

Children Services Committee
12/13/17
Raleigh, NC

Tri Chairs: Tracie Murphy, Heather Skeens, April Snead

In attendance: See sign in form attached.

By telephone (counties): Person, Caldwell, Johnston, Chatham, Lincoln, Edgecombe, Catawba, Rockingham, Stokes, Gaston, Robeson, Anson, Wilson, Stanly, Beaufort, Nash, Guilford, Brunswick, and Davidson.

Approval of the minutes: November 2017 meeting minutes were approved. A motion was made by Melody Corprew and seconded by Karen Pritchard.

CCPT State Team Update (Wanda Marino): CCPT State Advisory Board was formed 4-5 years ago to provide a county voice and to assist with the annual survey. This committee has faced some struggles and were looking for guidance and structure. Dr. Blake Jones from University of Kentucky is a national consultant for citizen review panels (in NC CCPT is the citizen review panel) and he has been brought in to help provide support. There CCPT Advisory Board held a retreat for two days in late November. This is particularly important given HB 630. There are concerns that the state is not in total compliance with the CAPTA requirement. Dr. Jones met with the NCSU research team (who has been overseeing the survey) in making use of the data including qualitative data. There is an opportunity to re-envision how citizen review panels are conducted. A 2010 report from Prevent Child Abuse will be used to also provide guidance. Furthermore, a guiding principle will be quality over quantity. There are CCPT's that are very productive and meet the statutory requirements, however, all CCPT's should be reviewed to determine that they are meeting the requirement of citizen review panels. The team has discussed a number of improvements to include a designated person from the Division of Social Services (Melanie Meeks) and more communication with local teams. The CCPT Advisory Board has revised the mission and vision statements and have discussed values. The board divided into four teams to cover the following: how to include more family integration, examining CAPTA law and structure of CCPT, impacts of HB 630 and potential reform, and support for local CCPT. By-laws will be finished in January 2018. The goal is to speak with one voice to advocate for children and families. Recognized the need for more consumer (family) voice in CCPT's.

Kristen O'Connor added that there has not been capacity at the state level to provide support to local teams that would allow them to adequately identify and address system level issues. There has been recognition that CCPT's may not be able to meet the true requirement of the federal legislation that is much more consumer or client driven than local teams are.

Heather Skeens reiterated the local CCPT's are important and the Children's Services Committee has made this a priority with at least annual presentations on the work of the Advisory Board. Ms. Marino added that the discussion of merged CCPT and CFPT was not something that the board has spent time on but may be something that is further explored in the future.

Adoption Promotion Update (Kim Best and Tracie Murphy): Kim Best provided an overview of the adoption promotion program, what funds are used for, and direction for the future. The premise of the program (per the General Statute) is to provide funds to DSS and private agencies to incentivize and improve performance in finding adoptive homes for children. The funds are to be used for improving adoption programs. The current DCDL was issued on 10/23/17 (see slides for the link). The only change this year was regarding the adoption services agreement. In the absence of a signed adoption services agreement then the funds should be shared 50-50 between the county DSS and the private agency. Ms. Skeens asked a question regarding this being appealed and Ms. Best confirmed that this process would not be needed as in any situation with a disagreement, there is a 50-50 split of the funds. The DCDL breaks down the funding categories and what services are included. The funds are divided equally among the four categories. The category should be documented on the adoption services agreement.

There are explicit instructions that the funding should be used to improve adoption programs both in increasing the number of adoptions completed and the types of services offered to children. Ms. Best reviewed data in the slides. There are increasing numbers of children entering foster care, however, the number of children being adopted has remained fairly flat. The funding invested into the program has been increasing over the years, however, there has not been an increase in the number of adoptions completed. NC has not been enhancing their adoption services by using funds from the program. This will be an area of focus for the work group to determine what can be done to move the needle forward to increase the number of adoptions and make good use of the funds. Expenditures are also broken down on the PowerPoint slides. Private agency contracts will be decreased, depending on prior funding. Amendments were done to the contracts with continued discussions about the best interest of the program and children. A new threshold, still considering prior performance history, was used to allocate funding with some agencies being reinstated to original amounts and some decreased. Performance will continue to be a driver for changes and improvements to the program. Private agencies must have a contract with the Division (15 agencies are currently) in order to obtain incentive funds. If DSS agencies are partnering with agencies without a contract, they will not be eligible to receive incentive funds. Slides provide a list of all of the contracted agencies and updates will be provided annually.

Ms. Murphy added that the committee has been meeting bi-monthly. In the next meeting, the committee will be doing a “deep dive” into how outcomes can be improved. In 2013-2014, budget was \$2.5 million and 1900 children were free with 1200 adoptions. In 2015-2016 the budget has increased by \$1 million but only 200 additional adoptions took place with 2600 children waiting. In 2016-2017, \$4.8 million was spent with 1370 total adoptions.

Ms. Skeens asked a budgetary issue. While more children were claimed for the program, there are a number of variables that could impact. Possible explanations include more adolescent and sibling group adoptions and/or increased county awareness in claiming and spending the funds. The workgroup is going to be looking at all of these variables.

Ms. Murphy added that the committee will be looking at the baseline, how duties are shared, and how funds are spent. She reiterated that work must be done to improve the program. A question

was asked if the funding could be spent on salaries and it cannot be done. Ms. Best acknowledged that this could be explored, however, the funding could not be guaranteed from year to year if a county created a position using incentive funds in one year. Ms. Murphy asked for the committee to give input now as there will be changes to the policy. Ms. Murphy and Debra Donahue from Forsyth County both serve on the committee. New Hanover County, Buncombe County, Children's Home Society, Children's Home Alliance, Boys and Girls Home, and Seven Homes are all represented on the work group. There is a balance between public and private agencies.

PIP Workgroup Updates (Arlette Lambert): Slides were sent out to committee this morning. Quarter four of the work will end on December 31, 2017. This means that we are halfway through the PIP. Ms. Lambert emphasized that the PIP is not the follow up, it is the main event. The CFSR is really just a QA of how the system is functioning and the PIP is where the system change occurs. The Children's Bureau (CB) came to visit in the fall. The CSC tri-chairs and pilot counties were represented. Feedback from the Children's Bureau (CB) was around interpretation of the work being done and NC renegotiated portions of the PIP as a result. These have been approved as of last week. The changes are highlighted in the presentation. Some highlights are as follows:

- All initiations must include individual interviews with children
- Home visit where victim resides must occur the same day the victim child is seen
- Each case must be staffed twice monthly (two level decision making)
- Every contact with family must include individual interview with child.
- At least one contact per month must be in the home
- At least one contact per month with each child must be with child and his/her caretaker
- In high risk cases, all children, parents/primary caretakers and all maltreating parents/caretakers must be seen face to face once a week.
- If reunification is primary plan, face to face contact with parent must occur at least month and the majority (4 of 6) must be at parent's residence.

The new policy is much more streamlined and easy to read with requirements more clearly laid out. Assessment, Intake, In-Home, and Permanency Planning manual improvements have all been made. Feedback is being obtained from the counties that have implemented and will make further changes before rolling out statewide in 2018. Trainings are including both old and new policy, however as of April 1 2018, training will only be using revised manual. The DIY kits are being developed and four new kits will be available next year.

The CB recommended that the supervisor academy be more closely tied to policy and practice. While one cohort had already completed the first part of the academy, this group will receive the revised training. The expectation is that 80 supervisors complete the academy and currently only 13 have completed. Additional work will be needed to get these numbers increased. The workgroup is meeting tomorrow and will address this.

The Children's Bureau raised a number of concerns with the Technical Assistance PIP goal and the representatives wanted to see that revised policy and practice was "hitting" front level work.

There will be a multi-level TA model with the goal of TA to teach, mentor, and coach county child welfare staff.

For the state level family advisory council, the CB wanted both state and individual county engagement of families (rather than a state level council as proposed by the work group). Center for Community and Family Engagement and family partners are also contributing to this work. The CB would like to see this piloted in three counties (ideally small, medium, and large). Currently Richmond has volunteered, however medium and large pilot counties are needed. Ms. O'Connor reiterated that serving as a pilot would involve significant support to the county in getting a local council established.

Goal Two is focused specifically in improving outcomes on the OSRI tool. These reviews are happening in pilot and non-pilot counties

Goal Three is focused on permanency outcomes. A permanency profile has been developed and it includes CFSR data, specific OSRI case findings and J Wise court data. It is one page, double sided. This data is being populated. This work will also include engagement of the child welfare and court systems with ongoing meetings to address these outcomes. Counties have been invited to a kick-off. The pilot county court districts were included in the kick-off meeting (along with any counties that were in the same districts with a pilot county). Also, one western district was included to ensure representation from across the state. This may be expanded to other counties after the PIP. Court engagement and partnering is critical as permanency is not just a DSS issue. The Guardianship Assistance Program is also included under goal three. This program is currently being underutilized and work will be done to increase participation.

Diligent Recruitment is included under goal four. While the plan was due in June 2017, the CB indicated that this goal would not be met until all of the county plans were complete and so this goal is extended until June 2018.

Goal Five is focused on NCFAST.

Ms. Lambert also gave an update regarding how the state is doing on the OSRI. The baseline was established using the 10 pilot counties. Data is in for the second baseline (May-October 2017) and a review was held with CB last week. The CB will be setting a percentage for improvement and indicated that this should be available in next couple of weeks. This will be shared with counties. Ms. Lambert reviewed data (see slides for more detail) and indicated that several of the items represented a decline from 2015. Ms. Skeens asked a question about the source of the data and Ms. Lambert said that the data is being pulled directly from the OSRI file reviews. The expectation is 95%, however, there is a standard of improvement of between 5 and 10% during each review. Ms. Murphy thanked Ms. Lambert for sharing the information and asked when the new policies would be shared with counties. Ms. Lambert acknowledged that a timeline for the roll out is being developed and the PIP requires Sept 2018, however, given the positive feedback received it would be beneficial to get it out earlier. While the policy is available for counties to use, it is not being promoted. Ensuring that new policies are properly aligned within NCFAST is also a concern. An estimate that has not been finalized yet is April 2018. The Division is considering doing a blitz that is similar to what was done with Temporary Parental Safety

Agreements along with DIY kits that could be taken back to counties. A question was asked about new policy being incorporated into NCFAST and Ms. Lambert acknowledged work is being done to make NCFAST current with revised policy manual. This is a reason for delay of the statewide roll out in order to minimize confusion. There are not OSRI counties that are in NCFAST but two counties are in Group One (Pitt and Buncombe). Concerns were expressed about the discrepancies. Ms. Baker asked about the DCDL that indicated policy be implemented in November 2017 for OSRI counties, however, per the CPR's this is not effective in November 2017 and a clarifying letter has been requested. Ms. Skeens clarified that the tri-chairs have requested a revised letter. Ms. Betty Kelly stated that a letter is being developed with an anticipated release of next week. She also stated that the DCDL sent out in October was meant for the pilot counties, not all of the other 90 counties. Ms. Murphy encouraged counties to remain proactive. Ms. O'Connor acknowledged that improved communication is being worked out and that vast change in child welfare system will be occurring very quickly. She asked counties to continue to ask questions and hold state accountable with communication. Since things are moving so quickly, it is possible that communication will be missed.

TRIP (Transportation Really Is Possible), Betty Kelly: TRIP letter went out last week and is available. Please let Erin Connor know if you have any questions.

A motion was made to adjourn at 11:29 am.

<u>County</u>	<u>Signature</u>
Scotland	Ann Sneed
NC DSS CWS	Orlette Sordant
Alexander	Trish Baker
State DSS	Kerwin Brown
YADKIN CO. HSA	K. James
Beaufort	Melanie Cooper
Hyde	Laurie Park
Rowan	Dana Taylor
NCDSS	Betty Kelly
NCDSS CWS	Jan H. Boyum
NCDSS CWS	Bimbalyst
WAYNE	Kim McGuire
Orange	Crystal Mitchell
HALIFAX	Sitt Seltin
WILSON	Hobby Stone
Rowan	Beverly Berger
BRISTOL	Ch. C. Clark
Richmond	Dorothy Garrison
Rocky	David Rockwell
Dare	Linda Hyatt
Pender	Wes Flare