

EASTERN N.C. COLLABORATIONS

INTER-COUNTY COLLABORATION PROFILE (DRAFT)

OVERVIEW

- Several counties in Eastern North Carolina developed collaborations with each other to facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of social services in their area.
- Collaborations in Eastern North Carolina developed around Foster Care, Child Support Services, Child Protective Services conflict of interest cases, and DSS staff training.
- Many of the counties in Eastern North Carolina participate in more than one of the collaborations.
- The county DSS Directors who were interviewed highlighted small caseloads, limited resources, and conflict of interests as the primary reasons for forming collaborations.

PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

County	Population
Beaufort	47,779
Camden	9,980
Craven	103,501
Currituck	23,547
Dare	33,920
Hyde	5,810
Pasquotank	30,661
Tyrrell	4,407
Washington	13,218



COLLABORATIONS

Foster Care Collaboration #1

- Participating Counties: Hyde, Beaufort and Washington Counties
- Description of Collaboration: Hyde County does not have any in-county foster homes. In order to provide placements for children in their county, Hyde DSS relies on Washington and Beaufort Counties' licensed foster homes. When a case-worker in Hyde County identifies a need for a foster home placement, they first alert the Hyde County DSS Director. Hyde County's Director then contacts the director from either Beaufort or Washington County to discuss a potential placement. If the first county contacted is unable to assist with a placement, Hyde County will then contact the other.
- Notes on collaboration from a Hyde County DSS representative:
 - Hyde County's Foster Care caseload is very small and therefore designating resources to foster home licensing and foster parent training would not be efficient.
 - This collaboration is informal - there is no Memorandum of Understanding that formalizes its operation.
 - Although there is no written agreement that formalizes the collaboration, Hyde County has always been successful in securing foster home placements through Washington or Beaufort County.
 - As with many other inter-county partnerships in the area, the healthy working relationship between the county directors and the county departments facilitates and supports the collaboration.

Foster Care Collaboration #2

- Participating Counties: Currituck, Dare, and Camden Counties
- Description of Collaboration: Currituck has limited in-county foster homes. In order to accommodate the number of children in their Foster Care program, Currituck has formed a collaboration with Dare and Camden counties to assist with placements.
- Notes on collaboration from a Currituck County DSS representative:
 - Potential foster parents in Currituck have been disqualified from licensure in the past due to excessively stringent eligibility requirements.
 - Policies that regulate the distance between the home and a body of water have been particularly problematic.

Foster Parent Conference

- Participating Counties: Beaufort and Craven Counties
- Description of Collaboration: Beaufort and Craven County DSS have partnered for several years to host a Foster Parent Conference. The conference is designed to motivate and retain foster care parents and give them the training and tools to work more effectively with children and families.

Child Support Services

- Participating Counties: Washington and Tyrrell Counties
- Description of Collaboration: Forthcoming

Child Protective Services – Conflict of Interest Cases

- Participating Counties: Dare, Currituck, and Pasquotank
- Description of Collaboration: The operation of this Child Protective Services COI collaboration is detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding that each participating county has signed. The MOU states that the collaboration service area includes Child Protective Services Assessment, In-Home Services, and/or Child Placement Services. When a conflict of interest arises in any of these services areas, the home county can refer the case to one of the other partner counties in the collaboration. CPS Program supervisors will facilitate the COI case referral and will attempt to address any disagreements between county departments about how to proceed with the case. If supervisors from each county DSS are unable to reach a resolution, the issue will be brought to county DSS directors for further review.
- Notes on collaboration from a Dare County DSS representative:
 - A change in state policy expanded the definition of conflict of interest and counties were therefore making more COI referrals than they had in the past.
 - Some of the smaller counties in the area had to make several COI referrals per year but were unable to accept referrals from neighboring counties because their limited staff size and resource availability. This created tension among county DSS in the area.
 - The decision to include Dare, Currituck, and Pasquotank counties in this COI collaboration was made based on their relatively equal staff size, resource availability, and case-loads.
 - The collaboration and the accompanying MOU has helped to relieve tension between participating county DSS because it has established a shared understanding of what constitutes a conflict, provides specific guidelines for how those referrals will be made, and encourages staff to consider .
 - However, the participating counties still feel as though COI referrals place an additional burden on already limited staffing and resources.

Child Protective Services – Assessment Training

- Participating Counties: Beaufort and Hyde Counties
- Description of Collaboration: Forthcoming