

2012 County Self-Assessment Executive Summary

Focus Areas

Some of the key system focus areas that County Self-Assessment (CSA) identified include Placement Stability, the need for additional quality assurance tools and procedures to better determine the effectiveness of CBCAP/CAPIT/PSSF funded programs and better meet State and Federal reporting requirements, further implementation of all Structure Decision Making (SDM) tools and to promote and support the expanded use of the Home Visitation Program.

Challenges

Placement stability of children in foster care was the focus area during the County's PQCR in May 2011. Challenges in this area include the lack of a receiving home, the need for more foster homes, the limited training, preparation and support that foster parents receive and the need for family engagement through implementation of a Family Team Meeting process

Finalization of Adoptions with 12 months of being legally free and initialization of children's Health and Education Passports was identified as two areas needing attention and improvement.

While CWS social worker retention improved greatly during 2009 and 2010, it is felt that this was a temporary effect caused by the poor employment market and the fact that several local counties laid off many social workers during this time period. The County is again beginning to experience a higher turnover rate as CWS social workers leave to take other employment opportunities in their field. Ongoing factors contributing to social worker turnover include competing for social workers with other child welfare agencies, particularly in surrounding counties that offer higher salary and benefits and with the non-profit community where caseloads and requirements are not equivalent to those in the County CWS. Continuous staff turnover interferes with continuity in training procedure, process and effectiveness.

Community Input

Community input included the recognition of alcohol and drug abuse as a major contributing factor to CPS cases. The continued need for treatment programs and post-treatment support was expressed. Another primary issue brought by the community was the lack of parenting skills and support from others, especially in the case of many young parents. Home visitation was emphasized as an early intervention which is effective and the community would like to concentrate on this as a strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. Implementing Team Decision Making / Family Team Meetings to engage families were seen as good strategies to improve placement decisions and case plan effectiveness. More parent involvement and leadership, including parent mentoring, was expressed as another strategy. The community feels that the partnerships developed between the HHSA and community partners during CPRT meetings has improved service delivery and prevented the necessity for CPS involvement.

The community members also recognized the issues of social worker recruitment, development and retention. They understand the challenges of high caseload responsibilities and expressed their desire to assist. In order for them to assist they feel that a closer relationship should be fostered between social workers and their community partners so they can offer assistance.