

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

Session Law 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**

February 1, 2017

Reporting Requirement

SECTION 12C.1.(a) of Session Law 2016-94 requires the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, to implement the requirements of the federal Program Improvement Plan to bring our State into compliance with national standards for child welfare policy and practices. The Division shall collaborate with county departments of social services to develop a model of oversight that supports program outcomes and a county's ability to meet performance standards as outlined in the Program Improvement Plan. Oversight may include support for continuous quality improvement, staff training, and data analysis. During the first two years of implementing the Program Improvement Plan, the Division shall ensure the three new Human Services/Planner Evaluator positions funded by this act are used to carry out the activities detailed in the Plan. Upon complete implementation of the Plan, these positions shall be used in child welfare services to continually improve outcomes for children and families.

The Division shall 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 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 December 31, 2018.

Over the course of the next two years, the approved Program Improvement Plan has certain activities and benchmarks that are expected to be completed at varying intervals.

Background Information

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, more specifically its agents, 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 a subjective evaluation 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 all seven outcome areas, as well as all 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 analysis was performed, as well as brainstorming possible 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 is officially underway with the implementation of its Program Improvement Plan. The implementation prescribes that each of the goals, strategies, and activities be managed by workgroups. This means that there are thirteen 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 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. Additionally, some workgroups 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 one or more workgroup, depending on the strategy.

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

While the Program Improvement Plan only became official on January 1, 2017, the goals, strategies, and activities have remained fairly consistent since the Fall of 2016. This allowed for the workgroups to begin meeting to start the planning for the assigned strategies and activities. At this time, most workgroups have met at least once and are fully engaged in the work of the Plan.

North Carolina continues to receive support from the Administration for Children and Families to ensure the successful completion of its Program Improvement Plan and in turn an improved system for serving vulnerable children and families. This support includes 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 is also receiving 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

1. The Policy and Practices Workgroup is charged with the following:
 - Reviewing, assessing, and revising the current policies as they pertain to Child Protective Services;
 - Implementing the revised policy in the ten counties participating in the On Site Review Instrument;
 - Incorporating lessons learned from the ten counties;
 - Developing a statewide communication plan regarding the revised policies; and
 - Executing statewide implementation plan for the revised policies.

This workgroup is receiving consultation from the Capacity Building Center for States as it delves into the crucial task of assessing, revising, and implementing child welfare policy.

2. The Training System Workgroup is tasked with the following:

- Identifying training competencies for the revised child welfare policies (being completed by the Policy and Practices Workgroup);
- Revising training curricula and delivery methodology that will cover the identified training competencies based on the revised child welfare policies;
- Strengthening and mandating the use of the “Transfer-of-Learning” tool following all training events; and
- Developing a series of in-service trainings that county child welfare agencies can use to reinforce consistent practice.

3. The Supervisor Academy Workgroup is addressing the following:

- Identifying training competencies for consistent child welfare practice;
- Utilizing a random selection process to identify at least 80 supervisors to attend the Supervisor Academy within two years; all of the selected supervisors will hail from the ten pilot counties
- Incorporating lessons learned from the initial delivery of the Supervisor Academy;
- Developing a statewide plan (regional approach) for continued delivery of the Supervisor Academy;
- Developing a communication plan regarding the Supervisor Academy; and
- Executing an implementation plan for the Supervisor Academy.

This workgroup is receiving consultation from the Capacity Building Center for States as it tackles the notion of offering quality training and support for child welfare supervisors, as they are one of the key players in the achievement of successful outcomes for children and families.

4. The Technical Assistance Model Workgroup is exploring the following:

- Assessing current protocols regarding technical assistance and revise as needed;
- Documenting and implementing the revised technical assistance in the ten county child welfare agencies;
- Incorporating lessons learned from the delivery of any revised technical assistance to the county child welfare agencies;
- Developing a statewide plan (regional approach) to deliver consistent technical assistance
- Developing and executing a communication plan regarding North Carolina’s technical assistance model; and
- Examining and exploring the consistent use of the TA Gateway, which is an online system the North Carolina Division of Social Services invested in several years ago to help improve the delivery of technical assistance using a ticket system to track questions and issues, as well as a Knowledgebase that can be accessed publicly.

5. The Family Leadership Model Workgroup is charged with the following:

- Reviewing and adapting current family leadership models being utilized across the country;
- Conducting a readiness assessment of both families, youth, and professionals to evaluate their ability to implement a family leadership model;
- Determining what supports are needed for successful implementation and formalizing identified supports; and
- Creating the Family Leadership Council for North Carolina.

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

6. The Quality Assurance Workgroup is tasked with the following:

- Developing a communication plan regarding the use of the On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI) across North Carolina;
- Executing a webinar on the OSRI to orient county child welfare agencies to the tool;
- Providing 2nd level oversight to the 10 county child welfare agencies conducting their own case reviews (113 cases); and
- Conducting random reviews in the other 90 county child welfare agencies (100 cases).

7. The Permanency Profile Workgroup is addressing the following:

- Developing a "Permanency Profile" for each county child welfare agency using administrative and OSRI data;
- Publishing the Permanency Profile to both the Judicial and County level; and
- Facilitating local meetings regarding data and the improvements necessary.

8. The Court Engagement Workgroup is charged with the following:

- Developing a plan for court jurisdictions that are not meeting the standards and expectations;
- Providing consultation and support to county child welfare agencies and judicial districts;
- Collaborating and customizing training as the needs indicate; and
- Evaluating the effectiveness of such engagement.

The activities of this workgroup directly relate to the Permanency Profile Workgroup. Thus, it is the intention of this workgroup to delve into its tasks once the Permanency Profile has been developed.

9. The Guardianship Assistance Program Workgroup is addressing the following:

- Proposed administrative rules that will govern the Guardianship Assistance

Program (GAP). This proposal was submitted in 2016 with an expected effective date of January 1, 2017.

- Publishing child welfare policy that will guide implementation of this program;
- Developing and delivering training regarding the program;
- Implementing GAP statewide; and
- Monitoring the program to ensure it is operating within rules and policies.

10. The Service Collaboration Workgroup is charged with the following:

- Holding a series of meetings between Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations and county child welfare agencies;
- Establishing written agreements between all of the organizations on agreed upon standards;
- Reporting quarterly and providing consultation as needed; and
- Disseminating the lessons learned for statewide continuous quality improvement.

The Workgroup is being spearheaded by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine with funding support from the Duke Endowment.

11. The Diligent Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Parents Workgroup is tasked with the following:

- Developing tools for county child welfare agencies and private child placing agencies to conduct ongoing data analysis;
- Developing a communication plan regarding North Carolina's Diligent Recruitment Plan;
- Sharing the implementation of the Diligent Recruitment Plan; and
- Monitoring and strengthening county child welfare agencies Multi-Ethnic Placement Act plans.

This Workgroup is receiving support from the National Resource Center on Diligent Recruitment (NRCDR). Support from NRCDR is 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.

12. The CFSP-APRS-PIP Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup is addressing the following:

- Strengthening the external stakeholders' understanding of, and input into the development of, the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), as well as, the Annual Program and Services Report (APSR). Both of these documents are Federal reports that mandate stakeholder engagement and contribution. The CFSP is submitted every five years and the APSR is submitted annually.
- Developing a webinar that will educate stakeholders on each of these reports;
- Consulting with stakeholders regarding their understanding and input into each of

- these reports;
- Engaging in six listening sessions with stakeholders; and
- Coordinating with other systems to address any identified concerns.

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.

Please see Appendix A for details of the participants on each Workgroup.

APPENDIX A

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.		
<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Internal Members</u>	<u>External Members</u>
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 • DHHS Communications • Youth • Capacity Building Center for States
1.2 Enhance the training system to support the consistent application of revised policies and practices	9 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Camden County • Chowan County • Davie County • Wake County • UNC School of Social Work • NCSU Center for Family and Community Engagement
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 • Northampton County • Rowan County • Methodist University • UNC School of Social Worker • NCSU Center for Family and Community Engagement • 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	12 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Cabarrus County • Davie County • Durham County • Forsyth County • Guilford County • Mecklenburg County • Pitt County • Wake County • Wilson County
1.5 Develop and implement a state level child welfare family leadership model which will	6 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Forsyth County • Mecklenburg County

provide family “voice” to inform state plans (CBCAP, CFSP/APSR, CAPTA), policies and practices		• Richmond County • Wake County • Wilson County • NCSU Center for Family and Community Engagement • Capacity Building Center for States • Youth • Prevent Child Abuse – North Carolina • NC Families United • Alamance System of Care • 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.		
<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Internal Members</u>	<u>External Members</u>
2.1 Operationalize the state level quality assurance system so that areas of child welfare practice needing improvement are consistently identified and addressed	9 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Catawba 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	12 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Buncombe County • Cabarrus County • Davie County • Durham County • Forsyth County • Guilford County • Mecklenburg County • Pitt County • Wake County • Wilson 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.		
<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Internal Members</u>	<u>External Members</u>
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 • DHHS Communications • NC Department of Justice
3.2 NC DSS, Indigent Defense	7 Child Welfare Services	• NC Court Improvement Project

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	Section staff members	• NC Department of Justice • 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	4 Child Welfare Services Section staff members	• Chatham County • Cleveland County • Haywood County • Mecklenburg County • Union County • Wilson County
Goal 4. Strengthen cross-system service provision to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families.		
<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Internal Members</u>	<u>External Members</u>
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 Parent
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	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

and establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms.		
Goal 5. Enhance the statewide data quality, collection, and dissemination of information regarding services provided.		
<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Internal Members</u>	<u>External Members</u>
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