- A multi-agency collaborative for looking at crisis services for adults
- Co-parenting initiative
- Domestic violence services for victims
- Education and relationship building

Adult Services and Transition to Community Living Initiative

At the second summit meeting, Partners presented information on its adult service continuum and the Transition to Community Living Initiative (TCLI) program. DSS leaders expressed concern about the safety of transitioning some guardianship clients who were not ready for community living, and volunteered that they knew adults eligible for TCLI who had potential to benefit and transition successfully. Further, DSS leaders indicated that the county DSSs provide services that could help adults transition successfully that were being underutilized. Partners convened a meeting in January 2017 with interested county representatives to discuss the initiative further. Participants in the January meeting learned more about the TCLI program, the settlement requirements, and the options and resources available to individuals. Representatives also exchanged contact information and discussed ways to improve communication between Partners and the DSS adult services supervisors regarding specific issues and concerns, guardianship, individual candidates for transition, and how to ensure the appropriate community resources are in place prior to transition.

Trauma-Informed Care Initiatives

Cleveland and Catawba Counties have engaged with Partners in ambitious system-wide trauma-informed care initiatives with goals of improving the functioning of children involved with DSS, reducing placement disruptions, and reducing treatment costs. The Cleveland County initiative, Partnering for Excellence, is in collaboration with Benchmarks.[2] The Catawba County initiative is

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[2] Benchmarks is a non-profit association of provider agencies across a broad continuum of behavioral health, child welfare, education, developmental disabilities, and residential support services. Benchmarks strives to improve the quality and accountability of services to children, adults, and families in North Carolina (www.benchmarks.nc.org).

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based on Project Broadcast.[3] The Partners MCO indicated its willingness to explore trauma-informed care initiatives with other counties that could be individualized to their needs and available resources. Lincoln and Gaston Counties have initiated discussions with Partners.

Development of Shared Data

Shared data is an excellent tool for communication. Partners shared data from its system on the number of residents eligible for Medicaid in each county, the claims paid for services to children in foster care by service category for each county, and the number and stability of treatment placements in each county. Partners also shared foster care placement and placement stability data from the Jordan Institute website by county. Partners held a subgroup conference call in November 2016 with Catawba and Cleveland Counties to identify common data elements that will help the MCO and DSSs jointly assess service needs and evaluate service impact and performance. The identified indicators of interest focused on tracking issues relevant to the implementation of trauma-informed care initiatives.

SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

The summit participants including Partners and the county DSSs developed and endorsed several system recommendations for consideration by DHHS and/or the legislature:

- Develop and support a cross-system effort of prevention, treatment, and funding initiatives to effectively address the impact of parental substance use on children. The effort should include:
    - Community prevention initiatives that include social services, public health, law enforcement, and provider partners. Prevention efforts should include adopting best practices for prescribing controlled substances; addressing unresolved trauma; and providing easy and safe disposal of medications.
    - Improved availability and accessibility of addiction treatment services for parents whose children are at risk of or have entered foster care including Suboxone medication and residential programs that allow mothers with young children to live together throughout treatment.
    - Alternatives that allow parents whose children enter foster care to receive continuing Medicaid benefits to support family reunification.

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[3] Project Broadcast was a five-year grant awarded to the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau between 2011-2016. The project focused on improving the well-being of children and families through the development of a trauma-informed child welfare system in nine demonstration counties (Buncombe, Craven, Cumberland, Hoke, Pender, Pitt, Scotland, Union, and Wilson).

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- Maintain or expand Medicaid benefits. Reductions in Medicaid benefits and services are very damaging to the vulnerable children and families served by the DSSs and LME/MCOs.
- Maintain or expand state funding of behavioral health services for North Carolina citizens. Cutting state single stream funding to LME/MCOs reduces the ability of the LME/MCO to provide addiction treatment to uninsured adults, and contribute to innovative local initiatives such as trauma-informed services.
- Incorporate trauma-informed training into the training for all foster parents.

NEXT STEPS

Partners and the county DSSs expressed strong commitments to continue working together. All agencies endorsed continuing Partner's process of working individually with each county with several also voicing support for holding occasional larger group meetings to share information about initiatives and work on common issues.

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REGIONAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

Burke County Department of Social Services
Kathy Craig, *Adult and Child Welfare Services Administrator*
Jamie Pearson, *Child Protective Services Supervisor*

Catawba County Department of Social Services
John Eller, *Former Director*
Karen Harrington, *Director*
Robert Powers

Cleveland County Department of Social Services
Karen Ellis, *Director*
Alison Clark, *Social Work Program Manager, Child Permanency/Adoptions*
Lana White

Gaston County Health and Human Services
Angela Karchmer, *Social Services Division Director*
Melanie Lowrance, *Children and Family Services Administrator*
Anna Trietley, *DHHS Special Projects Manager*

Iredell County Department of Social Services
Angela Williams, *Program Administrator, Foster Care, Adoptions and Adult Services*
Lisa York, *Program Administrator, Child Protective Services*

Lincoln County Department of Social Services
Susan McCracken, *Director*
Dean Bethea, *Adult Services Program Manager*
Tony Carpenter, *Services Program Administrator*
Sandy Kennedy, *Foster Care and Adoptions Program Manager*

Surry County Department of Social Services
Kristy Preston, *Director*

Yadkin County Human Services
Kim Harrell, *Director*

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Partners Behavioral Health Management
Rhett Melton, *CEO*
Tara Conrad, *Regional Director of Community Operations*
Jeffery Eads, *Regional Director*
Mike Forrester, *Chief Clinical Officer*
Lynne Grey, *Utilization Management Manager*
Allison Gosda, *Mental Health/Substance Use Clinical Director*
Barbara Hallisey, *Associate Clinical Services Director*
Beth Lackey, *Provider Network Director*
Jeffrey Sanders
Andrew Schrag, *Regional Director*
Leah Williams, *Research Director*
Gayle Mitchell, *CFAC*
Donna Sallstrom, *CFAC*

NC Department of Health and Human Services
LaVerne Blue, *Division of Aging and Adult Services*
Heather Burkhardt, *Division of Aging and Adult Services*
Yvonne French, *LME Liaison*
Lisa Jackson, *Division of Medical Assistance*
Joynce Massey-Smith, *Division of Aging and Adult Services*
Suzanne Merrill, *Division of Aging and Adult Services*
Roslyn Thompson, *Division of Social Services*

Other Stakeholders
Mellicent Blythe, *NC Child Treatment Program*

Project Staff
Lauren Benbow, *Project Director, NCIOM*
Anne Foglia, *Project Director, NCIOM*
Warren Ludwig, *Consultant & Summit Facilitator*

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SUMMARY: REGIONAL LEADERSHIP SUMMITS

Participants at the Regional Leadership Summits thus far in the Eastpointe, Partners Behavioral Health Management, Sandhills Center, and Alliance Behavioral Healthcare catchment areas have raised concerns and proposed strategies along the following common themes:

- Collaboration & Communication
    - Establish a communication protocol and distribute contact information.
    - Eastpointe Regional DSS participants are developing a proposal to create LME/MCO Liaison positions at the DSS to facilitate communication and service coordination. Similarly, Sandhills Regional Leadership Summit participants have drafted a proposal for a Mental Health Case Manager at the DSS to evaluate needed services, facilitate referrals, and provide direct diagnostic/treatment services to children and families. Durham County DSS and Alliance already have a co-funded position.
    - Eastpointe Regional Leadership Summit participants identified a specific need for increased collaboration around discharge planning and are discussing communication and procedural strategies for future planning.
    - Partners Regional Leadership Summit participants identified Transition to Community Living Initiative (TCLI) services as a key area for increased collaboration. TCLI staff and DSS adult service managers are developing a process for working together to identify and assist transition clients.
- Education & Training
    - In order to enhance understanding among DSS, LME/MCO, and provider staff of the responsibilities and regulations of each partner and help prevent future breakdowns in communication, the participants of the Eastpointe Regional Leadership Summit have proposed developing a series of cross-training orientation webinars to educate staff on a number of common issues relating to procedure, provider management, and inter-agency communication.
    - Partners staff gave an informational presentation on the adult services available and participants of the Partners Regional Leadership Summit identified possible training topics.
    - Participants at the Partners and Sandhills Regional Leadership Summits requested additional information about how funding streams work for each agency.

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- Provider Network & Service Delivery
    - Some regions emphasized the limited resources available and a lack of providers/services in some counties. This was of particular concern to counties in the Eastpointe region. Several counties across regions discussed the benefits of having or desire to have an onsite clinicians.
    - Participating counties at both the Eastpointe and Sandhills Regional Leadership Summits expressed concerns regarding the timeliness of service delivery. Some participants from both DSS agencies and LME/MCOs shared strategies for incentivizing timely assessments and referrals in payment contracts.
    - Participants at both the Eastpointe and Alliance Regional Leadership Summits raised questions about how provider performance is monitored and concerns about the quality of providers and their contribution to placement disruptions. Sandhills Regional Leadership Summit participants proposed a set of performance-based measures for use in contracting with network providers and a biannual meeting between the Sandhills Stakeholder Continual Quality Improvement committee and DSS agencies.
- Parent Services & Eligibility
    - DSS representatives at the Partners, Eastpointe, and Sandhills Regional Leadership Summits raised the issue of eligibility of parents for Medicaid services. Adult services, including opiate addiction treatment services, can be a valuable tool for family reunification, but are particularly difficult to access for parents without Medicaid, or parents who lose Medicaid after children are removed from the home.
        - A new Medicaid waiver has been requested to allow for a period of 12 months of Medicaid eligibility for parents who lose custody of their children.
        - Sandhills Center and local DSS have agreed that parents entering the health department without Medicaid can receive intervention therapy for 6 weeks.
- Preventing Placement Disruptions
    - Although the DSS and LME/MCO systems have different approaches to evaluating placements, both can agree that placement disruptions have a human cost for the child and a financial cost for both systems.
    - Alliance Regional Leadership Summit participants have made building capacity, placing children locally, and preventing placement disruptions a focus issue of discussions. This ongoing conversation has centered around the foster care home shortage, difficulties placing children in their home counties (and the importance of doing so), and concerns about network quality as it relates to placement moves.
- Adult Services
    - Participants at the Partners, Eastpointe, and Alliance Regional Leadership Summits have raised concern about the impact of the growing adult population and the need to grow capacity and collaboration to meet the challenge.

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- Data
  - o Partners Regional Leadership Summit participants discussed the importance of data-informed action and are working to collect common data elements among counties implementing trauma-informed care services and share data between the LME/MCO and DSS.
  - o Alliance Regional Leadership Summit participants shared and discussed data from several sources and how it can be used to inform action and evaluate progress in efforts to build capacity, place children locally, and prevent placement disruptions.
- Trauma-Informed Care Practices
  - o Partners Regional Leadership Summit participants expressed a desire to implement trauma-informed services more broadly in the region. Cleveland and Catawba Counties have implemented trauma-informed care interventions and additional counties, including Lincoln and Gaston expressed interest in pursuing opportunities to implement trauma-informed care elements as well. Participants noted that these are ambitious initiatives that require engagement and commitment by both partners in addition to funding.

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North Carolina
Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan
Last Updated June 15, 2017

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Introduction and Overview

North Carolina is a state supervised, county administered child welfare system with partially privatized foster home licensing and adoption services. Prospective foster and adoptive families can be licensed as foster families and/or approved as adoptive families by either a County Department of Social Services, a licensed child placing agency, or licensed adoption agency. North Carolina does not have a dual foster care/adoption licensure process. For the purposes of this Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, the term "County Department of Social Services" includes consolidated human services agencies.

Each county in North Carolina has a different need around Diligent Recruitment and Retention. For example, some counties have very few children in foster care and even fewer who become available for adoption. They may opt to place all their children in privately licensed foster and adoptive homes and meet their diligent recruitment and retention needs through their partnership with the private agencies that serve their area. Some counties have robust diligent recruitment and retention programs for foster care, but may rely on private agency resources to meet their needs for adoptive homes. Finally, some counties have robust diligent recruitment and retention programs for foster and adoptive families. This variation in service provision across the state provides a wide variety of localized licensure and approval options for families but also creates a complex system that can be confusing and frustrating to prospective families and stakeholders.

Through this updated Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, NC intends to provide increased consistency in both messaging and service provision to prospective and current foster and adoptive families, as well as developing increased capacity to meet the needs of children and youth in care.

Values and Vision for Diligent Recruitment and Retention in North Carolina

The North Carolina child welfare system has the following core values regarding diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families:

- We value all prospective, current, and former foster and adoptive families.
- We value the belief that retention of foster and adoptive families is a customer service based activity that begins at the first contact with a prospective family and continues through post permanence support.
- We value all caregivers, including kinship caregivers, and encourage the licensure of kinship homes whenever possible, including the use of licensure waivers when appropriate.
- We value opportunities for support, engagement, and training of foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

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- We value opportunities to increase North Carolina's capacity to track and interpret data.
- We value the use of data to inform diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.

The North Carolina child welfare system has the following long term vision regarding diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families:

- Structured statewide approach to the diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.
- Efficient and easily understood process for prospective families when navigating their initial interest in being foster/adoptive families.
- Placement stability for children served by the foster care system.
- Placement of children in their home communities and school districts.
- Placement of sibling groups together.
- Diverse population of foster and adoptive families, including but not limited to ethnicity, race, language and geographic location.
- Familiarity with the North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan among public and private child welfare staff.
- Consistent engagement in technical assistance, information sharing, and collaboration around Diligent Recruitment and Retention by the NC Division of Social Services, County Departments of Social Services, and private child placing agencies.
- Statewide use of a customer service approach to diligent recruitment and retention with positive feedback from foster and adoptive families.
- Representation of foster and adoptive families and youth served by the foster care program in the recruitment and retention process.
- Statewide capacity to collect, assess, and interpret data to inform diligent recruitment and retention activities.

Roles and Responsibilities of State Division of Social Services

Three statewide, all day, stakeholder meetings were held in October 2016 and January 2017 with over 200 participants, to seek input for NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. These stakeholders included County DSS's, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, youth, Guardian Ad Litem staff, and other key stakeholders. Each attendee provided input into the development of the North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. The approach was collaborative and structured, and was facilitated by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at Adopt US Kids.

Information gained through the stakeholder meetings was used by a work group made up of the Division of Social Services, local County Departments of Social Services, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, and youth both currently and formerly in foster care to write NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.

Through this work, it was ultimately determined that the most appropriate plan for diligent recruitment and retention in NC was to have a statewide plan that provided concrete goals for

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statewide achievement, consistency, and structure, while also allowing for localized planning for diligent recruitment and retention efforts within each individual County Department of Social Services, in partnership with their private child placing agency partners.

Roles and Responsibilities of County Departments of Social Services

To best meet the needs of children in the custody of each county Department of Social Services and NC's foster and adoptive families, North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan must consider the needs, resources, and structure of each individual county. For that reason, each county is tasked with writing an annual localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan with the technical assistance and resources provided by the North Carolina Division of Social Services. The first county-specific Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will be written during state fiscal year 2017/2018 and then implemented in state fiscal year 2018/2019. Following the first year of implementation, an updated plan will be submitted by the county on an annual basis, due on September 1 each year. The county-specific plan will be comprehensive and include the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) requirements.

The Division of Social Services will continue to provide state level diligent recruitment and retention activities while also providing technical assistance, resources, and support to the County DSS's and private agencies in their specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts.

A template for a county-level Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan is provided, as well as supplemental guides and attachments that will be used to track data, provide best practice outcomes, and provide ongoing support to localized efforts. Counties will then submit their annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan to the state for review, feedback, and technical assistance as needed. Each County's Plan will be reviewed by their assigned NC Kids Consultant; a plan for technical assistance created if needed, and then written correspondence that the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan has been received and reviewed.

Each County's annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will also serve as their annual MEPA Plan. Please reference the County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template and the attached resources for additional guidance and information regarding the overlap between diligent recruitment and retention and the requirements of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act.

The County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans will be initiated during two phases throughout fiscal year 2017/2018, for implementation during fiscal year 2018/2019 with the expectation that the County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan will be updated and resubmitted to the Division of Social Services by September 1st of each year going forward.

While County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans are scheduled for formal implementation beginning July 1st, 2018, counties are highly encouraged to use any time in fiscal year 2017/2018 to begin implementation activities and data tracking once their county specific plan is complete and approved.

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Phase 1 Counties:
Alamance, Alexander, Alleghany, Avery, Bladen, Brunswick, Burke, Caldwell, Carteret, Catawba, Chowan, Cleveland, Columbus, Currituck, Davidson, Davie, Duplin, Edgecombe, Gaston, Gates, Granville, Halifax, Haywood, Hertford, Iredell, Johnston, Lee, Macon, Madison, Martin, McDowell, Mitchell, Montgomery, Moore, Nash, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Polk, Randolph, Robeson, Rutherford, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Warren, Wayne, Transylvania, Tyrell, Union, Vance, Yancey, and Yadkin

County DRR Plan due to NC Kids Consultant on February 1, 2018, effective July 1, 2018

Phase 2 Counties:

Anson, Ashe, Beaufort, Bertie, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Camden, Caswell, Chatham, Cherokee, Clay, Craven, Cumberland, Dare, Durham, Forsyth, Franklin, Graham, Greene, Guilford, Harnett, Henderson, Hoke, Hyde, Jackson, Jones, Lenoir, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, New Hanover, Onslow, Orange, Pamlico, Pender, Pitt, Richmond, Rockingham, Rowan, Sampson, Scotland, Wake, Washington, Watauga, Wilkes, and Wilson

County DRR Plan due to NC Kids Consultant on May 1, 2018, effective July 1, 2018

NC Kids Consultant and County Assignments

Alamance through Cumberland Counties	Currituck through Jackson Counties
Shirley Williams, Program Consultant	Britt Cloudsdale, Program Consultant
Shirley.Williams@dhhs.nc.gov	Britt.Cloudsdale@dhhs.nc.gov
(919)527-6404	(919)527-6358
Johnston through Polk Counties	Randolph through Yancey Counties
Kerri Shiflett, Program Consultant	Mary Mackins, Program Consultant
Kerri.Shiflett@dhhs.nc.gov	Mary.Mackins@dhhs.nc.gov
(919)527-6366	(919)527-6287

Roles and Responsibilities of Private Agencies

Private child placing agencies are a vital aspect of NC's child welfare system. Each Department of Social Services is highly encouraged to collaborate with the private child placing agencies that serve children and families in their counties in the writing of their Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. Many private child placing agencies engage in the development of their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan on a regular basis. Private child placing agencies are encouraged to share these detailed plans with the NC Division of Social Services and the counties they serve to promote collaboration and consistency in practice. Private child placing agencies may utilize the templates provided to inform their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. At a minimum, private child placing agencies who place children in the custody of a County Department of Social Services in their licensed foster homes are required to report data to the NC Division of Social Services at the end of each fiscal year using the attached Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B).

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State Level Data Regarding North Carolina's Children in Foster Care and Foster and Adoptive Families

In addition to county Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies submitting a completed data profile (Appendix B) annually, the North Carolina Division of Social Services provides the following data summary of the statewide characteristics of children in foster care, children legally free for adoption, as well as comparable data regarding licensed foster homes. The table below provides that information in this initial report and will be updated annually at the time of submission of the statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan through the Annual Progress and Services Report.

For YTD SFY 2016-2017 CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN FOSTER CARE	N=10935	%	Data Source/As of
Female	5291	48.39	CSDW
Male	5644	51.61	April 2017 data
Caucasian	5556	50.81	month
African American	3370	30.82	Run 5/24/17
Hispanic	886	8.10	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	229	2.09	
Asian	22	0.20	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	19	0.17	
Bi-racial	660	6.04	
Other	74	0.68	
Unable to Determine	119	1.09	
Ages 0-5	4330	39.62	
Ages 6-10	2710	24.80	
Ages 11-14	1773	16.22	
Ages 15-17	1761	16.11	
Ages 18-21	355	3.25	
ICWA-Eligible	41	0.37	

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For YTD FY 2016-2017 CHILDREN WHO EXITED FOSTER CARE	N= 4785	%	Data Source/As of
Female	2321	48.51	CSDW
Male	2464	51.49	April 2017 data
Caucasian	2404	50.24	month
African American	1415	29.57	Run 5/24/17
Hispanic	388	8.11	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	163	3.41	
Asian	21	0.44	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	10	0.21	
Bi-racial	287	6.00	
Other	51	1.07	
Unable to Determine	44	0.92	
Ages 0-5	1883	39.35	
Ages 6-10	1207	25.22	
Ages 11-14	636	13.29	
Ages 15-17	488	10.20	
Ages 18-21	571	11.93	
ICWA-Eligible	19	0.40	
Reasons for Exit	**N=4785**	**%**	
Reunification with Parents or Primary Caretakers	1405	29.36	
Guardianship with a Relative	708	14.80	
Adoption	1153	24.10	
Guardianship with Court-Approved Caretaker	153	3.20	
Custody with Non-Removal Parent or Relative	549	11.47	
Custody with Other Court-Approved Caretaker	123	2.57	
Emancipation	461	9.63	
Transfer to Another Agency	69	1.44	
Runaway	7	0.15	
Death of Child	7	0.15	
ICPC	4	0.08	
Authority Revoked for Reasons Other than Above	108	2.26	
Missing Field (blank)	38	0.79	

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	N	%	Data Source/As of
TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION	**1227** **(735 also coded as Free for Adoption as of 5/24/17)**		CSDW April 2017 data month Run 5/24/17
CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION *AND IN NEED OF AN ADOPTIVE HOME	**N**	**%**	
Female	431	43.06	
Male	570	56.94	
Caucasian	521	52.05	
African American	295	29.47	
Hispanic	76	7.59	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	20	2.00	
Asian	n/a	n/a	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.10	
Bi-racial	76	7.59	
Other	7	0.70	
Unable to Determine	5	0.50	
Ages 0-5	285	28.47	
Ages 6-10	321	32.07	
Ages 11-14	235	23.48	
Ages 15-17	160	15.98	
ICWA Eligible	9	0.90	
Total	**1001**	**100%**	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING ACTIVELY RECRUITED FOR BY NC (NC's Adoption Exchange and Photolisting)	**Legally Free: 237** **Legal Risk: 53** **Hold: 101**		AIMS 6/2/2017

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TOTAL NUMBER OF LICENSED BEDS	N	%	Data Source/As of
Foster Care (privately licensed)	1297	12.57	XPTR 2/28/17
Special Program (privately licensed)	142	1.38	
Therapeutic Homes (privately licensed)	2646	25.64	
Foster Care (county licensed)	6235	60.42	XPTR 5/17/17
Total	**10320**	**100%**	

RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FOSTER FAMILIES (Private Agency Supervised Households)	N	%	Exported from SESSIONS 5/30/17
Caucasian	1587	40.11	
African American	2295	58.00	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	38	0.96	
Asian	9	0.23	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.05	
Multi-racial	17	0.43	
Unable to Determine	9	0.23	
Total	**3957**	**100%**	
Hispanic or Latino	129	3.26	
Not Hispanic or Latino	3828	96.74	

RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSED FOSTER FAMILIES (DSS Supervised Households)	N	%	Exported from SESSIONS 6/1/2017
Caucasian	1921	72.71	
African American	668	25.28	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	27	1.02	
Asian	8	0.30	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	0.11	
Multi-racial	11	0.42	
Unable to Determine	4	0.15	
Total	**2642**	**100%**	
Hispanic or Latino	100	3.79	
Not Hispanic or Latino	2541	96.18	
Unknown	1	0.04	

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Statewide Goals and Strategies for Diligent Recruitment and Retention

All statewide and localized diligent recruitment and retention activities in NC should support the following goals and strategies. The primary owner of each strategy is listed in parentheses after each strategy.

Goal 1: Recruit and maintain a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program.

o Strategy 1 – Provide a template for each county to write their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (NC Division of Social Services)
o Strategy 2 – Development and implementation of localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (County Departments of Social Services and Private Agencies)
o Strategy 3 – Review and approve each County's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan (NC Division of Social Services)
o Strategy 4 – Provide technical assistance, education, and resources specific to diligent recruitment and retention and MEPA compliance to County and private agency partners on an individual, regional, and statewide basis as needed (NC Division of Social Services)

o Measures of success:

   ▪ Each County Department of Social Services will write and implement an annual Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan
   ▪ Data regarding race/ethnicity of children in foster care and the pool of licensed foster families are aligned
   ▪ Increase in the number of new applications submitted to licensing authority who reflect the ethnicity and race of the children served by the foster care program

Goal 2: State, counties, and private child placing agencies have the capacity and ability to use data to inform and monitor diligent recruitment and retention efforts throughout North Carolina

o Strategy 1 – Provide a data profile (Appendix B) for quarterly and annual reporting of key state identified diligent recruitment and retention measures, with an option for additional county specific measures. to be reported based on individual county Diligent Recruitment and Retention plan (NC Division of Social Services)
o Strategy 2 – County Departments of Social Services and licensed private foster care agencies update data profile measures quarterly, and submit to NC Division of Social Services annually (County Departments of Social Services and private agencies)
o Strategy 3 – Publish annual statewide cumulative data profile (NC Division of Social Services)
o Strategy 4 – Provide technical assistance to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies regarding access, tracking, and interpretation of data to inform their diligent recruitment and retention efforts (NC Division of Social Services)

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- o Strategy 5 – Build capacity to track and report demographic characteristics of licensed foster homes at all levels of service provision (NC Division of Social Services, county Departments of Social Services, private agencies)

- o Measures of success:
  - Annual publication of diligent recruitment and retention data
  - An increase in the capacity of County Departments of Social Services to determine realistic targets for diligent recruitment and retention based on data
  - Creation of state level reports regarding licensed foster families' race and ethnicity

Goal 3: Excellent customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families

- o Strategy 1 – Update NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Website – adoptnckids.org (NC Division of Social Services)
- o Strategy 2 – Create a decision tree accessible on the adoptnckids.org website for prospective foster and adoptive families to use to navigate making an informed decision in selecting prospective child placing agencies that meet their needs (NC Division of Social Services)
- o Strategy 3 – Develop and disseminate a communication plan to County Departments of Social Services and private agencies regarding the updated website and decision tree features with suggestions for increased collaboration among agencies (NC Division of Social Services)
- o Strategy 4 – Assess each agency's customer service culture and identify any needed changes in the approach to customer service in each county's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans (County Departments of Social Services)
- o Strategy 5 – Provide resources, tools, and technical assistance to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies specific to evaluating and improving customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster and adoptive families (NC Division of Social Services)

- o Measures of success:
  - The completed update of the adoptnckids.org website
  - The completed decision tree available on adoptnckids.org website
  - Decrease in calls to the NC Kids statewide hotline about problems with the inquiry, response, and licensing process. A baseline for comparison will be established beginning in June 2017
  - Develop the capacity to track the time from initial inquiry to licensure for foster families on a statewide level, and work to decrease the time from initial inquiry to licensure for foster families

Goal 4: Excellent customer service provided to internal and external community partners/stakeholders

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- o Strategy 1 – Provide diligent recruitment and retention resource list, sample documents, and appendices to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies (NC Division of Social Services)
- o Strategy 2 – Implement quarterly diligent recruitment and retention calls to increase communication, information sharing, and collaboration between the North Carolina Division of Social Services, local county Departments of Social Services, private child placing agencies, and community stakeholders (NC Division of Social Services)
- o Strategy 3 – Ongoing use of webinars and state publications to provide topic specific resources, training, and information sharing regarding diligent recruitment and retention (NC Division of Social Services)

- o Measures of success:
  - ▪ The number of events, agencies, and individuals participating in quarterly diligent recruitment calls
  - ▪ The number of requests for and topics of technical assistance made to the Division of Social Services around Diligent Recruitment and Retention

Use of Data and Data Systems to Build Statewide Capacity

Throughout the development process for this Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, it was recognized that County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies have a wide variation in capacity to track, maintain, and interpret diligent recruitment and retention data. Each agency is encouraged to begin building their data capacity through their first Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. Acknowledging a lack of use of data around recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families, and taking the first steps to begin to build that capacity is acceptable and encouraged. Technical assistance regarding the building of data capacity is available through the North Carolina Division of Social Services.

To make data driven decisions regarding diligent recruitment and retention, each County Department of Social Services and private child placing agency that licenses foster families will complete a quarterly update to the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B). The completed profile will be provided to the NC Division of Social Services by August 1st of the next fiscal year. Comprehensive statewide data will then be issued on an annual basis to assist in informing ongoing localized and statewide diligent recruitment and retention efforts.

Private Child Placing Agencies are required to complete the foster family specific section of the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B) on a quarterly basis and submit it to the Division of Social Services by August 1st for the previous fiscal year.

State Level Diligent Recruitment and Retention Activities

NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network

The Division of Social Services' NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network is North Carolina's Statewide Diligent Recruitment Entity and Adoption Exchange Program. NC Kids manages the following elements of diligent recruitment and retention:

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- State level first point of contact for individuals interested in becoming foster or adoptive families via a general email address and telephone hotline as direct points of intake, talking families through the general process of becoming a foster and/or adoptive family in North Carolina.
- Manage and facilitate North Carolina's adoption exchange program, providing targeted child specific recruitment of adoptive homes through online photo listing.
- Conduct preliminary review of approved adoptive family's Preplacement Assessment for initial matching before final matching determination is made by the County Department of Social Services.
- Manage and facilitate the North Carolina Heart Gallery, a traveling photography exhibit of children legally free for adoption and in need of adoptive families.
- Provide diligent recruitment tools for use at the state level or by County and private agencies such as the NC Kids website, general brochures, fliers, pens, key chains, magnets, and posters.
- Provide technical assistance and support to the County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies regarding general, targeted, and child specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts.
- Provide monitoring and technical assistance support for each county's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan on an annual basis.
- Publish North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan data on an annual basis.

Foster Home Licensing

The Division of Social Services serves as North Carolina's licensing authority for the licensure of all North Carolina's foster homes. Public and private child placing agencies recommend foster homes for licensure. All foster home license actions are put through a rigorous quality assurance review before being approved or denied by the Division of Social Services. The Regulatory and Licensing Team also provides technical assistance and training to County Departments of Social Services and private child placing agencies regarding the training and licensure process for foster families.

Treat Them Like Gold and Latino Recruitment and Retention Guide.

The North Carolina Division of Social Services' recruitment guide *Treat Them Like Gold* is a diligent recruitment guide that provides suggested practices, resources, and general guidance on how to effectively recruit and retain foster and adoptive families in NC. A companion guide that specifically focuses on recruitment and partnering with Spanish speaking foster and adoptive families is available.

Statewide Diligent Recruitment Calls and Trainings

Through the development process for the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, it was recognized that there is a significant need for regular, ongoing communication and collaboration between agencies on the topic of diligent recruitment and retention. The NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network will initiate standing quarterly calls regarding diligent recruitment and retention beginning in fiscal year 2017/2018.

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The Division of Social Services will also facilitate recorded webinars as needed on a variety of diligent recruitment and retention topics. These topics will be determined through assessment of patterns in technical assistance needs, topics that arise during quarterly calls, and requests by both County DSS's and private child placing agencies.

Fostering Perspectives
(www.fosteringperspectives.org), is a free newsletter produced by the NC Division of Social Services in partnership the UNC School of Social Work. It is published twice a year and the intended audience is foster, adoptive, kinship, and therapeutic families as well as child welfare professionals in North Carolina. Each issue furthers diligent recruitment efforts by regularly featuring waiting children and offering information that supports the educational needs of existing foster families.

FosteringNC.org

Fosteringnc.org is a learning site for North Carolina's foster and adoptive families and kinship caregivers. This site features on-demand courses, webinars, videos, resources, and answers to foster, adoptive, and kinship caregiver's frequently asked questions. The Division of Social Services, in partnership with the University of NC Chapel Hill, NC State University, and Independent Living Resources, will maintain and update the learning site with additional resources and trainings on a regular basis.

Online Orientation for Prospective Foster Families

North Carolina's online, on-demand, self-paced orientation for NC foster parents provides an over view of foster care in North Carolina. Public and private child-placing agencies are required to make completion of this online orientation mandatory for all foster families.

NC's Permanency Innovation Initiative (PII)

PII is an effort launched in 2013 by NC's General Assembly. Under this state-sponsored initiative a private child-placing agency, Children's Home Society of North Carolina (CHS), provides services to improve permanency outcomes for children living in foster care, to improve engagement with biological relatives, and to reduce costs associated with maintaining children in foster care. Since July 1, 2015 CHS has achieved positive outcomes for children and families through Family Finding, child specific adoption recruitment, and permanency related training.

Adoption Promotion Program Fund

The Adoption Promotion Program Fund is utilized to enhance and expand adoption programs, to secure permanent homes for hard to place children, and to encourage partnerships between public and private agencies to achieve permanency for children in a timely manner by providing financial incentives for the adoption of special needs children. Allowable expenditures of the funds received include direct provision or purchase by contract of general and child specific adoption recruitment, retention, and promotion services.

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Post Adoption Support Services (PASS)

Post Adoption Support Services (PASS) are intended to ensure the permanency and well-being of adoptees and their families. PASS are voluntary services available to all adoptees in NC, regardless of age of the adoptee or the type of adoption. PASS also provide education, outreach, and support to families at risk of or experiencing an illegal custody transfer.

State-Funded Supplement for Children Exposed to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

North Carolina provides supplemental board payments for children served by the foster care program and supplemental adoption assistance payments for children who have been adopted that were diagnosed as having been prenatally exposed to HIV or who have developed symptoms of HIV/AIDS in foster care. Supplemental payments for HIV positive children may be made to foster/adoptive families, group homes, or child caring institutions licensed by NC DSS.

Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund (SCAIF)

The NC Appropriations Act annually authorizes Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding for a Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund. The SSBG funding is then combined with local and state matching funds to make adoption a possibility for children with special health care needs who would otherwise remain in the foster care system because of the financial loss to adoptive families.

Foster Care to 21

NC Session Law 2015-241 (2015 Appropriations Act) was passed to include "Fostering Success/Extend Foster Care to 21 Years of Age." The North Carolina Division of Social Services worked with collaborative partners and the General Assembly to afford the opportunity for youth to continue foster care services from 18 to 21 years of age if the individual meets the requirements for the program. This law also provides the availability of adoption assistance payments to continue until the youth reaches the age of 21 if the youth was adopted at 16 or 17 years of age. Implementation of this initiative began on January 1, 2017. These developments around Foster Care 18 to 21 will enhance North Carolina's capacity to recruit, retain, and support families for children and youth, specifically youth ages 16 and 17 in need of foster and adoptive homes.

Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)

NC Session Law 2015-241 (2015 Appropriations Act) was passed to include a Guardianship Assistance Program. The purpose of GAP is to make funds available for the financial support of youth ages 14 to 18 who are determined to be in a permanent family setting, eligible for legal guardianship, and otherwise unlikely to obtain permanency. GAP reimburses room and board at the same rate as North Carolina's foster care board rates. A child eligible for GAP must be living in a licensed foster home for six months. The GAP provides an additional mechanism to support permanency through guardianship for specific youth and their licensed caregivers.

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Foster Parent Liability Insurance

Foster parent liability insurance became available to North Carolina foster families on May 1, 2016. Foster families can use this optional insurance, if they choose to purchase it, to protect their assets against litigation in the event a child in their care is hurt.

Appendices

Appendix A
County Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template

Appendix B
Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile

Appendix C
Diligent Recruitment and Retention Resource List

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North Carolina
Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

Appendix A:
County/Agency Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template

County/Agency Name:_____

Effective July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

The North Carolina child welfare system has the following core beliefs regarding diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents:

- We value all prospective, current, and former foster and adoptive families.
- We value the belief that retention of foster and adoptive families is a customer service based activity that begins at the first contact with a prospective family and continues through post permanence support.
- We value all caregivers, including kinship caregivers, and encourage the licensure of kinship homes whenever possible, including the use of licensure waivers when appropriate.
- We value opportunities for support, engagement, and training of foster, adoptive, and kinship families.
- We value opportunities to increase North Carolina's capacity to track and interpret data.
- We value the use of data to inform diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families.

As set out by the statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, the state of North Carolina identifies the following goals for diligent recruitment and retention within the child welfare system:

1) Recruit and maintain a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program.
2) State, counties, and private child placing agencies have the capacity and ability to use data to inform and monitor diligent recruitment and retention efforts throughout North Carolina.
3) Excellent customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families.
4) Excellent customer service provided to internal and external community partners/stakeholders.

North Carolina is a beautifully diverse state, with 100 counties that each have unique populations, strengths, needs, resources, and cultures. In recognizing and valuing the need for localization of diligent recruitment and retention efforts, each county child welfare agency will submit its own plan for the diligent recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families to meet the needs of the children in their care. By design, each plan will be different, and will be based on the expertise of the communities it aims to serve. Private child-placing agencies are welcome and encouraged to use this template, in partnership with the counties they serve, to develop their own Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.

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The diligent recruitment and retention plan for all county child welfare agencies must be submitted to the county's NC Kids Program Consultant by the following dates:

Phase 1 Counties: Due February 1, 2018

Phase 2 Counties: Due May 1, 2018

All plans will be effective from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. The NC Kids Consultant will review the completed plan, and is available for technical assistance to assist the county in the plan's development and implementation. Counties must also complete the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile (Appendix B). Counties are expected to capture this data at the beginning of each quarter, and submit the completed Data Profile to their NC Kids Consultant by September 1, 2019.

NC Kids Program County Assignments (current as of June 15, 2017)

Alamance through Cumberland
Shirley Williams
919-527-6404
shirley.williams@dhhs.nc.gov

Currituck through Jackson
Britt Cloudsdale
919-527-6358
britt.cloudsdale@dhhs.nc.gov

Johnston through Polk
Kerri Shiflett
919-527-6366
Kerri.shiflett@dhhs.nc.gov

Randolph through Yancey
Mary Mackins
919-527-6287
mary.mackins@dhhs.nc.gov

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Part 1: Information Gathering

Agencies are encouraged to utilize the Developing Recruitment Plans Toolkit developed by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, available at http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/developing-recruitment-plans-toolkit.pdf

1) **Describe your county's child welfare system and structure.** Is your agency a consolidated human service agency or an independent social service agency? How many employees work in child welfare services at your agency? Are the child welfare teams blended (responsible for more than one service area) or do you have dedicated staff per service area (assessments, in-home, foster care, adoption, etc.)? Which staff, team or external agency has primary responsibility for the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents?

2) **Describe the training model(s) that your agency provides to prospective foster, adoptive, and kinship families (i.e. TIPS-MAPP, MAPP-GPS, PRIDE, Deciding Together, etc.) and its structure.** How often are orientation sessions and trainings offered? How do you structure your curriculum? How many staff are certified trainers? What ongoing training is available to foster, adoptive, and kinships families through your agency or community partners?

3) **Describe the licensure/approval process at your agency.** How quickly do families typically move from initial inquiry to licensure? Does your agency gather data on when and how often families drop out of the licensure process? How frequently and under what circumstances do you refer to other agencies for licensure/approval rather than work with them directly?

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4) **Describe your agency's current process for data collection.** How does your agency gather and maintain data on the characteristics of children in care? How does your agency gather and maintain data on the characteristics of available families/beds? Do you feel like your data gathering techniques are effective? How does your agency use the data collected to inform diligent recruitment and retention?

5) **Describe any community partnerships that exist in your county and how they impact your recruitment and retention efforts.** How effective do you feel like these relationships are? What aspects of these partnerships are strongest, and what aspects do partners find challenging? Is data shared between agencies?

6) **Describe standards, practices, or conditions in your agency related to the recruitment, retention, or approval of families that may be unique or nuanced.** (For example, does your agency require that all kinship care providers be licensed? Do you require all adoptive families to provide foster care before adopting?)

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7) **Describe specific strategies that your agency is currently using to recruit and/or retain foster, adoptive, and kinship families.** (For example – media campaigns, mailers, community events, etc.) **Which of these strategies do you feel are the most effective, and how do you know?**

8) **What are barriers to effective diligent recruitment in your community?** (For example - financial, staff shortages, linguistic, geographic, etc.)

9) **Describe the population(s) of children your agency currently has the highest need for resource families?** (For example – age, race, sibling groups, disabilities, ethnicities, etc.) **Can you provide data to demonstrate this need?**

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10) **The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) has the following requirements:**

- Prohibits State agencies and other entities that receive Federal funding and were involved in foster care or adoption placements from delaying, denying, or otherwise discriminating when making a foster care or adoption placement decision on the basis of the parent or child's race, color, or national origin
- Prohibits State agencies and other entities that received Federal funds and were involved in foster care or adoption placements from categorically denying any person the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent solely on the basis of race, color, or national origin of the parent or the child
- Requires States to develop plans for the recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom families are needed
- Allows an agency or entity to consider the cultural, ethnic, or racial background of a child and the capacity of an adoptive or foster parent to meet the needs of a child with that background when making a placement
- Does not effect the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978
- Makes failure to comply with MEPA a violation of title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Explain how your agency meets these requirements. Explain how your agency safeguards against such discrimination, what procedures are in place when a staff person may believe discrimination may be a factor in decisions, and how your agency meets these requirements.

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Part 2: Plan Development Process

Diligent Recruitment and Retention is a community activity and each agency is encouraged to develop a county DRR plan with the input of your community's stakeholders (such as private child placing agencies, youth in care, foster and adoptive parents, kinship providers, faith community leaders, volunteers, GAL staff and volunteers, etc.).

1) **Who was involved in the development of this plan?** Were any current or former resource parents, kinship providers, and/or foster youth involved with the plan's development?

Name	Role	Agency

2) **How was this plan developed?** (Describe process, meetings held, input gathered, data collection)

3) **How were strategies identified?**

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4) How will capacity be built to measure outcomes and success?

5) What Technical Assistance (TA) have you sought from the State in the formulation of this plan? What areas of TA are most needed by your agency related to diligent recruitment and retention of resource parents?

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Part 3: Plan and Measurement

Goal 1: Recruit and maintain a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program.

Strategies	Activities	Current, Expanded, or New Activity+	Type of Recruitment*	Potential Outcomes/Measures	Timeline	Responsible Parties

+Identify if this activity is already taking place at your agency (Current), is an expansion of an existing activity (Expanded), or is a new activity not already in place (New).

* Type of Recruitment: General, Targeted, Child-Specific, Retention (Select all that apply)

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Goal 2: State, counties, and private child placing agencies have the capacity and ability to use data to inform and monitor diligent recruitment and retention efforts throughout North Carolina.

Strategies	Activities	Current, Expanded, or New Activity	Type of Recruitment*	Potential Outcomes/Measures	Timeline	Responsible Parties

+Identify if this activity is already taking place at your agency (Current), is an expansion of an existing activity (Expanded), or is a new activity not already in place (New)

* Type of Recruitment: General, Targeted, Child-Specific, Retention

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Goal 3: <u>Excellent customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families.</u>

Strategies	Activities	Current, Expanded, or New Activity	Type of Recruitment*	Potential Outcomes/Measures	Timeline	Responsible Parties

+Identify if this activity is already taking place at your agency (Current), is an expansion of an existing activity (Expanded), or is a new activity not already in place (New)

* Type of Recruitment: General, Targeted, Child-Specific, Retention

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Goal 4: <u>Excellent customer service provided to internal and external community partners/stakeholders.</u>

Strategies	Activities	Current, Expanded, or New Activity	Type of Recruitment*	Potential Outcomes/Measures	Timeline	Responsible Parties

+Identify if this activity is already taking place at your agency (Current), is an expansion of an existing activity (Expanded), or is a new activity not already in place (New)

* Type of Recruitment: General, Targeted, Child-Specific, Retention

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Goal 5 (Optional): _____

Strategies	Activities	Current, Expanded, or New Activity	Type of Recruitment*	Potential Outcomes/Measures	Timeline	Responsible Parties

+Identify if this activity is already taking place at your agency (Current), is an expansion of an existing activity (Expanded), or is a new activity not already in place (New)

* Type of Recruitment: General, Targeted, Child-Specific, Retention

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DILIGENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DATA PROFILE
COUNTY / AGENCY: _____ SFY: _____

REQUIRED DATA POINTS	CURRENT NUMBERS AS OF _____	QUARTER ONE 7/1 - 9/30	QUARTER TWO 10/1 - 12/30	QUARTER THREE 1/1 - 3/30	QUARTER FOUR 4/1 - 6/30	TOTAL # FOR YEAR	NARRATIVE
Total number of children in care							
Characteristics of children in care							
Caucasian							
African American							
American Indian or Alaskan Native							
Asian							
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander							
Other							
Ages 0-5							
Ages 6-12							
Ages 13-17							
Ages 18 and over							
Number of children where ICWA applies							
Characteristics of families available							
Caucasian							
African American							
American Indian or Alaskan Native							
Asian							
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander							
Other							
Average length of time from initial inquiry to licensure.							
Total number of licensed beds							
Total number of true available beds (Explain discrepancies in numbers in narrative section. For example, why are available beds not being used - ie: adoptive only, respite only, concerns re the family, etc.)							
Number of children placed out of county and/or with outside agency due to lack of available families. (Give examples in narrative section.)						0	
Number of placement disruptions or placement changes. (Explain reasons for disruptions and placement changes in narrative section.)						0	

OPTIONAL DATA POINTS TO TRACK (SEE EXAMPLES)							

Example Optional Data Points to Track:
Track varying level of needs of children in care related to types of homes needed.
Number of families who were previously licensed with another agency, and why?

Number of MAPP Trainings completed each quarter

Families licensed more than "x" number of years.
Number of In-Service trainings provided to foster/adoptive parents per quarter.
Number LGBTQ friendly foster homes available.
Number of sibling groups placed together.

Number of sibling groups placed separately due to lack of homes available to accommodate sibling groups.

APPENDIX H

North Carolina
Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

Appendix C:
Diligent Recruitment and Retention Resource Guide

Foreword

Three statewide, all day, stakeholder meetings were held in October 2016 and January 2017 with over 200 participants, to seek input for NC's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. These stakeholders included County DSS's, private child placing agencies, foster and adoptive families, youth, Guardian Ad Litem staff, and other key stakeholders. Each attendee provided input into the development of the North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan. The approach was collaborative and structured, and was facilitated by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at Adopt US Kids.

A consistent need identified at these stakeholder meetings was a centralized resource guide to support agencies in their recruitment and retention efforts. This appendix is such a guide. The NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network, at the NC Division of Social Services, maintains this resource guide as one portion of the technical assistance the team provides to counties and partner agencies. These resources are not all-inclusive, and their appearance in this resource guide does not constitute an endorsement by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

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Resource Guide Table of Contents

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External Resource Links

General Resources

- "What Can I and My Agency Do to Improve Recruitment" – NC Practice Notes:
  https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/youth-development/blueprint-series/
- Recruiting and Retaining Resource Families – Child Welfare Information Gateway:
  https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/recruiting/
- National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (NRC-DR):
  http://www.nrcdr.org/
- A Community Outreach Handbook for Recruiting Foster Parents – Child Welfare League of America
  http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/recruiting-foster-parents.pdf
- Recruitment, Training, and Support: The Essential Tools of Foster Care – The Annie E. Casey Foundation
  http://www.aecf.org/resources/recruitment-training-and-support-the-essential-tools-of-foster-care-1/
- Getting More Parents for Children from Your Recruitment Efforts – Adopt US Kids
  http://www.adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/practitioners-guide-getting-more-parents-from-your-recruitment-efforts.pdf

Customer Service

- *Treat Them Like Gold* – NC DHHS Publication:
  https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/publications/docs/Partnering_with_Resource_Families.pdf
- Using Customer Service Concepts to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Practices – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/using-customer-service-concepts-to-enhance-recuitment-and-retention-practices.pdf
- Phone Interactions with Families – NRC-DR:
- http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/five-things-you-can-do-customer-service-phone-interaction.pdf

Data-Driven Recruitment

- Data-Driven Recruitment – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/data-driven-recruitment-110514.pdf
- Overview of Market Segmentation – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/overview-of-market-segmentation.pdf
- Speaking the Same Language – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/speaking-the-same-language-110614.pdf
- NC Child Welfare Program Data – Published by the Jordan Institute (UNC-CH School of Social Work)
  http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/
- Developing Recruitment Plans Toolkit – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/developing-recruitment-plans-toolkit.pdf

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Interjurisdictional Placements

- "Tips and Strategies for Successful Out of State Adoptive Placements" – NC DHHS and the Jordan Institute for Families (NC Kids and ICPC):
  Webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWWdOnFaiII&feature=youtu.be
  Handouts: http://fcrp.unc.edu/pdfs/interstate.pdf
- Key Elements and Strategies for Effective Interjurisdictional Work – NRC-DR
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/key-elements-and-strategies-for-effective-interjurisdictional-work.pdf

Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)

- "Guide to the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act" – NC DHHS
  https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/info/olm/manuals/dss/csm-50/man/appendixp.pdf
- Understanding and Complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994" – US DHHS, Administration for Children and Families
  https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/mepa_powerpoint.pdf

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

- NC Indian Child Welfare Program – NC DHHS (Contains contact info for tribal enrollment representatives for all NC tribes and bands of American Indians)
  https://ncadmin.nc.gov/citizens/american-indians/american-indian-initiatives/indian-child%20welfare-program
- Full text of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) – Tribal Law and Policy Institute
  http://www.tribal-institute.org/lists/chapter21_icwa.htm
- Commission of Indian Affairs
  https://ncadmin.nc.gov/about-doa/divisions/commission-of-indian-affairs
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
  https://ebci.com/
- "A Guide to Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act" – National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)
  http://www.nicwa.org/Indian_Child_Welfare_Act/documents/Guide%20to%20ICWA%20Compliance.pdf
- For assistance with meeting the needs of Native American resource families, you may contact the Commission of Indian Affairs
  Lori McClain – 919-807-4440

Recruiting Specific Populations

- Moving Toward Cultural Competence – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/moving-toward-cultural-competence.pdf
- Working With African American Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Families – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/working-with-african-american-families.pdf
- Recruiting Families for Native American Children – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/recruiting-families-for-native-american-children.pdf

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- [Nuestra Familia, Nuestra Cultura: Promoting and Supporting Latino Families – NRC-DR](http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/nuestra-familia-nuestra-cultura.pdf)
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/nuestra-familia-nuestra-cultura.pdf
- [Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Preferred-Placement Foster Homes for American Indian Children – Casey Foundation](https://www.casey.org/icwa-recruitment-retention/)
  https://www.casey.org/icwa-recruitment-retention/
- Recruiting and Supporting Military Families Who Are Adopting:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/wherever-my-family-is-thats-home.pdf
- Strategies for Recruiting LGBT Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/strategies-for-recruiting-LGBT-foster-adoptive-kinship-families.pdf
- Finding Common Ground: A Guide for Child Welfare Agencies Working with Communities of Faith – NRC-DR:
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/finding-common-ground.pdf
- Recruiting, Developing, and Supporting Resource Families in Rural Communities (Webinar) – NRC-DR
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh-auFN-l4s&feature=youtu.be&list=PLghM7YFZ4EP9f1wm5hPsLtV39hXb6JtYk
- Recruitment and Retention of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Families for Siblings – NRC-DR
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/practice-principles-and-seven-step-process-for-sibling-recruitment.pdf

Training for Resource Parents

- Fostering NC – Resource Parent Education Portal
  http://fosteringnc.org/
- Fostering Perspectives
  http://fosteringperspectives.org/
- Foster Parent College
  http://fosterparentcollege.com
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network:
  http://www.nctsn.com/

Youth Engagement

- Youth Engagement Blueprint Series – DHHS Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative:
  https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/youth-development/blueprint-series/
- Talking with Older Youth About Adoption – DHHS, Adopt US Kids, Child Welfare Information Gateway:
  https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/talking.pdf
- Going Beyond Recruitment for Older Youth – NRC-DR
  http://www.nrcdr.org/_assets/files/NRCDR-org/going-beyond-recruitment-for-older-youth.pdf

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Types of Recruitment: Definitions and Suggestions

General Recruitment

General recruitment strategies help build public interest and awareness of the need for foster and adoptive parents for children and youth in foster care by broadcasting the need to a general audience. These strategies focus on drawing in a wide variety of families while setting the stage for more targeted recruitment.

Examples of General Recruitment:

- Setting up a booth/table at an event designed for a wide population of people, such as a fair or street festival
- "Swag" that is given out to the public at events or as they encounter the agency (such as pens, keychains, bags, t-shirts, etc.)
- Facebook/Twitter posts from your agency
- Media releases, TV spots on local news, ads in the local newspaper
- Events that promote Adoption Awareness Month, Foster Care Awareness Month, etc.
- Pamphlets and publications that are available on your website or on the state's website (such as "You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be a Perfect Parent"
- Heart Gallery

Targeted Recruitment

Targeted recruitment considers the unique needs of children and youth in need of foster and adoptive families by developing recruitment strategies and messages based on their needs. Effective targeted recruitment uses demographic data to inform your recruiting efforts by identifying characteristics of current foster and adoptive parents and children and youth in care.

Examples of Targeted Recruitment:

- Building your data capacity is a critical component of targeted recruitment. What are the characteristics of children that you have in care? (Race, age, gender, sibling groups status, therapeutic need, etc.) Do you have families available to meet these needs? Your areas of largest need are the communities you should target.
- Partner with a school or school system located in community where many children from your county enter care; arrange to send flyers home with every child's report card, or have a booth/table during open house night.
- Request permission to post information and/or speak at an event about the need for foster parents at a faith house or community center that is frequented by leaders from within the population you are seeking to recruit. Come prepared with data that informs the need for foster parents from their community (for example, "there are currently X number of Native American children in foster care in our county. X percentage of those children are placed in non-Native homes.") Cultural competency is incredibly important as you seek to establish or maintain trust.
- Your materials should reflect the needs of your agency. For example, if you have a need for foster parents for teenagers, photos of a teen or group of teens should be on your pamphlets and websites.

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- Target people that are already in helping professions, such as the medical field, teaching, social work, mental health, etc. You could arrange to leave flyers or speak at the next staff meeting at the elementary school or at a local hospital or clinic.
- Poll your current pool of foster parents to find out where people like them spend time in your community. Ask them where they typically go out to eat, what stores they frequent, how do they spend their free time, where do they work, etc. This can help you decide how to put your limited time, money, and energy to the best use, by focusing your recruitment on places where foster parents already congregate.

Child-Specific Recruitment

Child-specific recruitment strategies help recruit foster, adoptive, and kinship families for specific children and youth in foster care. These strategies begin with a comprehensive child assessment and preparation process. Every effort should be made to involve the child as developmentally appropriate. Comprehensive strengths-based child pre-adoptive summaries are a critical component of child-specific recruitment.

Examples of Child-Specific Recruitment:

- Photo listings and/or video listings of available children (such as on Adopt US Kids)
- Participating in matching events with the child, where approved families meet children who are available for adoption
- NC Kids Program (DHHS)
- Family Finding services (CHS)

Retention

Retaining resource parents is an incredibly important recruitment strategy that cannot be overlooked. Excellent recruitment strategies mean nothing if resource parents are not supported and developed to meet the complex needs of the children in care. Retention efforts should start from the first point of inquiry, and are intrinsically linked to quality customer service.

- Cross-train all staff so that they understand what to say (and how to say it) when they interact with a prospective or current resource family. The administrative assistant or the assessments social worker don't have to know absolutely everything about how to become a foster parent, but they should know some general talking point and who interested families can talk to within the agency.
- Call folks back! It's simple, but it's so incredibly important. Everyone is very busy, but taking just a moment to promptly return someone's call could mean the difference between a family feeling supported and a family feeling ignored.
- Partner with local businesses to offer discounts or special deals to resource parents in your community. Perhaps a local salon could provide foster children with free haircuts, or a local restaurant could offer one night a month where foster families eat for free. You could provide the businesses with a placard or certificate to display that indicates that they are supporting local foster children, which is both good for their business, and an additional general recruitment tool for your agency. This could be especially effective in rural communities.

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- Organize foster parent appreciation events (dinners, picnics, movie nights, trips to the ball park, etc.). Not only do these events support current foster parents, they also are visible in the community and act as another general recruitment tool.
- Organize foster parent support groups and have agency staff provide childcare
- Send handwritten and personalized notes and cards on birthdays or other special days.
- Poll your foster parents to understand what makes them feel supported. Tailor your support to the specific needs of your families as best you can.

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Sample Recruitment Letter
[Agency Letterhead]

April 20, 2017

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster or adoptive parent in North Carolina! At NC Kids we are here to help you with getting started and to assist you on your fostering or adoption journey. Valuable information about how to become a foster or adoptive parent, frequently asked questions about the process and the child welfare system, as well as, information about the types of children who are in need of foster and adoptive homes can be obtained by viewing the "You Don't Have to be Perfect to be a Perfect Parent" brochure at: http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5133.pdf .

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent only, you may contact your local county Department of Social Services or one of the private foster home licensing agencies. To locate contact information for your county's DSS, please visit the North Carolina Division of Social Services website at https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local/index.htm . A list of private foster home licensing agencies can be found at: http://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/licensing/docs/cpalistfostercare.pdf. These agencies can provide you with information regarding upcoming informational meetings, training sessions and answer any questions you may have about the licensing process.

The first step to becoming an adoptive parent in NC is to obtain a Pre-Placement Assessment (PPA), also known as an adoptive home study, from a licensed adoption agency. All local county Departments of Social Services (DSS) are licensed. There are also several private agencies in North Carolina available to assist you. A list of these agencies can be found at: http://www.adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/how-to-adopt-and-foster/state-information/north-carolina#agency. Please note that there are differences between a county agency and a private agency in terms of services offered and potential fees for those services. Selecting an agency to represent you during this process is an important decision. We suggest that you contact several agencies to discuss your adoption goals so as to make an informed choice.

Once you have obtained an approved Pre-Placement Assessment (PPA), you may register with the NC Kids office. You will then be added to a database of approved families and waiting children that is used to find potential matches. To register with NC Kids, please complete the Family Registration Form (http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-1821-ia.pdf) and return it along with a copy of your approved PPA. Please note that registration with NC Kids is optional and does not guarantee that you will be matched. It is simply one option available to you in your adoption journey. We encourage you to search for children on your own through AdoptUSKids or NC Kids' websites.

Please visit www.AdoptUsKids.org and click on North Carolina to see children in our state that are waiting to be adopted. We recommend that you check the website frequently, as new profiles of children who have recently become available for adoption are added regularly. For confidentiality reasons, we are not able to make referrals or provide information on specific children without a current PPA.

Once you have had an opportunity to review the websites provided and to speak with your local agencies, please feel free to contact us with any additional questions. You may reach me at 1-919-527-6358 or by email at britt.cloudsdale@dhhs.nc.gov. Again, we appreciate your interest in North Carolina's waiting children.

Sincerely,

Britt Cloudsdale, MSW

NC Kids Program Consultant

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New Caller Intake Form (Sample) – Source: "Treat Them Like Gold"

Contact Information for Prospective Resource Families

1. Name of Caller: _____
2. Date of Initial Call: _____ 3. Date Call Returned: _____
4. Home Address:_____
5. Primary Phone:_____Alternate Phone: _____
6. Email:_____
7. DOB:_____ 8. Marital Status:_____
9. Employment:_____10. Work hours:_____
11. How did you hear about the need for resource parents/our agency?

12. Are you primarily interested in fostering? Adopting? Both? Volunteering?

13. What can I do for you?
☐ Send Information ☐ Arrange an Interview☐ Accept a donation of goods/services
☐ Accept a donation of money ☐ Other:_____

Information on Others in the Home (if applicable)

Name:_____
Relationship to Caller:_____DOB:_____
School or employment:_____

Name:_____
Relationship to Caller:_____DOB:_____
School or employment:_____

Name:_____
Relationship to Caller:_____DOB:_____
School or employment:_____

Notes from Call

Tracking Information
Informed of Orientation Meeting to be held:_____ Attended? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Date Information Packet Sent:_____ Sent by:_____
Date of Follow-up Letter or Visit: _____Completed by:_____
Staff Member Completing Form: _____

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Sample Tracking Table – Source: "Treat Them Like Gold"

Inquiry Type	Name and Address	Phone #	F/A	How did they hear?	Date Packet Sent	Date Follow-up Call	Date of Orientation	MAPP	Approval Date

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Sample Exit Interview

Resource Parent Exit Questionnaire
Agency Name: _____

Name (optional):   _____
Email (optional):   _____
Date of Exit: _____
How many years were you a resource parent?

_____

What was your main motivation to begin fostering? (check as many as apply.)
☐ Wanted to give back/make a difference   ☐ Infertility issues
☐ Former fostering/adoption experience   ☐ Own children were grown
☐ Spiritual or religious calling   ☐ Interested in adoption
☐ Other : _____

What was your main reason for deciding not to continue fostering?
☐ Adoption   ☐ Health
☐ Moved out of county   ☐ End of relative placement
☐ Burn out   ☐ Involuntary closure
☐ Transferred to another agency   ☐ Change in family circumstance
☐ At capacity   ☐ Other : _____

Tell us about your experience as a Resource Parent:

Did you feel confident in your ability to meet the needs of the child(ren) placed in your care?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Do you feel that you were offered support services to you meet the needs of the child(ren) placed in your home?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you feel you were offered training which could help you meet the needs of the child(ren) placed in your home?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Did you feel consistently supported by your social worker and the child's team?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

What support services do you feel you needed, that were not offered?

_____

What did we do well in supporting you as a resource parent?

_____

What, if anything, could have been done to change your mind about closing your foster home license?

_____

Additional Comments:

_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If you have further thoughts you would like to share, please contact XXXX at XXXXX.

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Sample Renewal Interview

Resource Parent Renewal Questionnaire
Agency Name: _____

Name: _____
Email: _____
Date of Renewal: _____
How many years have you been a resource parent?
_____

What was your main motivation to begin fostering? (check as many as apply.)
☐ Wanted to give back/make a difference   ☐ Infertility issues
☐ Former fostering/adoption experience   ☐ Own children were grown
☐ Spiritual or religious calling   ☐ Interested in adoption
☐ Other : _____

What was your main reason for deciding to continue fostering with our agency? (check as many as apply.)
☐ Plan to adopt   ☐ Fostering a relative
☐ Level of support from my worker   ☐ Level of support from child's team
☐ Services provided   ☐ Feel a calling
☐ Other : _____

Tell us about your experience as a Resource Parent:

Do you feel confident in your ability to meet the needs of the child(ren) placed in your care?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you feel that you are offered support services to meet the needs of the child(ren) placed in your home?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you feel you are provided training which enables you to meet the needs of the child(ren) placed in your home?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you feel consistently supported by your social worker and the child's team?
☐ Yes ☐ No

What support services do you feel you need, that are not offered?
_____

What do we do well in supporting you as a resource parent?
_____

What, if anything, could we do better to support you in your role as a resource parent?
_____

Additional Comments:
_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If you have further thoughts you would like to share, please contact XXXX at XXXXX.

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Sample Satisfaction Survey

Resource Parent Satisfaction Survey

[Company Name]
[Company Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]

[Company Name] requests your help. We take our role of supporting, training, and licensing foster, adoptive, and kinship families very seriously and are always looking to improve our services. Please take a few minutes to complete the following Resource Parent Satisfaction Survey. We plan to complete this survey annually in order to continually improve services and meet the needs of our families. Thank you in advance for your time.

This survey is annoymous. Social Worker XXX will be entering the data from the survey and there will be no link from the survey data to the person who completed it.

Directions: Please complete the following survey. If responding to an email, please save your completed survey and mail back directly to XXX. If your worker gave the survey to you during a home visit, please complete and return in the envelope included that has postage pre-paid.

1. Demographics

1a. Who is your support social worker?

☐ XXX   ☐ XXX   ☐ XXX   ☐ Other

1b. Resource parent category

☐ Foster Parent   ☐ Respite/Emergency Placement   ☐ Adoptive Parent   ☐ Other

1c. What is your education level?

☐ High School   ☐ Some College   ☐ College/University Degree   ☐ Graduate School or Higher

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1d. How long have you been a resource parent?

☐ Less than 1 year   ☐ 1-2 years   ☐ 3-5 years   ☐ More than 5 years

1e. How many different children in foster care have you cared for in your home during the last year? (Not including respite)

☐ None   ☐ 1-3 children   ☐ 4-7 children   ☐ More than 7 children

1f. How many different children in foster care have you cared for through respite?

☐ None   ☐ 1-3 children   ☐ 4-7 children   ☐ More than 7 children

2. Overall, how satisfied are you as a licensed resource parent with Catawba County Social Services?

☐ Very Satisfied   ☐ Satisfied   ☐ Unsatisfied   ☐ Very Unsatisfied

Comments:_____

2a. In the past year, did you receive adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a resource parent?

☐ More than adequate   ☐ Somewhat adequate   ☐ Somewhat inadequate   ☐ Very inadequate

Comments:_____

2b. I feel that I am kept informed of events, trainings, and support services available to me.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

2c. My support social worker (Marcie, Sharon, or Leigh Ann) responds to my requests, needs, and suggestions in a timely manner.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

2d. I feel my role as a Resource Parent is viewed as important and valued by staff.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

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2e. I am made aware of whom I can call if my support worker is on vacation or if there is a crisis.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

2f. My licensing social worker gives me the support and information I need for licensure.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. Do you currently have any children in foster care in your home?

☐ Yes   ☐ No (skip to question 4 on next page)

3a. I believe I am given all information available about the children placed in my home.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3b. My support social worker involves me in the planning process for each child in my home.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3c. I feel the educational, medical, and psychological needs of the children in my home are being met.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3d. I am invited to attend Permanency Planning meetings and/or Child and Family Team Meetings for each child living in my home.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3e. I am involved and kept informed of court hearings and outcomes that affect me and the child in my home.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3f. When in crisis, efforts are made to support the placement and help us through the crisis.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

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3g. What does [Agency] and your social workers **_do well_** to support you?

_____

___

_____

___

3h. What could [Agency] and your social workers **_do better_** to support you?

_____

___

_____

___

3i. What makes you feel appreciated as a person? Is there something we could do to better show our appreciation of you as a resource family?

_____

___

_____

___

4. I feel the training offered to me is helpful and allows me to be an effective resource parent.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

4a. How effective was MAPP training in preparing you to become a foster parent?

☐ Very Effective   ☐ Effective   ☐ Ineffective   ☐ Very Ineffective

4b. How well prepared were you to be a foster parent prior to your first placement?

☐ Very prepared   ☐ Somewhat prepared   ☐ Not prepared at all   ☐ N/A, I have not had a placement yet

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4c. In your opinion, what has been the most helpful training that you have attended? Why?

_____

___

_____

___

4d. Are there any trainings that you would like to see offered that are not?

_____

___

_____

___

4e. Do you have any suggestions as to how resource parent training could be improved?

_____

___

_____

___

5. *The following supplemental questions are to help us improve our recruitment process and gauge interest in support services.*

5a. Do you have any suggestions for recruiting new resource families?

_____

___

_____

___

5b. Do you have any connections that could assist us in recruitment (i.e. arranging for us to speak at your church, getting us a booth at a community event)?

_____

___

_____

___

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5c. Based on your experience with [Agency], would you recommend [Agency] to others?

☐ Yes   ☐ Maybe   ☐ No

5d. Have you attended the Support Group?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

5e. If you HAVE attended a meeting, was it helpful to you?

☐ Yes   ☐ Somewhat   ☐ No   ☐ N/A, I have not
                                                        attended

5f. Would you be willing to join a [Agency] public Facebook page to help publicize recruitment efforts?

☐ Yes   ☐ Maybe   ☐ No

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Questions to Engage Youth in Child-Specific Recruitment

(Please be mindful: Tailor these questions for the specific child you're talking to. Some of these may trigger trauma in different children.)

- Who do you call for advice, or just to talk?
- When something great happens, who do you feeling like calling to tell them about it?
- Do you have a best friend?
- Is there an adult that seems to understand you better than others do?
- Who do you, or would you, call if you were in serious trouble? (in the emergency room, at the police station, etc.)
- Is there someone who worries about where you are and what you're doing?
- Do you have an adult in your life whose advice you respect?
- Can you tell me who you trust the most? (Who have you trusted before, even if you feel like you can't trust them now?)
- Is there anyone with whom you'd like to build a better relationship? Someone you hope to trust one day?
- Where were you living at the point in your life that you felt safest and most comfortable? Where do you feel the most at home?
- With what person or people do you feel the most comfortable?
- Who praises you and makes you feel good about yourself?
- Who believes in you?
- If you could choose where you are going to live, where would that be?
- Where have you visited in the past that you'd like to go again?
- What are your favorite things to do (hobbies, interests, etc.)? – [When they answer, ask who taught them how to do those things.]
- What would you like someone to know about you if they were meeting you for the first time?
- What things would you like to do when you are older? When you are an adult?
- Who/What makes you feel useful or accomplished?
- Who really listens to you and knows what you want?
- Who do you want to have around to help you plan for your future?
- What is your favorite part of your day?

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