

Children Services Committee
2/07/18
Raleigh, NC

Tri Chairs: Tracie Murphy, Heather Skeens, April Snead

In attendance: See sign in form attached.

By telephone (counties): Caldwell, Lincoln, Rowan, Catawba, Moore, Alamance, Beaufort, Stokes, Cleveland, Robeson, Cabarrus, Columbus, Gaston, Tyrrell, New Hanover, Yadkin, Buncombe, Rockingham, Brunswick, Franklin, Edgecombe, Johnston, Iredell, Durham, Avery, Davidson, Bladen, and Jackson.

Approval of the minutes: December 2017 meeting minutes were approved. A motion was made by Trish Baker and seconded by Sheila Evans.

Review of Dear County Director Letters (Lisa Cauley): Ms. Cauley provided an overview of recent Dear County Director Letters. There is a letter that addresses National Youth in Transition Database requirements. Another letter was issued regarding the IV-E federal review. This was a big accomplishment for NC and went very well overall. There was one error case where the removal home was a relative. There were also non-error cases where IV-E funds could have been claimed and were not. Reviewers noted that judicial findings were timely and above expectations, records were well organized and included relevant documents for determination, safety checks consistently being done and documented, and 5120 and redetermination forms were done well. A recommendation was made to ensure that placement logs are maintained and are accurate with payments being made to providers.

Gina Curucullo reviewed the custody agreement letter. She reiterated that custody can only be changed in court and cannot be done outside out court. Counties should not be executing private custody agreements and instead go to court or identify other mechanisms (e.g. temporary safety agreements). Custody agreements outside of court are outside the scope of social services. Any questions regarding this letter may be sent to CPR. A county may pay for a private attorney to work with a family to get this worked out.

Ms. Cucorullo also announced that regarding IV-E eligibility, the AOC J 150 form has been updated to clearly indicate that efforts to prevent removal was reasonable. It is very important that counties use this form.

Lisa Cauley addressed the letter issued regarding the modified policy manual. This manual is posted on the TA gateway for counties to review and use if they choose. It is only being required in the 10 OSRI counties. There has been no revision to the program monitoring tools yet but this will be complete by June.

Finally, there was a letter issued regarding the annual Child Welfare Funding Survey. Please turn in your survey. This provides very useful information that is not captured in other places.

Ms. Cauley announced that next month in the Children's Services Committee a review of the OSRI data will be provided. The OSRI quarterly report, which has recently been developed, is a compilation of reviews and provides guidance on where counties should focus to improve OSRI outcomes. The draft report will be sent out and please send feedback to the tri-chairs through Jennie Kristiansen. Specifically, information is needed from counties regarding the usefulness of the report and where improvements can be made. Ms. Skeens added that she shared with Michael Becketts the importance of ensuring that counties understand the deficits and recommendations from the division regarding how counties can improve their scoring. The data will include the whole state divided out between the 10 OSRI counties and the other 90 counties. Counties are not mentioned by name. The draft report does not cover recommendations on all 18 factors but a smaller number to allow for focus to address in a manageable way before moving on to additional areas.

Adoption Promotion Presentation (Kim Best, Jamie Bazemore, and Alicia Gaither): Ms. Best reviewed adoption promotion expectations and also roles and responsibilities at federal, local and state level. The goal is to build shared knowledge and recognize that there is a budget problem within adoption promotion. No decisions will be made today. There is a need to contain costs by adjusting payment methods and amounts or to obtain increased funds for the program. Ms. Best encouraged that we must start thinking concretely and seriously about what can be done to drive performance and increase outcomes. States are to utilize funds to advance adoption programs and permanency for children and youth in foster care. The intent locally is to expedite and increase adoptions of special needs children and youth. Also, want to see public private partnership to ensure adoptions are finalized in timely manner.

DSS agencies use adoption promotion funds for recruitment/retention, legal fees related to legal clearance, contractors, adoption preparation for youth. Private agencies use funding for services they have already rendered but fall into same areas. Use is in line with the requirements of the program but even with the appropriate use we are not seeing outcomes in line with the goal which is to increase/improve adoptions for children and youth.

Program in the current format is not working as evidenced by increasing costs in excess of what is budgeted statewide, not achieving adoption outcomes, distribution of funding, and clarity of roles between public and private agencies. The statewide adoption promotion budget is \$3.6 million per year with opportunity to earn additional federal incentive funds, however, these funds are tied to success rate of adoptions completed in each state (determined annually). In 2013, NC received \$112,000, in 2014 NC received no funding and in 2015 NC received \$220,000. This underlines the fact that NC needs to improve access to draw down the federal funds. Since the program has overspent funds, this has moved funding away from prevention programming which also needs investment. In summary, the expenditures over the past five years have doubled but total adoptions completed is not in line as the population of children available continues to grow. While the county expenditures have tripled over the past four years, the private agency expenditures have remained the same.

Ms. Bazemore reviewed the current methodology for baseline determination (see slides and handouts for additional information). A question was asked regarding spending the funding and counties must have either spent or encumbered the funds prior to receiving new funding.

Ms. Skeens asked a question about a discrepancy between the number of adoptions statewide in the PowerPoint and the baseline handout. Ms. Bazemore will follow up on this.

Ms. Bazemore described the phenomenon where there are small number of counties are drawing down significant “windfalls” of payments (\$1.1 million in FY 15-16 and \$2.3 million in FY 16-17) with several years of below baseline performance.

Ms. Murphy asked a question regarding division of funding between private and public agencies. Within state appropriation, 20% is to be available specifically for private child placing agencies. Ms. Gaither stated that for anything in the budget bill, 20% must be allocated to private agencies. This is a part of the \$3.6 total funding allocated. Significantly more funding than this is allocated based on the agreements that counties have with private child placing agencies (approximately 42-44% each year).

A question was asked about division of “private” v. “public” agency adoptions and Ms. Bazemore clarified that the “private” agency adoptions are a subset of “public” agency adoptions.

Ms. Bazemore provided information regarding how other states use this funding (Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, Virginia). Three of the states only use federal adoption incentive money each year and no state funding is allocated. Every state has a different way of disbursing. Pennsylvania does not distribute any funds. In Virginia, the local agencies submit proposals up to \$5,000. Ohio uses a baseline method similar to NC. For children age 0-8 who were adopted the local agency receives \$2,000 and for children 9-18 years old the agency receives \$6,000. California uses the federal baseline formula with four categories based on “hard to place” children. Ms. Jackson asked a question about reimbursement to providers in Ohio and California. Ms. Bazemore responded that neither Ohio nor California give funding to private providers.

Ms. Bazemore reviewed the federal formula which is based on the rate of success based on total adoptions achieved, also considering the population in need of service (see handout on federal formula).

Alicia Gaither reviewed the baseline formula (handout three). For the purposes of the handout, the state fiscal year was used (not the federal). The difference between state and federal incentives is outlined by county.

Ms. Best reviewed that partnerships between public and private agencies has sometimes become a barrier, rather than a support in the finalizing adoptions. In some situations, adoptions have been delayed and invoices from private agencies are not submitted on time. The workgroup has spent time deconstructing the adoption process from both private agency and DSS side. The purpose was to examine overlap and duplicative services. This process indicated that the overlaps are primarily with paperwork and visits (i.e. both agencies are doing both of these).

Considerations for moving forward are how to best incentivize outcomes, remain within budget and determine what appropriate funding method for private agencies is. Next steps are to finalize

funding for next fiscal year, explore alternative methodologies including application of federal rate, and convene of a smaller workgroup of DSS Directors and private agency leaders to facilitate a discussion regarding strategies.

A motion was made to adjourn at 11:31 am.

KUMa Unplanted	Director, Halifax DSS	
Clifton Hardison	Director, Washington	
Pam Stewart	SW Program Manager, Carteret DSS	
Denise Boyette	Interim Director - Johnston	
Dana Jayko	Director	Rowan
Dolly Haffman Clayton	Director	Stanly HHS
Shelia Stokes	-PM	Guilford County DSS
Kim Hamell	- Director	Yadler Co.
Susan Osborne	Director	Alamance Co -
Christ Lewis	Director	Carteret
Ms Z	Director	Craven
Lisa A. Berger	Prog Mgr	Rowan
Sueci		David
Trina Ebben	Program Administrator	Edgecombe DSS
Shelia B. Davis		Southampton Co.
Karon Mitchell		Cleveland
Chi C. Olin		GASTON
Pam Stewart	SW Program Manager	Carter
Joni Welch		Randolph
Jaynetta Butler		Randolph
Gyan Siles		Simpson
Chuck Wyatt		Dare
Wanda McLean		Stanly
John Gelp		Rockyford
Lauris Pico		Wayne
Karen Harrington		Catawba

2/7/18 Sign In

April Kneed
Clifton Hardison

Chris C. Collins

Susan McCutchen

Suzanne Chaney

Scotland

Washington

Garson

Luxde

Perquimans