

1406- ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

CHANGE # 05-2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

Under [N.C.G.S. §108A](#), Article 3, the Department of Health and Human Services is designated as the single state agency responsible for administering or supervising the administration of programs of Social Services established under the Social Security Act, other Federal laws or regulations, State appropriations and other non-federal sources. Direct administration of the programs is carried out through the local county Department of Social Services. The North Carolina Division of Social Services is responsible for developing policy that is in keeping with state and federal law and that represents best practice guidance; provision of training for county staff; and administering state-wide initiatives. Supervision of the local agencies is carried out through the issuance and interpretation of policies; provision of consultation and technical assistance; conducting biennial reviews of program performance; and establishing program improvement plans as needed to ensure that policies, standards, and methods are in operation to achieve safety for children. If a county agency is unable to correct agency practice so that adequate protective services are provided, the Division of Social Services has the authority to assume direct responsibility for providing services.

The Department of Social Services is the central agency in each county's child protection system. As such, it has several purposes: to receive reports of suspected child abuse, neglect, or dependency; to identify and protect children who have been abused, neglected, or are dependent or are at imminent risk; and to provide or arrange for services to help families meet their children's basic needs and to help families reduce the likelihood of maltreatment occurring in the future.

The Department of Social Services shall also provide regular community awareness and public education programs on recognizing and reporting abuse, neglect, and dependency. Community Coordination and cooperation in service provision are required essentials to achieving good family-centered practice for each agency and System of Care recognizes the importance of collaboration among all community based agencies that serve children and families.

II. MANDATED SERVICES

When organizing protective services an agency should begin by assessing the mandated responsibilities and then by determining how the agency as a whole can accomplish the tasks.

A. Intake

Each agency shall have specific written procedures for receiving CPS reports and for providing supervisory decision making 24 hours a day. The DSS is responsible for receiving reports of suspected child abuse, neglect, or dependency and evaluating these reports to determine if the reported information meets the statutory guidelines for child maltreatment. The Intake worker is also responsible for asking questions that will help the supervisors determine the urgency of the response time, the presence of other children in the home, and information that will help the line worker to prepare for the CPS assessment. In addition, the agency has an opportunity to educate reporters regarding State statutes, agency guidelines, the roles and responsibilities of child protective services, and other community agencies that may be of assistance.

The average caseload size for child welfare intake shall be no greater than one worker per 100 CPS referrals a month.

Further discussion of the intake process is discussed in Chapter VIII, [Section 1407](#) of the Family Services Manual.

B. CPS Assessment

The purpose of the CPS assessment is to gather sufficient information to determine if:

- Child maltreatment occurred;
- There is a risk of future maltreatment and the level of that risk;
- The child is safe within the home and, if not, what interventions can be implemented that will ensure the child's protection and maintain the family unit intact if reasonably possible;
- Continuing agency services are needed to reduce the risk of maltreatment occurring in the future and;
- Determine if out of home placement is necessary to protect the child from harm.

Work schedules of staff shall be sufficiently flexible to meet client needs. Intervention during this stage sets the tone for all future work with the children and their families. Assessing the family's strengths and needs on a comprehensive basis helps to tailor services to their needs and is consistent with the System of Care principle for individualized strengths-based care. During the CPS assessment, the agency must not only determine whether child abuse, neglect, or dependency occurred and the risk of maltreatment that may occur in the future, but it must also actively involve the parents in the process. Use of the structured decision making tools ensures that all the necessary information is obtained to determine if the family needs services. The decision making process also exemplifies the System of Care principle of child and family involvement by engaging the family in the CPS In-Home Services process. County Departments of Social Services are required to complete the comprehensive structured decision making tools. Further discussion of the steps taken and the tools completed in a CPS assessment are discussed in Chapter VIII, [Section 1408](#) of the Family Services Manual.

C. CPS In-Home Services

Social workers, families and the family's supports together determine the strategies to be used to change the conditions and behaviors that resulted in child abuse and neglect. Maintaining consistency with System of Care principles, the primary goal of the CPS In-Home Services process is to engage family members to reduce or eliminate the risk of maltreatment as well as to agree on what the family, their support system, the social worker, and other service providers will do to achieve needed changes. When the court is involved in a particular case, the court may order the parent or caretaker to participate in services or to complete certain actions on behalf of the child ([N.C.G.S. § 7B-904](#)). If the child cannot be maintained safely in the home or voluntarily placed safely with relatives or other kin while services are continued, then the agency should seek removal of custody through the juvenile court.

A further discussion of CPS In-Home Services and the tools completed are contained in Chapter VIII, [Section 1412](#) of the Family Services Manual.

III. A TOTAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

The county director must decide how these interrelated aspects of protective services will be provided by the agency. Providing all aspects of protective services is a total agency responsibility, even when the responsibility for protective services delivery is normally assigned to a specific staff person or a specialized unit. In other words, if CPS staff members are not able to meet the mandatory requirements for intake, CPS assessment, or CPS In-Home Services, the director must assign someone else to take responsibility for mandatory agency services until the assigned staff is available.

The county director of social services is responsible for ensuring that child protective services are provided for all children within each county who are found to be abused, neglected, or dependent ([N.C.G.S. § 7B-302](#)). To offer adequate protective services, the director and staff must have a clear understanding of the legal authority for providing voluntary and involuntary services to families.

Agencies are expected to adhere to laws and policies when administering and designating CPS roles and responsibilities. Child protective services policies and procedures are designed to provide safety to children at risk while respecting the family's right to privacy, to self-determination, and to its unique cultural identity. Standards for CPS Delivery were first established in February 1993. However, they have been incorporated within the policy manual instead of a stand alone document for all of Children's Services.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AND DATA SYSTEM

The agency should have an organizational chart that identifies staff by name, position class, employee class, education, CPS experience, and Children's Services training attended and scheduled. Agencies shall be able to readily access information that provides:

- The number of fulltime staff positions budgeted
- The number of fulltime staff positions filled
- Completed and scheduled training required by general statute and Division policy
- The number of reports received and the number of reports screened out, by month and year
- The number of open CPS assessments by month and year
- The number of CPS investigative assessments requiring more than 30 days to complete, by month and year
- The number of CPS family assessments requiring more than 45 days to complete, by month and year
- The number of CPS In-Home Services cases, by month and year

V. STAFFING

A. Supervisors

The supervisor teaches and models practice standards that are consistent with federal and state statutes, Administrative Rules, and protective services policy. Supervisors are responsible for providing oversight to social work practice performed by their workers. Supervisors are expected:

- to meet regularly with social work staff in order to ensure adherence to law, rule, and policy
- to provide on the job training
- to ensure staff receive all training required by law (N.C.G.S. § 131D-10.6A (b)) and Division policy
- to evaluate staff performance
- to process client-specific issues
- to answer questions
- to request outside consultation as needed
- to support their staff's best practice

Supervisor/worker ratios shall not exceed an average of one fulltime equivalent supervisory position to five fulltime equivalent social work positions.

B. Social Workers

Social workers are responsible for carrying out child protective service functions as mandated and as delegated by agency administrators.

Average CPS caseloads shall be no greater than 10 families at any time for workers performing CPS assessments, and 10 families at any time for staff providing In-Home services.

VI. SPECIALIZATION AND TRAINING

The degree of specialization of staff depends on the size of the agency as well as the needs identified by the community. Some agencies have social work teams within their children's services unit to help assure consistency for the families served. Other agencies may have only a few social work staff that handles a large variety of services.

Providing protective services in any capacity requires certain knowledge, skills, personal qualities, and respect for the values of others. Specific competencies are required of CPS professionals that enable staff to perform effectively the tasks associated with each stage of the CPS casework process. Supervisors and social workers are expected to meet all training requirements to perform child protective services duties.

The [N.C.G.S. §131D-10.6A \(b\)](#) applies to child welfare services staff initially hired on or after July 1, 1998.

A. Child Welfare Services Staff

The Division of Social Services shall establish minimum training requirements for child welfare services staff. The minimum training requirements established by the Division are as follows:

- (1) Child welfare services workers shall complete a minimum of 72 hours of preservice training before assuming direct client contact responsibilities. In completing this requirement the Division of Social Services shall ensure that each child welfare social worker receives training on family-centered practices and State and federal law regarding the basic rights of individuals relevant to the provision of child welfare services, including the right to privacy, freedom from duress and coercion to induce cooperation, and the right to parent.
- (2) Child protective services workers shall complete a minimum of 18 hours of additional training that the Division of Social Services determines is necessary to adequately meet training needs.
- (3) Foster care and adoption workers shall complete a minimum of 39 hours of additional training that the Division of Social Services determines is necessary to adequately meet training needs.

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(4)	Child welfare services supervisors shall complete a minimum of 72 hours of preservice training before assuming supervisory responsibilities and a minimum of 54 hours of additional training that the Division of Social Services determines is necessary to adequately meet training needs.	
(5)	Child welfare services staff shall complete 24 hours of continuing education annually. In completing this requirement, the Division of Social Services shall provide each child welfare services staff member with the annual update information on family-centered practices and State and federal law regarding the basic rights of individuals relevant to the provision of child welfare services, including the right to privacy, freedom from duress and coercion to induce cooperation, and the right to parent.	

The Division of Social Services may grant an exception in whole or in part to the requirement under subdivision (1) of this subsection to child welfare workers who satisfactorily complete or are enrolled in a masters or bachelors program after July 1, 1999, from a North Carolina social work program accredited pursuant to the Council on Social Work Education. The program's curricula must cover the specific preservice training requirements as established by the Division of Social Services.

The Division of Social Services shall ensure that training opportunities are available for county departments of social services and consolidated human service agencies to meet the training requirements of this subsection."

Information regarding specific training requirements and course offerings are available through the Division of Social Services, Children's Services Section Staff Development Team. The telephone number is (919) 733-7672.

VII. DATA TRACKING AND STATISTICS

The community has a right to know that the services provided by the DSS are efficient and effective. One way to determine the effectiveness of agency efforts is to gather accurate data on outcomes of provided services. Child Protective Services are often delivered in an atmosphere of fear and distrust from the public. Agencies are sometimes accused of doing either too much or too little to protect a child. Despite the risk of negative feedback, agencies are encouraged to conduct regular client satisfaction surveys that specifically ask for feedback on the professional conduct of service delivery staff. Conducting similar surveys of professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers who work with children and their families are also encouraged.

All accepted reports of child maltreatment must be reported to the central registry ([10A NCAC 70A.0112](#)). The primary responsibility of the Central Registry is to provide statistical information used to study the extent of abuse and neglect within the State. This information is also used to provide statistics and management reports for county departments of social services and to track child fatality information. Refer to Chapter VIII, [Section 1426](#) "Central

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Registry" of the Children's Services Manual for more information specific to the functioning of the central registry system.

Each agency should have logs used for screening CPS reports. Agencies should develop separate filing systems for reports accepted for CPS assessment and those reports that are not accepted for CPS assessment (screened out reports).

The use of the XPTR monthly reports and the Children's Services Key Indicators Report can assist in evaluating the agency's practice.