

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER

FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES FSCWS-07-08

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Child Welfare Services Program Managers, Supervisors, and Social Workers

DATE: April 2, 2008

SUBJECT: Clarification Related to Child and Family Services Review Process, Protocol and Instrument and Child Welfare Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

This administrative letter provides critical clarification on policy and rating criteria for purposes of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) previously outlined in the 12/19/07 DSS Administrative Letter. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has provided further clarification on issues related to the Child and Family Services Review Process, Protocol and Instrument, and our child welfare policy.

Now the State CFSR process closely mirrors the Federal CFSR process and is outcome focused. It is designed to accurately measure our practice and progress towards successfully meeting the outcomes in the CFSR process. While the movement towards becoming more outcomes focused will strengthen our efforts towards meeting the requirements outlined by ACF in the Federal CFSR process, we recognize that county ratings on the State CFSR may be impacted as a result of this. It may be difficult to interpret how the State CFSR measures outcomes only and does not account for the diligent efforts made by staff when it is required in policy. This may be awkward to explain to those in your community who are not aware of the many inputs required to document social work activity. We must all be reminded that even though certain activities were performed, that certain outcome was not achieved.

Certain policies will not be changed as they provide for good case work practice, case building, supervisory oversight and tracking case activity. However, to ensure the integrity of the State CFSR and to meet ACF CFSR requirements, this review will remain outcome focused and inputs like diligent efforts, which are required in policy, will be identified as areas needing improvement. While maintaining the integrity of ACF's model, if an area is found to be out of substantial conformity due only to the documentation of diligent efforts and not achieving the outcome, a Program Improvement Plan, PIP, will not be required but will be noted in the CFSR report. Your Children's Programs Representative (CPR) will follow up with your agency regarding ways to ensure the focus on achieving the outcome.

The following is updated information based on clarification provided by ACF as it relates to specific items and achieving outcomes in the CFSR.

- Outcome Safety I, Item #1 addresses timeliness of initiating reports of child maltreatment. This item will be rated an area needing improvement during the CFSR process if the Investigative or Family Assessments were not initiated within timeframes required by policy, **even if diligent efforts were made to initiate the report timely.** Social workers must still make and document all efforts to initiate reports of maltreatment

- within the timeframes required by policy. **We need to re-emphasize that for the purposes of the CFSR, the outcome was not achieved but the documentation of inputs to record social work activity is still required in policy.**
- Outcome Safety II, Item #2 addresses repeat maltreatment and will be rated as a strength if there were no incidents of repeat maltreatment or there were **extraordinary** circumstances that caused repeat maltreatment. These circumstances cannot be specifically defined and will be considered on a case by case basis during the CFSR.
- Outcome Permanency I, Items #7 through #10 will be rated based on whether or not the permanent plan is being pursued or has been achieved for the child, and whether or not the plan was or is likely to be achieved within timeframes that are in the child's best interest. Item #7 will be rated an area needing improvement if the court makes a decision regarding permanency that is contrary to the best interest of the child. Suitability of permanent plans will be determined based on the circumstances of each case.
- Outcome Well-Being I, Items #18 and #19 rate the worker contacts with children and parents, and ACF provided clarification regarding contacts made by contractual agencies. Contacts made by a county DSS worker in another North Carolina county **will** be accepted for consideration in determining if the standard of "substantial conformity" is met. **Contacts made by personnel from temporary social work agencies that are contracted by DSS as DSS employees to provide case development/case management/court responsible services will be accepted.** Contacts made by placement resources, such as group homes, **will not be accepted** as "worker contacts with the child", and agencies should make arrangements for authorized staff to see the child as required in current policy.

The cover letter of your agency's CFSR report will reflect the changes noted in this letter and explains the CFSR ratings based solely on outcomes. The cover letter acknowledges that not all counties will be able to achieve all of the outcomes but should show incremental progress towards meeting that high standard. Attached please find a sample copy of the cover letters.

If you have any questions regarding any information contained in this Administrative Letter, please contact Beverly Daniel at (919) 733-9461.

Sincerely,



Charisse Johnson, Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

Attachments:

[Attachment 1 CFSR LET- NOT IN PIP-1](#)

[Attachment 2 CFSR LET- NOT IN PIP-D-1](#)

[Attachment 3 CFSR LET. FOR PIP-1-1](#)

cc: Sherry Bradsher
Jo Ann Lamm
Sarah Barham
Family Support and Child Welfare Team Leaders
Children's Programs Representatives
Local Business Liaisons