

4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Category: ISC#1 Tier 2 Innovations In Services to Customers

Project Title: DV Screening Tool Used in Child and Family Team Meetings

- 1. Project/Program Summary:** In 2001, Nash County participated in a pilot program called Multiple Response System (MRS). In this program, departments of social services would respond to reports of abuse and neglect using either the traditional investigative method, or a more family-friendly assessment method. Since its inception, MRS has been fully implemented in all 100 counties. An integral part of MRS is Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings. One area of concern quickly emerged regarding meetings involving allegations of domestic violence. While the state recommends that two separate meetings are held, one with the victim and another with the batterer, some non-offending adult victims would sometimes choose to have the CFT meeting with their batterer present. Social workers struggled with how to accommodate that request and at the same time create an environment conducive to safety for the child victims, the non-offending adult victim, and the social workers. Additionally, the batterer needed to be held accountable for his/her actions. For these reasons, an assessment tool consisting of eleven (11) questions was developed to help the social worker and the adult victim determine if having the meeting together was the best decision, considering the circumstances of their particular case. The tool would also assure that the agency had adequately addressed safety issues prior to allowing a CFT meeting with both the non-offending adult victim and the batterer present
- 2. Innovation:** Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects? Training was offered at the state level to address safety in CFT meetings, but there was no specific information provided on how to deal with an adult victim's request to have their batterer present for the meeting. This assessment tool provides documentation for a social worker's rationale in allowing the joint meeting.
- 3. Project Success and Impact:** What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration. The objectives of the project were to address the needs verbalized by clients experiencing domestic violence and at the same time assure that appropriate documentation was in place to justify actions taken that were in conflict in recommendations made by the state. The tool met these objectives and was used 100% of the time upon request by the adult victim. Our agency collaborated with staff of the local Domestic Violence Shelter as well as with the Family Centered Meeting Project staff at North Carolina State University to develop this tool. The Child Protective Services line social workers also had input into the development of the tool.
- 4. Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done? The project required no additional resources to implement. The state provided training over the course of several months to help social workers develop a good understanding of domestic violence and the safety issues in CFT meetings. One challenge that had to be overcome was the need to be responsive and sensitive to the needs of our clients while at the same time following recommendations of the state. Through attending meetings at the state and local levels and engaging in intensive discussions regarding this issue early on, the challenge aforementioned evolved into a non-issue.

5. **Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems? This assessment tool can be used as it is written by any agency or it can be adapted to their needs as appropriate. The Family Centered Meetings Project at North Carolina State University has requested permission to share this assessment tool in their trainings across the state. A copy of the tool may also be obtained by contacting the Nash County Department of Social Services Child Protective Services Unit.