


COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Department of Public Welfare

SPECIAL TRANSMITTAL

SUBJECT: Pennsylvania Standardized Service Plan Forms

TO: County Children and Youth Social Service Agencies


FROM: Nancy L. Hardy, Deputy Secretary for
Children, Youth and Families

As demands on the child welfare system increase and the families we serve become more transient, identifying services to meet a family's needs and having the plan for those services follow the family is vital in promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of children in a timely manner. In response to the Federal Child and Family Services Review, Pennsylvania included in its Program Improvement Plan the task of developing standardized forms. The Department of Public Welfare began this process by convening a cross-systems workgroup in August 2003 that consisted of state and local level human service professionals.

Although the standardized service plan forms are not required, the Department recommends that counties begin to use the forms. The intent of standardizing forms is to make the transfer of cases between counties easier and less confusing for families and professionals alike while supporting collaboration and service integration. The development of standardized service planning tools will promote more consistent strength-based child and family centered practices around the state. These standardized forms are framed from the child welfare perspective and include state and federal requirements. As counties look to integrate services where children and families have needs and receive services from more than one categorical county program, the Department recognizes the possible need to include the required elements of those programs into their service plans. All modified service planning tools must be approved by the Office of Children, Youth and Families to ensure all child welfare requirements are met prior to implementation.

In the fall of 2003, a county information systems survey was conducted to determine which operating system each county was currently using. Through this survey we determined that the forms must be offered in Word format. Copies of family service plans and other service plans from all 67 counties were collected and reviewed

for existing format and content. A draft plan was reviewed with seven family focus groups in the Spring of 2004. After revision, the standardized family service plan was piloted in the fall of 2004 in three counties (Berks, Dauphin and Franklin). The Department also consulted with the Family Group Decision Making Statewide Implementation Team regarding the forms' compatibility with existing family engagement models.

To accommodate the needs of counties and to provide a family friendly format, the Family Service Plan is separated into nine sections and the Child's Permanency Plan into twelve sections. To ensure proper use of the forms, technical instructions and instructions for general completion are included.

Technical assistance, training and support to counties relating to loading the forms onto users' computers and/or servers is available through the Office of Children, Youth and Families' Information and Data Management Unit. Basic training will also be provided, as requested, to assist county agency staff in understanding the steps that should be taken to best use these templates. Counties are welcome to do their own training within their agencies. To contact Information and Data Management staff to arrange for technical assistance, please call 717-772-7708.

In order to implement the standardized forms, county children and youth agencies that currently have this functionality within their county specific information system, such as the Child Net Information System or the ACYS Child Welfare Information System, may want to work with their information system contractors to have their systems updated to include the data elements and fields of the standardized family service plan and the child's permanency plan. The cost of upgrading those systems to use the standardized forms should be covered in the maintenance sections and/or service level agreements of their contracts with those companies.

If you have any questions in regards to the forms or the instructions, please contact Kerin Kohler (kkohler@state.pa.us) at 717-346-0445.