



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

February 1, 2018

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Louis Pate, Chair
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 311, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Josh Dobson, Chair
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 301N, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Donny Lambeth, Chair
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 303, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

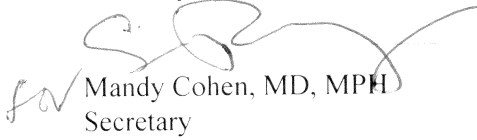
Dear Chairmen:

Session Law 2017-57, Section 11.C.7.(a), requires the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (DSS), to submit to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services a report on the implementation and outcomes of the Program Improvement Plan. DSS shall implement the requirements of the federal Program Improvement Plan to bring our state into compliance with national standards for child welfare policy and practices. This report is due no later than February 1 and August 1 of each year.

On behalf of Secretary Cohen, the Department of Health and Human Services is notifying you that this report will be delayed as the Department continues to work to finalize the requirements for this report. We will submit the report on or before February 28, 2018.

Should you have any questions concerning this report, please contact Wayne Black, Director for the Division of Social Services, at 919-527-6335 or Wayne.Black@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,


Mandy Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary

cc:	Wayne Black	Deborah Landry	Marjorie Donaldson	Kolt Ulm
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**Status of the Implementation of the 2015 North
Carolina Child and Family Services Review
Program Improvement Plan**

Session Law 2017-57, Section 11C.7.(a)



**Report to the
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services**

**By
North Carolina Department of
Health and Human Services**

February 12, 2018

Introduction

Section 12C.1(a) of S.L. 2016-94 requires the Department of Health and Human Services to “report on the implementation and outcomes of the Program Improvement Plan to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services. The report shall be submitted semiannually on February 1 and August 1 of each year, with the first report submitted on August 1, 2016, and the final report on February 1, 2019.”

Timeline

Per the requirements set by 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 these two years, the approved Program Improvement Plan contains specific and measurable, activities and benchmarks that are to be completed at varying intervals to ensure the safety of children and to help families who become known to the county child welfare agency. Please see Appendix A for a detailed list of these activities, their timeframe for completion, and the current status of implementation.

Background Information

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (more specifically, the county child welfare agencies) participated in a federal review of its Child Welfare Services programs in 2015. This review is referred to as the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). During this review, North Carolina was assessed and measured on seven outcomes and seven systemic factors.

Under the domains 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 data collected for the seven outcomes is based on the use of the federal case review instrument and protocol known as the On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI). Ten county child welfare agencies participated in the case review portion of the Child and Family Services Review in 2015. These counties were Buncombe, Craven, Cumberland, Durham, Hoke, Mecklenburg, Pitt, Scotland, Wake, and Wilson.

The seven systemic factors refer to 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 and through stakeholder interviews.

The seven outcomes were assessed based on child welfare cases in ten counties and the seven systemic factors were assessed through information available statewide. 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 did not achieve substantial conformity in each of the seven outcomes and the seven systemic factors.

The North Carolina Division of Social Services (NC DSS) collaborated with key stakeholders across the state in the development of its Program Improvement Plan (PIP). 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 improve performance. The resulting North Carolina PIP -- containing five goals, fourteen strategies, and seventy activities -- was approved by the Children's Bureau in December 2016, with an effective date of January 1, 2017. If North Carolina fails to meet the negotiated improvement goals, the estimated potential assessed penalty could be up to \$1,709,489 pursuant to 45 CFR 1355.36.

The Children's Bureau monitors North Carolina implementation of the PIP through reports submitted every six months, electronic access to case review data, and through onsite monitoring. The Children's Bureau visited North Carolina in September 2017 for the purpose of monitoring the progress of the PIP. Rylan's Law/Family/Child Protection and Accountability Act (HB 630) and its impact on services was a key topic of discussion, as many issues being addressed in the PIP will also be addressed through child welfare reform currently underway in North Carolina.

This onsite meeting and subsequent discussions resulted in the following goals and strategies needing to be renegotiated for content:

- Goal 1, Strategy 1;
- Goal 1, Strategy 3 (f);
- Goal 1, Strategy 4;
- Goal 1, Strategy 4 (b) to 4 (j);
- Goal 1, Strategy 5;
- Goal 1, Strategy 5 (a) to 5 (i); and
- Goal 2, Strategy 2.

In addition, timelines associated with activities within Goals 1 and 4 were renegotiated. North Carolina's revised PIP consists of five goals, thirteen strategies, and seventy-five activities. The revised strategies and the applicable activities will be described in this report.

In addition to the activities outlined in the PIP, data collected from North Carolina's continued use of the ORSI tool will be used to evaluate progress. The cases reviewed during the 6-month period of May 1, 2017–October 31, 2017, will be the baseline from which North Carolina will be evaluated. The Children's Bureau has not provided the new baseline as of the writing of this report. Please see Appendix A for complete details regarding each goal, strategy, and activity.

Current Status and Planned Activities

Implementation Structure

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 eleven workgroups established to help execute the activities in the PIP. Workgroups include county staff designated by 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, stakeholders from public and private agencies serving children and families, and representatives from several of North Carolina's public and private universities.

The current 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 Performance Profile and Court Engagement
8. Guardian Assistance Program
9. Service Collaboration
10. Diligent Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Parents
11. 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. North Carolina continues to make use of technical assistance from the Capacity Building Center for States, which helps "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 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.

Program Improvement Plan

The Program Improvement Plan is structured in a matrix of quarters, detailing which activities are due for completion by quarter. In the plan, many of the activities begin in the “10 PIP pilot counties”. These are the same counties who participated in the case review portion of the 2015 CFSR (Buncombe, Craven, Cumberland, Durham, Hoke, Mecklenburg, Pitt, Scotland, Wake, and Wilson). More than half of the cases reviewed using the OSRI instrument each year will be from these 10 counties. Targeting efforts in these counties increases the likelihood NC will see improvement in the delivery of services.

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: Implement a technical assistance model for NC DSS to provide multi-level assistance to county child welfare staff regarding the consistent application of policies, practices and training. This technical assistance model will be developed in concert with the Capacity Building Center. This technical assistance model will include strategies for NC DSS staff to teach, mentor, and coach county child welfare staff on the expected application of policy and practice standards to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being of children served by county child welfare programs.
- Strategy 5: Develop and pilot a county level child welfare family engagement committees and a state level family advisory council that promotes and supports the involvement of families at case practice, policy, and systems levels. This model is 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.

Goal 1, Strategy 1

The focus of Goal 1, Strategy 1 is to strengthen and revise North Carolina’s Child Welfare Manual in order to improve consistent application of child welfare policies and practices. Revisions were made to the manual pertaining to four main practice areas of child welfare--Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake, CPS Assessments, CPS In-Home Services, and Child Placement Services (now referred to as Permanency Planning). The revisions to CPS and Permanency Planning policies were published in July, August, and September 2017, respectively. The manual revisions centered on the frequency, consistency, quality, and documentation of:

- Case contacts between the social worker and the child, parents, other caretakers, and any identified perpetrators of maltreatment;
- Assessment of risk and safety in the home and to the child;
- Meaningful engagement in case planning activities;

- Sound decisions in child welfare cases; and
- Efforts to achieve safety, permanence, and well-being for the children and families served by the Child Welfare System.

Over the past six months, the revised manual has been implemented by the 10 PIP pilot counties on schedule. Staff from the NC DSS Child Welfare Policy Team, with support from county partners, have visited the 10 PIP pilot sites to provide training, technical assistance, and support. These activities have been completed on schedule, as outlined in the PIP.

North Carolina is required to incorporate the lessons learned from the 10 OSRI counties prior to implementing the revised policies statewide. Feedback was gathered from counties through onsite meetings with county child welfare staff, the development of a dedicated email address and a voicemail to receive comments from county staff, and through regular communication with the PIP pilot counties.

The feedback from counties has been overwhelmingly positive. County staff have expressed the belief that the revised policies address gaps and inconsistencies contained in the previous manual and that the expectations for practicing child welfare services are more clearly defined. North Carolina anticipates the case reviews completed in the PIP pilot counties after the implementation of the revised manual will show improvement in the seven CFSR outcomes.

The next phase of Goal 1, Strategy 1 includes designing, communicating, and supporting statewide implementation of the revised policies, which is scheduled to occur over the course of the next three quarters. NC DSS is working with county partners to ensure statewide implementation incorporates lessons learned from the PIP pilot counties and implementation science principles.

Goal 1, Strategy 2

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

Over the past six months, the Training Systems Workgroup has reviewed the existing staff competencies for selected curricula associated with CPS Intake, CPS Assessment, CPS In-Home Services and Placement Services (Foster Care), which were the sections of the policy under revision. These core competencies have been modified to align and support the revised policies. The training curricula itself is currently being revised to incorporate the modified competencies and will be completed on schedule by March 31, 2018.

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 with input from North Carolina’s Supervision Advisory Committee. Accessed through the DSS training platform (ncswLearn.org) under “Supervisor Resources,” this training series is designed to help supervisors deliver a short, in-service training to staff on a specific topic. These “Do-It-Yourself – Spotlight on Practice” kits are available to all 100 counties and include a PowerPoint presentation, a

Facilitator's guide, and handouts for learners. NC DSS can track how many times a course is downloaded.

Over the past year, DIYs were completed that highlight various areas of practice that have historically been problematic—namely absent parents, decision-making, family engagement, and safety planning. Planning has now begun for DIYs spotlighting the changes to the CPS Intake, CPS Assessment, CPS In-Home Services, & Permanency Planning policies. Given that these DIYs cover the newly revised policies, 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 applying the revised policies and practices. NC DHHS is currently planning promoting the DIYs during the statewide rollout of the revised policies during regional meetings with the counties in Spring 2018.

The feedback from counties regarding the existing DIY kits has been positive. Supervisors have expressed that the kits have helped them coach social workers on the consistent application of policy, as well as, best practice. NC DHHS believes that skill-building through training and implementation support for the revised policies and practices at the casework level will improve its performance in future case reviews.

The next phase of Goal 1, Strategy 2 is to finalize additional in-service training kits regarding the revised CPS Intake, CPS Assessment, CPS In-Home Services, and Permanency Planning policies. NC DHHS will include the promotion of these resources as part of the statewide implementation of the revised training curricula on the new manual, which begins April 1, 2018.

Goal 1, Strategy 3

Goal 1, Strategy 3 focuses on strengthening the capacity of child welfare supervisors to understand and consistently implement policy and practices, counties will see an improvement in the safety, permanency, and well-being of children served by the system.

The concept of a Supervisor Academy originated from the 2007 Child and Family Services Review, when North Carolina implemented a Supervision Advisory Committee. The charter of the Supervision Advisory Committee 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 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 developed three new training curricula based on the identified supervisor competencies needed for the revised policies and practices. These new courses are being offered to randomly selected supervisors in the PIP pilot counties through four cohorts (August 2017 – September 2018). These courses build upon the knowledge and skills introduced in the required 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 new courses are being presented in four regional sites based on the location of the ten pilot counties beginning in August 2017 and continuing through September 2018. To date, one cohort of supervisors has completed all of three of the courses. The second cohort has completed the *Nuts and Bolts* course as of December 31, 2017.

NC DHHS believes that through the empowerment of and skill-building at the supervisor level, the application of the revised policies and practices will become fully integrated into the casework, furthering its performance in case reviews.

The next phase of Goal 1, Strategy 3 is to continue to incorporate the lessons learned and improve the delivery of the three courses for learners. The Supervisor Academy will be offered statewide in 2019.

Goal 1, Strategy 4

The Technical Assistance Workgroup initially used this PIP Strategy to build upon the technical assistance framework NC DSS developed in 2009. While that technical assistance framework has value for North Carolina child welfare practice, the Children's Bureau requested efforts to be more narrowly focused on the revised policies and procedures and to improving outcomes on the OSRI case reviews. Therefore, this PIP strategy was one of the strategies that was renegotiated in December 2017. This request required North Carolina to modify its original technical assistance delivery plan.

Over the past six months, staff at the North Carolina Division of Social Services have defined what it means to teach, mentor, and coach county child welfare staff on the consistent application of revised policies and practices. Moreover, Children's Bureau expects that North Carolina's technical assistance shift from operating as merely a help desk to an effective model of teaching, mentoring, and coaching. A standard implementation plan for initiatives in child welfare was developed and includes, but is not limited to, written communication, virtual trainings via webinars and conference calls, as well as in-person trainings. The concentration of technical assistance efforts will be on moving policy to practice, which North Carolina believes will improve its performance in case reviews.

To assist further in improving performance and child welfare outcomes, NC DSS will conduct OSRI item-specific analyses related to performance. The OSRI is a data collection tool completed during case reviews. The OSRI comprises seven child welfare "outcomes" in the areas of child safety, permanency, and well-being and 18 "items" which operationalize these outcomes. An OSRI reviewer reviews documentation in a case file and, as necessary, interviews individuals involved in the case to determine if there is substantial conformity with the standard. An evaluation of each standard is rated as a Strength, an Area Needing Improvement, or Not Applicable and whether an outcome is determined to be Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved. Any items receiving a Partially Achieved or Not Achieved rating will be assessed, analyzed, and used to address any identified needs and to strengthen practice.

Another component of the technical assistance model is examining county practice when a child fatality has occurred in open CPS In-Home Services and Permanency Planning cases and addressing consumer complaints. When issues are identified, NC DSS staff provide county staff coaching and mentoring on the specific concerns. Any issues are addressed using the county Program Development Plans. Corrective Action Plans are also developed as needed. County Program Development Plans and Corrective Action Plans are monitored and additional technical assistance is provided when needed.

A key component to North Carolina's technical assistance model is the *TA Gateway*. This is ticketing

management system that was built in collaboration with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Beginning October 1, 2017, when staff from one of the ten PIP pilot counties has a question regarding the revised manual, leadership from that county submits a ticket into the *TA Gateway*. NC DSS responds to the question based on known policy, protocol, and guidance, and engages subject matter experts when appropriate. The information gained during the *TA Gateway* pilot with the ten counties will serve to inform statewide implementation of the *TA Gateway* in 2018.

The next phase of Goal 1, Strategy 4 is to define how needs will be determined based on the OSRI item-specific analysis and incorporate lessons learned from the OSRI counties into a statewide implementation plan.

Goal 1, Strategy 5

North Carolina has long recognized the importance of having “family voice” in its systemic-level child welfare practice. Despite this recognition, the state did not have many formal mechanisms in place to incorporate family voice into its business model. Goal 1, Strategy 5 seeks to institutionalize the belief that parent and youth involvement in a proactive way can have a transformative impact on services.

The original PIP and the Family Leadership Model Workgroup initially focused efforts on developing a statewide Child Welfare Family Advisory Council. The Children’s Bureau requested efforts to focus more on engaging the families at the county level. Therefore, this PIP strategy was one of the strategies that was renegotiated in December 2017. The revised PIP includes both a Child Welfare Family Advisory Council (state-level) and three Family Engagement Committees (county-level). Richmond County Department of Social Services has been identified as one of the three counties and negotiations with several other counties are underway for the remaining two counties to begin county-level engagement work.

The Family Leadership Model Workgroup has representation from birth, foster, adoptive and kinship parents, as well as, many community stakeholders. Given that the scope of work includes promoting family voice at the case-level, practice-level, and system-level, the emphasis of the county’s work will be engagement at the case-level. The emphasis of the state level work will be on policy and systemic issues.

The next phase of Goal 1, Strategy 5 is to identify the remaining two counties for the Family Engagement Committees; solidify the implementation structure of the state-level Child Welfare Family Advisory Council; and ensure local and state level family engagement work is aligned.

This Workgroup continues to receive consultation from the Capacity Building Center for States.

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”. During the negotiation with the Children’s Bureau, this goal was revised from two strategies into one strategy, with some of the activities moving into Goal 1, Strategy 4. The only strategy now included in this goal is:

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

Goal 2, Strategy 1

The focus of this strategy is to conduct quality assurance reviews of child welfare cases to evaluate the quality of services; identify strengths and needs of the service delivery system; and evaluate program improvement efforts. Reviewers—either state or county child welfare agency employees— review documentation in case files and interview individuals involved in the cases to determine if there is substantial conformity on the applicable items within the seven CFSR outcomes.

Each item is rated as a *Strength*, an *Area Needing Improvement*, or *Not Applicable* and this determines whether an outcome is determined to be *Substantially Achieved*, *Partially Achieved*, or *Not Achieved*. County staff who are trained on the OSRI tool review 113 cases (50 In-Home and 63 Foster Care) each year. NC DSS staff provide second-level, quality assurance oversight for these reviews.

Since one of the systemic factors is to ensure North Carolina’s quality assurance system is functioning statewide, NC DSS staff also review 100 cases (44 In-Home and 56 Foster Care) from the remaining 90 counties. Second-level, quality assurance oversight is provided by another NC DSS staff reviewer to ensure the OSRI tool is completed with fidelity.

The cases reviewed from May through October 2017 (62 foster care and 47 in-home) serve as a baseline of performance for North Carolina, from which the Children’s Bureau will calculate the performance “improvement” goals for each item. For example, 72% of the cases reviewed for baseline were rated as a *Strength* for Item #1. The Children’s Bureau determines how many percentage points NC will need to improve *from* 72% as part of our PIP measurement. As the state achieves a performance goal, the Children’s Bureau will remove the item from the list of *Areas Needing Improvement*.

Given that this baseline period has recently ended, the Children’s Bureau is still determining what the performance goals will be for each of the CFSR items. Below is a table detailing North Carolina’s performance during its baseline period.

OSRI Items	May – Oct 2017	NC PIP Goal
Safety		
Item 1: Timely Investigations	72%	TBD
Item 2: Services	62%	TBD
Item 3: Assess Risk & Safety	59%	TBD
Permanency		
Item 4: Placement Stability	66%	TBD
Item 5: Permanency Goal	50%	TBD
Item 6: Achieving Permanency	50%	TBD
Item 7: Sibling Placement	80%	TBD
Item 8: Family Visits	52%	TBD
Item 9: Preserving Connections	68%	TBD
Item 10: Relative Placement	86%	TBD
Item 11: Parent Relationship	52%	TBD
Well-Being		
Item 12: Services and Needs	45%	TBD
Item 13: Case Planning	49%	TBD
Item 14: SW Child Visits	62%	TBD
Item 15: SW Parent Visits	43%	TBD
Item 16: Child Education	90%	TBD
Item 17: Child Health	78%	TBD
Item 18: Child Mental Health	76%	TBD

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 supported by the Permanency Profile Workgroup. As of September 30, 2017, the Permanency Performance Profile was created as a tool to engage local courts and county child welfare agencies in discussions addressing issues of achieving timely permanence for children in the legal custody of the county child welfare agency. This Profile is comprised of data from the OSRI Online Management System, CFSR data indicators, and Court Improvement Program measures. Please see Appendix B for a sample Permanency Performance Profile.

The next phase of Goal 3, Strategy 1 is to work with judicial districts to fully understand what the data contained in the Permanency Performance Profile means for their community and help them develop strategies to improve their performance (see Goal 3, Strategy 2).

Goal 3, Strategy 2

Goal 3, Strategy 2 engages court partners in the role they play in the achievement of permanency for children through discussions about the Permanency Performance Profile. A plan was developed on how NC would provide technical assistance to communities who do not meet performance standards. This plan includes the identification of the anticipated technical assistance of the local communities; details of the various modes of delivery for technical assistance; and describes what state-level coordination to support the local efforts looks like.

The next phase of Goal 3, Strategy 2 is to work with individual judicial districts to fully understand what the data means for their community. NC DSS and its court partners will convene stakeholders to develop strategies to improve performance. To support that work, a meeting is planned for February 23, 2018. This event will include invited county child welfare agencies and judicial partners, and will examine their permanency data; allow inquiries about their data; and plan future local meetings to continue the dialogue. NC DSS staff will aid in the facilitation of the local conversations, as well as, collect identified themes and obstacles for improving permanency. These themes will, in turn, be used to tailor ongoing training and technical assistance efforts. NC DHHS believes that it is critical for county child welfare

systems and local judicial partners to acknowledge their roles in child safety, permanence, and well-being, with an emphasis on collaboration to improve the permanency outcomes for children.

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, Section 12C.4. GAP provides financial support of children who are deemed to be (i) in a permanent family placement setting, (ii) eligible for legal guardianship, and (iii) otherwise unlikely to achieve permanency. GAP reimburses the legal guardian for room and board at the same rate as the foster care room and board rates.

On March 1, 2017, policy and Administrative Rule governing the Guardianship Assistance Program was published, which exceeded the timeframe expectations outlined in the Program Improvement Plan. GAP is now an option for permanency for youth—who are at least fourteen years of age but less than eighteen years of age—who would otherwise remain the foster care system.

The next phase of Goal 3, Strategy 3 is to ensure ongoing promotion and evaluation of the program. As GAP is still a relatively new program for North Carolina, education and marketing during various meetings and trainings across the state will be necessary. NC DSS anticipates reaching out to county child welfare agencies regarding eligible youth, as well as to licensed foster parents and licensed relative placements to make them aware of this permanency option. With assistance from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and guardianship assistance expert Mark Testa, PhD. Dr. Testa and his team at UNC are working with NC DSS to develop a toolkit for county child welfare agencies about how to engage families and advocates to mobilize to move eligible children and families toward the guardianship assistance program. NC DHHS will be leading a workgroup comprised of county child welfare agency partners to discuss and plan ways to further expand the program.

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

Goal 4, Strategy 1 is being supported by the Bridging Local Systems Workgroup, which was spearheaded by NC DHHS and the North Carolina Institute of Medicine with funding support from The

Duke Endowment. The emphasis of the workgroup was to identify the best strategies to address issues within North Carolina's service array. Strong consideration has been 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, services are coordinated); and to ensuring the services are individualized to meet the specific needs of families and children.

Regional Leadership Summits were held in all the Local Management Entities / Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCO) catchment areas. A final summary report of all the themes and topics identified is expected in January 2018. Once this summary has been received, a concentrated focus moving forward will be on the written agreements between the county child welfare agencies and the LME/MCOs. These written agreements must focus on the following:

- 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.

NC DHHS believes that the improved collaboration between county child welfare agencies and the LME/MCOs will improve the lives of children and family services through the child welfare system; hence improving the overall performance as demonstrated by regular case reviews.

The next phase of Goal 4, Strategy 1 is to develop written agreements between LME/MCO and county child welfare agencies and for NC DHHS to provide consultation around effectively addressing the behavioral health needs of the foster care population.

Goal 4, Strategy 2

Goal 4, 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.

North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan prescribes that the NC DSS Adoption 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 Team will lead.

As of December 31, 2017, most of work associated with this strategy has been completed. The next phase of Goal 4, Strategy 2 is to support child placing agencies' use of data to correctly inform and promote diligent recruitment and retention efforts. This includes supporting the development and implementation of individual county-level diligent recruitment and retention plans and additional

training on Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) requirements. MEPA ensures parents reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

Goal 4, Strategy 3

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”.

A presentation regarding the CFSP/APSR and PIP has been developed with the intended audience being external stakeholders (birth families, foster parents, adoptive parents, community agencies, judicial partners, etc.). It is the intention of this presentation is to strengthen their understanding of the goals and objectives and opportunities for ongoing engagement.

The next phase of Goal 4, Strategy 3 includes the hosting of statewide “listening sessions”, which will provide external stakeholders with an opportunity to share their opinions and viewpoints with NC DSS leadership. Following the listening sessions, NC DSS will collaborate with other child and family serving units to address any identified concerns.

Goal 5

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”. The achievement of this goal will come through one strategy:

Strategy 1: Strengthen the statewide information system through the development of a child welfare module within NC FAST.

The Child Welfare component, also called Project 4 (P4), introduces a significant change to the way county child welfare agencies operate and manage their child welfare programs, which is largely done without automation currently.

To date, the P4 Child Welfare project team, in collaboration with selected counties, has completed the fit/gap, design, development, and test phases for Releases 1 (Intake, Assessments, Foster Care and In-Home Services) and Release 2 (Adoptions and Foster Care Licensing). Implementation for Release 1 is complete for the five pilot counties.

The team is using an Agile Project Management methodology that ensured early county and state stakeholder involvement, adherence to the end users’ requirements, and has contained schedule, cost, and scope risks. The status highlights are listed below:

- Joint application design (JAD) activities are a collaborative approach to the design of NC FAST Project 4 that relies upon input from these counties:
 - The five pilot counties (Franklin, Guilford, Richmond, Rockingham, and Sampson),
 - The seven Group 1 counties (Buncombe, Carteret, Catawba, Chatham, Cleveland, Orange, Rowan),
 - The State Division of Social Services (NC DSS).

JAD sessions were conducted every four weeks. They were used to complete the solutioning of the requirements in alignment with business needs.

- Early in the Development phase, the decision was made to use Out of the Box (OOTB) software and incorporate NC-specific policy and process changes as needed.
- Throughout the development and pilot phase, monthly status meetings with NC DSS leadership and the co-chairs of the Children's Services Committee of the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services were conducted to keep county leadership up to date on the software development and receive their feedback
- User Checkpoints have been conducted at 5-6 month intervals along the way. The purpose of the User Checkpoints is to provide counties and NC DSS staff with early hands-on exposure to the system functionality. To date, three User Checkpoints have been held with the counties.

The county and state stakeholders completed User Acceptance Testing (UAT) in July 2017 and again in November 2017 prior to the first software release to production in early August. UAT was an opportunity for NC DSS and county staff to test the system prior to pilot county implementations.

As the software project took shape, requirements from the counties were added and existing requirements were refined and updated. To accommodate these changes, project leadership determined that updates to the working software product would be added incrementally. The following release schedule was determined:

- Release 1:
 - Person, Intake, Investigation, Ongoing Case management, Provider management, Legal (base), Eligibility, IV-E Eligibility, ICWA (base), Process Support (base), Security (base), Financials (base), Federal Reporting
- Release 2:
 - Adoption, Provider Management, Links Case management, NC Kids, Foster home Licensure, Indian Child Welfare Act (Enhancements), Legal (Enhancements), ICPC, Security (Enhancements), Process Support (Enhancements), Financials (Enhancements), Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)
- Release 3
 - CCWIS, Social Enterprise Collaboration (SEC), QA

The rollout of the base product (Release 1), was also organized to be released incrementally to the counties. Each county was assigned to be in a group, as follows:

- Pilot – September 2017
- Group 1 - January 22, 2018
- Group 2 - March 26, 2018
- Group 3 - April 23, 2018
- Group 4 - May 21, 2018
- Group 5 - June 25, 2018

Following successful first release to each county, successive releases would be rolled out bundled together to each county active in NC FAST.

This deployment plan was approved by the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) on December 16, 2016.

On August 7, 2017, NC FAST P4 went live in the five pilot counties; meaning new referrals of child abuse and neglect began to be entered into the system. Cases that were already open in the following processes were still being processed in legacy systems until they close through the normal work flow:

- Existing open CPS Intake,
- CPS Assessment,

- CPS In-Home Services.

Since the inception of the pilot, the counties, NCFAST, and the Division of Social Services have maintained regular communication about the system's status. As is the nature of the pilot process, the counties have been able to identify components of the system that were not working as expected (defects) and have also identified gaps in the initial requirements developed (enhancements) to build the system. The pilot counties, the Division of Social Services, and NCFAST have worked to identify fixes for the system.

While NCFAST worked to improve system functionality with identified updates to critical items in January and February 2018, the pilot counties conveyed to the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services their belief that the number of problems identified caused enough concern that they could not support the further implementation of NCFAST without considerable attention to improve the system.

On December 22, 2017, the Director's Association sent a letter to DHHS Secretary Cohen, citing the following concerns with P4:

- Negative impact of the system on state/federal requirements.
- Additional workload created because of having to juggle the legacy system and the new system.
- Concerns about confidentiality (federal requirement) between economic services and child welfare services.
- The DSS Director's ability to monitor/assess work.
- Unresolved issues with the financials for foster care reimbursement.
- System down time.
- PIP policy changes have not been incorporated into NC FAST though rollout to more counties is scheduled.
- Backlog of help desk tickets.
- Security issues allow one county to change another county's work in progress.

DHHS leadership immediately reviewed the concerns and agreed that NC FAST P4 had critical issues that required system modification to improve functionality. On January 5, DHHS leadership sent an email to all county DSS directors informing them of the decision to adjust the roll out schedule and that a meeting would be held with the DSS Director's Association leadership, and the directors of the five pilot counties and Group 1 counties on January 10 to review all critical issues in detail and propose a plan forward. At the January 10 meeting, DHHS leadership and the DSS directors shared detailed lists of critical issues to be addressed and discussed a proposed revised roll out schedule that included fixing all defects and enhancements deemed "critical" by both DHHS leadership and the Directors. DHHS authorized the delayed implementation of NCFAST to the Group 1 counties until February 26, 2018 to provide time for the updates to be made and to provide an opportunity to validate that the updates addressed the identified issues.

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)

a. Review, assess, and revise the current policies and practices including, but not limited to, frequency, consistency, quality and documentation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> timely initiations of child protective services risk assessments that inform safety plans and services concerted efforts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess the needs of children, parents and foster parents identify necessary services to adequately address issues relevant to agency's involvement identify necessary services to achieve case goals 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	Status
		Completed As of June 30, 2017
b. Publish the revised manuals governing child welfare policies and practices	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q3	Completed As of September 30, 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	Completed As of September 30, 2017
d. Implement the revised policies, practices and training in the 10 OSRI counties	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q4	Completed As of December 31, 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	In progress
f. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q5	In progress

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g. Execute the statewide implementation plan for the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q7	Not yet started
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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
		Completed As of September 30, 2017
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: Q5	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	Completed As of December 31, 2017
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	Completed As of December 31, 2017
b. Develop the supervisor academy based on identified competencies	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	Completed As of December 31, 2017
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	Completed As of September 30, 2017
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	In progress

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f.	Incorporate lessons learned from the first cohort and execute the supervisor academy incorporating the revised policies for all 80 supervisors from the 10 OSRI counties	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	In progress
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. Implement a technical assistance model for NC DSS to provide multi-level assistance to county child welfare staff regarding the consistent application of policies, practices and training. This technical assistance model will be developed in concert with the Capacity Building Center. This technical assistance model will include strategies for NC DSS staff to teach, mentor, and coach county child welfare staff on the expected application of policy and practice standards to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being of children served by county child welfare programs. (Safety 1, Safety 2, Permanency 1, Permanency 2, Well-Being 1, Well-Being 2, Well-Being 3)

			Status
			Completed as of December 31, 2017
a.	Assess the current technical assistance model to support the consistent implementation of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q4	Completed as of December 31, 2017
b.	Explore other county-administered states technical assistance/support models to inform development	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q4	Completed as of December 31, 2017
c.	Revise the technical assistance model to counties based on the assessment	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	Completed as of December 31, 2017
d.	Document the revised North Carolina technical assistance to counties model	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q4	Completed as of December 31, 2017
e.	Define how counties' 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	In progress
f.	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: Q6	In progress
g.	Develop the protocol and processes by which quality assurance results will be analyzed and program improvement will be implemented and evaluated statewide	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q8	In progress
h.	Incorporate lessons learned from the 10 OSRI counties to strengthen the technical assistance model and develop business processes across NC DSS' child welfare teams	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started

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i. Execute a phased implementation plan for the technical assistance model using a geographic approach to support the consistent use of the revised policies and practices	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
j. Develop and execute a statewide communication plan regarding the technical assistance model / support activities, protocols, and processes	Begin Date: Q6 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
k. Expand and utilize the TA Gateway to support the consistent application of the technical assistance model	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8	In progress

5. Develop and pilot county level child welfare family engagement committees and a state level family advisory council that promotes and supports the involvement of families at case practice, policy, and systems levels. This model is 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 and Array of Services)

a. Review available family engagement leadership strategies at the case practice, policy, and systems levels and adopt/adapt components as needed	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q4	Status
		Completed as of December 31, 2017
b. Develop and document the framework for how county and state family engagement approaches are aligned. A charter will be developed for the state advisory council and will be the model charter for the county committees.	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q5	In progress
c. Identify 3 counties that are representative of North Carolina's population to pilot family engagement committees	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q5	In progress
d. Conduct organizational capacity/readiness assessment for the state to support implementation of family engagement committees in 3 counties and implement a state level family advisory council	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q4	Completed as of December 31, 2017
e. Identify and develop a charter outlining support mechanisms (i.e. family member recruitment, staffing, financing) for family engagement committees in the 3 counties and the family advisory council at the state level	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q5	Not yet started
f. Provide training, technical assistance, and coaching supports to the 3 counties to implement family engagement committees at the local level	Begin Date: Q4 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
g. Implement the family engagement committees in 3 counties.	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
h. Study how the family engagement committee will interact with the state-level family advisory council.	Begin Date: Q5 Completion Date: Q8	Not yet started
i. Involve the state child welfare family advisory council in policy development and other system level opportunities to support practice changes that promote family engagement at the local level	Begin Date: Q5 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

			Status
			Completed as of June 30, 2017
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	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

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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
			Completed as of September 30, 2017
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	
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	In progress
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	See Appendix B

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
			Completed as of December 31, 2017
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	
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

Appendix A

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
		Published as of March 1, 2017
a.	Propose administrative rules to govern the use of Guardianship Assistance Program funds	Begin Date: Q1 Completion Date: Q2
b.	Publish policy for implementation of the Guardianship Assistance Program	Begin Date: Q2 Completion Date: Q2
c.	Develop and provide training to county and court personnel on the application of the Guardianship Assistance Program	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q8
d.	Implement the Guardian Assistance Program statewide	Begin Date: Q3 Completion Date: Q6
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

Appendix A

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)

a. County DSSs and LME/MCOs will develop written agreements—one between each LME/MCO and the DSSs in their catchment area—which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Status
		In progress
b. NC DHHS will report quarterly on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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

Appendix A

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)

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: Q6	Status In progress
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	Completed as of September 30, 2017
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)

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	Status Completed as of December 31, 2017
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
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	In progress
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

Appendix A

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

Sample Permanency Performance Profile

Performance Measures - Permanency for Children in Foster Care						
JWise Data Source: NC Administrative Office of Courts. These numbers represent data from July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017.						
Performance Measures	North Carolina		Example County			Judicial District x
	Occurrences	Median Days	Total Occurrences	% of State Occurrences	Median Days	Median Days
<i>Court Improvement Program (CIP) Measures</i>						
Time to First Permanency Hearing (CIP 1)	5075	263	206	4.1%	300	300
Time to all Subsequent Permanency Hearings (CIP 2)	12791	126	498	3.9%	175	175
Time to Permanent Placement (CIP 3)	3140	456	247	7.9%	798	798
Time to Termination of Parental Rights Petition (CIP 4)	1404	472	133	9.5%	429	429
Time to Termination of Parental Rights (CIP 5)	239	608	32	13.4%	580	580
<i>Hearing Time Standard Reports</i>						
Adjudication Hearings - Total			234	100%		
Adjudication Hearings - Held within 60 days of the filing of the petition			164	70.0%		
Pending Adjudication Hearings - Total			37	100%		
Pending Adjudication Hearings - Pending less than 60 days of filing of petition			32	86.5%		
Disposition Hearings - Total			230	100%		
Disposition Hearings - Within 30 days of the adjudication hearing			229	99.6%		
First Permanency Planning Hearings - Within 365 day/12 months of the date of removal from the home			149 pending	n/a		

Appendix B

CFSR Round 3 Measures*

Source: Management Assistance. These numbers represent data from July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017.

Performance Measures	Performance Standard*	North Carolina	Example County	Judicial District x
Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care	40.5%	31.3%	18.8%	18.8%
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months	43.6%	44.6%	36.5%	36.5%
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care for 24 months or more	30.3%	37.7%	43.1%	43.1%
Re-entry to foster care within 12 months of discharge (to reunification, live with relative or guardianship)	8.30%	1.38%	0.00%	0.00%
Rate of placement moves per day of foster care (per 1,000 days of care for all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period)	4.1	4.8	3.8	3.8

OSRI Case Review Measures

Source: NCDSS Child Welfare OSRI Quarterly Report. These numbers represent data from the May - July 2017 case review period.

Performance Measures	Performance Standard	Statewide Data (n=54) (Percent of applicable cases rated as strength)		Example County (n=7) (Percent of applicable cases rated as strength)	
<i>Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</i>	95%	77.78%	n=14	100.00%	n=1
Item 1: Accepted Child Maltreatment Reports Initiated/Face-to-Face Contact	95%	77.78%	n=14	100.00%	n=1
<i>Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</i>	95%	55.56%	n=30	0.00%	n=0
Item 2: Prevent Entry into Foster Care or Re-Entry	95%	62.07%	n=18	20.00%	n=1
Item 3: Assess and Address the Risk and Safety Concerns	95%	55.56%	n=30	0.00%	n=0
<i>Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</i>	95%	21.43%	n=6	0.00%	n=0
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement	95%	71.43%	n=20	0.00%	n=0

Appendix B

Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child	95%	42.86%	n=12	33.33%	n=1
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement	95%	32.14%	n=9	33.33%	n=1
<i>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</i>	95%	53.57%	n=15	33.33%	n=1
Item 7: Placement With Siblings	95%	94.44%	n=17	66.67%	n=2
Item 8: Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care	95%	40.00%	n=8	33.33%	n=1
Item 9: Preserving Connections	95%	75.00%	n=21	33.33%	n=1
Item 10: Relative Placement	95%	53.57%	n=15	66.67%	n=2
Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care With Parents	95%	55.00%	n=11	100.00%	n=3
<i>Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</i>	95%	35.19%	n=19	28.57%	n=2
Item 12: Assess the Needs and Provide Services to Children, Parents, and Foster Parents	95%	46.30%	n=25	28.57%	n=2
Item 13: Case Planning for Parents and Children	95%	43.40%	n=23	42.86%	n=3
Item 14: Frequency and Quality of Visits Between Caseworkers and Children	95%	62.96%	n=34	42.86%	n=3
Item 15: Frequency and Quality of Visits Between Caseworkers, Mothers, and Fathers	95%	42.86%	n=21	28.57%	n=2
<i>Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</i>	95%	87.10%	n=27	100.00%	n=4
Item 16: Children's Educational Needs	95%	87.10%	n=27	100.00%	n=4
<i>Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</i>	95%	70.83%	n=34	33.33%	n=2
Item 17: Physical Needs of the Children	95%	76.92%	n=30	100.00%	n=3
Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Needs of the Children	95%	81.08%	n=30	20.00%	n=1