



PENNSYLVANIA Child & Family Services Review EXPRESS

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A collaborative effort between
Federal, State, & Local
Stakeholders to enhance the lives
of children & families



CFSR: the Onsite Review

Welcome to the third edition of the Pennsylvania CFSR Express! Our goal is to provide meaningful information about the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) to help improve outcomes for children and families.

Have you ever wondered after a long, exhausting day whether or not you made a difference? All of us have probably thought this from time to time after frustrating day at the office.

Quality assurance and improvement efforts can help answer this question. The CFSR is another vehicle to measure system strengths and needs to help better determine what systemic factors and practice issues lead to better outcomes.

The statewide Self-Assessment, described in the previous edition, is the initial step in the CFSR process. The second step is the onsite review, which will begin on July 28, 2008 in Philadelphia, Allegheny, and Northumberland counties. A total of sixty-five cases will be reviewed by a team of federal and state reviewers.

The review will include an examination of the case record and interviews with key participants. Assigned caseworkers, service providers, caregivers, parents, and children will likely be interviewed. The questions asked will relate to safety, permanence, and well-being, and will give key participants the opportunity to be

heard. The interviews provide those involved with the opportunity to share essential information that may not be in the case record.

In addition to the case-related interviews, local and statewide stakeholders will be interviewed to identify broader strengths and areas needing improvement within the state. The onsite review will be completed in five days. On the final day, a statewide exit conference will occur in Philadelphia, at which the Federal staff will present a preliminary summary of the findings.

Soon after, Pennsylvania will begin work on a Program Improvement Plan.

Important Dates

Period Under Review

- Now - 7/28/08

Statewide Assessment

- Due - 5/26/08

Onsite Review

- Starts - 7/28/08

Practice Spotlight: Indian Child Welfare

"Providing tribes direct access to federal child welfare resources is one of the most important things the federal government can do to help American Indian and Alaska Native children and Families," said Terry L. Cross, Executive Director of NICWA, Seneca.

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) was organized to give support to tribal nations, states and organizations assisting Native American children across the United States. The National Indian Child Welfare Association provides technical assistance based on its *Relational World-view model*. This model is designed to enhance the level and quality of child

welfare and related services delivered to American Indian children and their families by their tribes or urban Indian organizations.

Currently NICWA is offering a Tribal Child Welfare Certification that lends itself to the growing and changing field of Tribal Child Welfare. "Through the Tribal child welfare certification process, NICWA intends to enhance the quality of child welfare services provided to American Indian children and families by insuring that Tribal child welfare programs have access to staff trained in the specialized knowledge and skills needed to provide the most effective services.

The National Indian Child Welfare Association is a national nonprofit and comprehensive source of information in American Indians child welfare and works on behalf of Indian children and families. NICWA is interested in the needs of Indian children in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and want to partner together with us to see that Indian children in foster care receive "services and families they deserve."

To obtain more information about the services NICWA provides contact: www.nicwa.org

Don Hockenberry—York County CYS

Interview with a Round One County — Lancaster

What was your Round One experience like?

Amy Campbell (CYS): I believe that overall our experience in Round One was a positive one. It was significant in terms of the time and intensiveness of the time needed to prepare for the entire process. It really became a team effort. From Record preparation to preparing staff to review of records, staff at all levels participated. We had the opportunity to meet and interact with staff from other counties. It was incredibly beneficial to hear suggestions and thoughts from them. I believe that it helped us not feel so “alone” in the experience. We are also very fortunate to have a great relationship with our Juvenile Probation Office. Dave Mueller and his staff are great!! That was so important overall in our effort. We also had the opportunity to work closely with OCYF. They were very supportive and worked to assist us in any way.

I believe that we tried to be as open and honest in our approach to the process as possible. Because it was the first round, I’m not sure that any of us had a complete understanding of what to expect. We definitely tried to pay attention to details in the preparation and tried to make the experience a positive one for the review team.

By the end of the review, I think we were all just exhausted. A short time later, we were able to regroup and make some significant changes in our practice as a response. It also helped to reinforce that many of our approaches to families were positive ones and we were able to share that with staff.

Dave Mueller (JPO): I echo many of Amy’s thoughts about the experience and it certainly was a great opportunity to strengthen our ties with CYA and make new relationships with OCYF. I certainly was impressed by the wealth of talent, experience and leadership from

OCYF in the process. Additionally, it gave me, as a fairly new Chief JPO, a better understanding of the whole Child Welfare system. In the end, we still felt like we were trying to fit a square pegged juvenile justice system in to a round holed child welfare system, but we certainly learned a lot! Our staff who participated was also drawn into a broader perspective on their work and the work of our local Children and Youth agency.

What advice would you give other counties preparing for the onsite review?

Amy Campbell: My advice would be to assign specific duties to individuals during the preparation. Review, prepare and tab the records that are being reviewed. It was helpful to know in advance what the potential problem areas of the records were.

Make sure that your casework and JPO staff are completely aware of the process and understand what is happening. Looking back, I think I would have concentrated a little more time in this area. I think that careful preparation and development of timelines definitely pays off.

The entire process is definitely more of a marathon than a sprint!

Dave Mueller: My advice for JPO’s would be effective communication about the whole process to everyone; so, everyone understands what is going on. With regard to our involvement with the Federal review team I felt that they did not have a good grasp of juvenile probation work or office functioning or how the federal outcomes looked from probation viewpoint. This led to misunderstandings. One example of this was when the review team was meeting with our placement probation officer

(the one who supervised the juvenile during the period under review) he was asked, “What is the juvenile doing now that he has been released from placement?” The probation officer indicated that he didn’t know because he didn’t supervise the case anymore (meaning it had been transferred to another officer). At our local exit conference, we were shocked to hear the lead reviewer state that, “They were alarmed that Juvenile Probation did not even know where their clients were and juveniles were being lost in the cracks.” I recommend precise clarity of answers so that there can no confusion. Although we were told that the only questions would be about what happened during the period under review there were other questions outside of that as is indicated by the above example. The entire case must be understood as well as the entire process of CFSR. The prior “tabbing” of cases was definitely helpful to the reviewers, but also helpful for understanding what the review was about.

What impact has CFSR had on your county?

The core areas of Safety, Permanency and Well-Being obviously become the cornerstone of our practice. I think it is always difficult to hear others describe what they view as areas within your organization that need improvement. But, I think that we took that advice to heart and really made some significant changes within the Agency – greater inclusion of fathers, efforts aimed at improving our relationships with the courts and the timeliness of court hearings. At the same time, we started to use outcome information more than ever before. It was a good time for the review to happen within our organization. In the end, the changes that resulted were positive ones.

Q & A with Lancaster County

Amy Campbell, CYS

Dave Mueller, JPO