Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group
Meeting Minutes – 10.3.17

The first meeting of the Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group (SSWG) was held at the University of North Carolina School of Government (UNC SOG) on October 3, 2017.

Working Group Members in Attendance
Sen. Tamara Barringer, co-chair
Rep. Sarah Stevens, co-chair
Sen. Kathy Harrington
Sen. Joyce Krawiec
Susan Perry-Manning, Deputy Secretary for Human Services, DHHS
Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services, DHHS
Lisa Cauley, Chief, Child Welfare Section of the Division of Social Services, DHHS
Hon. Robert Stiehl, Chief District Court Judge, Cumberland County
Hon. Kevin Austin, Commissioner, Yadkin County
Hon. Brenda Howerton, Commissioner, Durham County
Hon. Page Lemel, Commissioner, Transylvania County
Hon. Bob Woodard, Commissioner Dare County
Chris Dobbins, Consolidated Human Services Director, Gaston County
Glenn Osborne, Social Services Director, Wilson County
Susan Osborne, Social Services Director, Alamance County
Angie Stephenson, Orange and Chatham Counties

Members Not in Attendance
Rep. Jonathan Jordan
Rep. David Lewis

Meeting Convened

- Welcoming remarks by Co-Chairs
  - Sen. Barringer and Rep. Stevens addressed the group, briefly introducing themselves and describing their past experiences with the social services system in NC. Both concluded their remarks with a call to action.
  - Sen. Barringer offered additional comments regarding the room set-up, the recording and broadcasting technology that would remain active throughout the meeting, and the role that of UNC SOG in facilitating meetings and providing technical assistance
- Introductory and welcoming remarks by Facilitators
  - M. Henderson welcomed the SSWG members. She elaborated on the role of the UNC SOG, explaining that the UNC SOG is a policy-neutral team that will provide the SSWG with support as they conduct their work moving forward.
- Review and clarify the plan for meeting

- Review discussion guidelines
    - A. Sachs provided additional information on the role of facilitators: To help group to achieve meeting objectives, use time well, and ensure that group members are able to work well together.
  - A. Sachs reviewed "Guidelines for Productive Meetings"
    - Rep. Stevens encouraged group members to engage on potentially contentious topics and not shy away from constructive discussion
    - Sen. Barringer emphasized the need to effectively manage time and stay on topic given the limited number of times the working group would be able to convene
    - The group adopted the Guidelines without revision.

Introductions

- Each SSWG member and UNC SOG support staff member introduced themselves to the group.
  - Each member gave their name, a brief description of their work and their connection to the work of the SSWG, and shared one attribute they believed would contribute positively to the SSWG.

Work Group Charge

- Presentation by UNC SOG Faculty Aimee Wall detailing the charge of the SSWG as set forth in S.L. 2017-41 (H 630). Presentation slides are available at https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials.
- Presentation Topics and Discussion:
  - Review of S.L. 2017-41 (H 630)
  - Clarification of Stage One vs. Stage Two objectives
  - Clarification of relevant terms and definitions
  - Timeline and key outputs
  - Reform Plan
    - Discussion regarding overlap between Reform Plan and the work being conducted by the SSWG
    - Coordination between the two is required by law but will be challenging because the timelines do not align
    - Question asked regarding flexibility of deadlines.
    - Sen. Barringer encouraged group members to consider the deadlines concrete.
  - Contracts/Corrective Action
  - Regional Departments
    - Potential regionalization carried out by County DSS which may coincide or conflict with regional recommendations made by SSWG.
  - Child Well-Being Transformation Council

Shared expectations about work processes

- Introduction to work processes discussion by A. Sachs.
  - Review of Handout #1, "Shared expectations about work processes." Handout available at https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials.
- Brief discussion regarding work processes.
  - Sen. Barringer addressed quorum for conducting business, explaining that quorum is only necessary when SSWG is making formal decisions or recommendations.
  - Sen. Barringer suggested that remote meetings be held in instances when discussion is limited, i.e. instances when a presentation is being made or research is being shared.
  - Rep. Stevens requested that SSWG members and UNC SOG faculty/staff introduce themselves before contributing to a meeting for the benefit of those listening/watching remotely.
  - Sen. Barringer requested that UNC SOG conduct interviews and focus groups between meetings and relay findings to the SSWG.
  - Work group adopted the "shared expectations" without revision.

Supervising and Administering Social Services Programs

- Discussion: What does "effective supervision" mean to you?
  - Face to face connection and interaction
  - Building professional relationships that incorporate accountability
  - Familiarity
  - Developing objective and clear deliverables
  - A mutual understanding of expectations
  - The relationship between supervisor and supervisee is multifaceted
  - Supervisor must have an understanding of equity versus equality (everything is not the same for everybody)
  - Confidentiality of communication when appropriate
  - Good support to the supervisee when completing difficult tasks
  - Mutual respect in communication, ability to be frank when necessary
  - Supervisor must have an adequate knowledge of policy and practices as to not get led down the wrong path in decision making
  - Transparency/known consequences
  - Focus on the target/goal
  - Giving/receiving feedback in a respectful manner
  - Supervisor must have something to offer and must be able to follow through
  - Good supervision can be freeing to both the supervisee and the supervisor with the development of trust, clear goals, and confidentiality; the supervisor does not need to constantly be looking over the supervisee's shoulder
  - Good mediation skills
  - Good assessment skills

- Discussion: How might any of these features inform how SSWG designs a system of regional supervision?
  - Could be used to inform job description for regional office leadership and/or regional staff
  - Consider leadership qualifications and experience as well as credentials
  - Regional offices/staff must have good assessment and problem-solving skills
  - Develop a regional staff that has a close relationship and understanding of the local system and the community it serves
  - Ensure that the staff of regional offices can also maintain an outsider point of view and objective perspective
  - Create a system that allows for individualized intervention/supervision
  - Ensure that skills and resources support effective and efficient communication
  - System must constantly keep tabs on outcomes and retain flexibility to make changes
- Discussion: Systematic considerations regarding regional supervision:
  - Maintain modern offices that allow for more fluid and flexible engagement with local offices and staff (telecommunication)
  - Use program objectives to overcome roadblocks
  - May be necessary to change the personnel system to make it easier to remove ineffective personnel
  - Create positions at the regional level that attract the best and brightest applicants
  - A system that creates "good cop/bad cop" roles of supervision. One group that works more closely with the local entities and one group that is brought in to deal with compliance issues
  - Regional CPRs (good cops) and Special Teams (bad cops) were effective in the past
  - We should hear more about these past systems if they were working
  - Make effective decisions about span of control and personnel
- G. Osborne shared some of his thoughts and experiences with regional supervision: Experience can be a good teacher. Regional staff can provide guidance to new hires at the county level while still holding county level professionals accountable. This should be the goal for regional supervision.

Planning for data gathering, input, and research

- Presentation by A. Wall on information gathered to date relevant to the SSWG charge
- Presentation topics and discussion. Presentation slides are available at https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials.
  - Overview of NC's social services system
  - Variation in local administration and governance of social services in NC
  - History of NC's regional offices
  - Examples of maps of regional presence in other divisions/department
    - Suggestion to add maps for Vocational Rehabilitation Division

- Discussion related to whether regions should be based on geography (contiguous counties) or commonalities
  - o Examples of maps depicting social services data by county, such as child abuse and neglect reports per capita and Medicaid eligibles per capita
- Discussion: What questions are we trying to answer and what information do we need to answer them?
  - o Information on county-level caseload
  - o Data on domestic abuse and felony child abuse by county
  - o Other states' use of regional supervision, both the good and the bad
  - o Other states' sharing of best practices between counties
  - o What is working/what is not working in the current NC system
  - o County commonalities (population, demographics, resources, etc.)
  - o Demographic information of program participants
  - o Population shifts over time; projections
  - o Best practices from federal system of regional supervision in HHS
  - o Overlay of demographic information with program outcomes
  - o Public health regional departments (districts)
  - o Information on which counties are running successful programs in NC
  - o Risk assessment of counties may lead to more equitable distribution of resources
  - o Factors that drive families into the child welfare system, such as opioid use, abuse, and related incarceration
  - o Information from overlapping systems such as law enforcement and the courts.
  - o Commonalities vs. contiguous counties, what has prompted the use of commonalities in the past
  - o Additional information on forest service map, regions, and subdivisions
  - o What led to current regional mapping in other departments and divisions
  - o Information about vocational rehabilitation
  - o NCSL research and historical data about other states
  - o Include the youth voice, particularly with regards to child welfare

Wrap Up

- Self-evaluation and discussion of next steps
  - o Monthly meetings with "homework" and remote meetings in the interim
  - o More frequent meetings may be necessary
  - o Appreciate information provided in smaller, more digestible increments as opposed to large information transfers
  - o Clear and detailed agendas are essential to ensure that progress is made
  - o Would be useful to have a plan for all of the meetings and the objectives
  - o Meetings to continue at UNC SOG; shift time to 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
  - o Continue with strict time management