

Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group Meeting Minutes – 02.27.18

The ninth 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 February 27, 2018.

Working Group Members and School of Government Staff in Attendance

Sen. Tamara Barringer, co-chair

Rep. Sarah Stevens, co-chair

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. Page Lemel, Commissioner, Transylvania County

Angie Stephenson, DSS Attorney, Orange and Chatham Counties

Sen. Joyce Krawiec

Hon. Bob Woodard, Commissioner, Dare County

Susan Osborne, Social Services Director, Alamance County

Hon. Kevin Austin, Commissioner, Yadkin County

Susan Perry-Manning, Deputy Secretary for Human Services, DHHS

Hon. Brenda Howerton, Commissioner, Durham County

Glenn Osborne, Social Services Director, Wilson County

Working Group Members Attending Remotely

Sen. Kathy Harrington

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

Rep. Jonathan Jordan

Rep. David Lewis

Chris Dobbins, Consolidated Human Services Director, Gaston County

Convene

- Welcoming Remarks by SSWG Co-chairs
 - Sen. Barringer and Rep. Stevens convened the Working Group with opening remarks
- Introductions by attendees
- A. Sachs reviewed the meeting's plans and purposes; agenda was adopted without change
- Updates from SSWG Members
 - A. Stephenson: Sharing personnel between regions might be easier if there is an even number (i.e. six regions)

Options for Early Intervention

- Presentation by A. Wall reviewing options for early intervention available to boards of county commissioners (BOCC); accompanying PowerPoint slides can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/meetings>.
 - Review of SSWG charge related to BOCC; relationship of BOCC to county DSS; current authorities of the BOCC
 - Comments from SSWG members:
 - The BOCC in each county does not always know what is going on with the county DSS; requiring that at least one county commissioner serve on the DSS board may be a way to increase communication, transparency, and coordination between the BOCC and the county DSS.
 - It may be beneficial to know how much funding counties typically provide the DSS.
- Review of homework assignments distributed at the February 20 meeting by M. Henderson.
 - In Part I of the homework assignment, SSWG members were asked to identify conflicts or issues that arise at the county level that make local governance less than ideal. Issues identified can exist at any point along the timeline spanning from agency formation to the point at which the state assumes control of administration and can involve BOCC or other stakeholders. In Parts II and III of the homework assignment, SSWG members were asked to consider the issues/conflicts identified in Part I and develop strategies that may address those issues.
- Small Table Discussion
 - SSWG members were provided time to discuss the conflict/issues and strategies they identified when completing the homework in small groups at their tables. Any strategies that received support in the small groups were put forward for further discussion by the large group.
- Large Group Discussion
 - SSWG members discussed as a large group the strategies that had been identified and put forward by the small groups.
 - SSWG members were asked to identify: (a) strategies that are already authorized by law (b) strategies that would require legislative action (c) strategies that could be implemented by all counties
 - Comments/Questions from SSWG members throughout the large group discussion of intervention strategies:
 - “Regional Director” vs “Regional Administrator”: Regional “director” suggests a competitive role with DSS Director; regional administrator stresses cooperation/coordination/oversight. Would another term be better?

- Provide training to DSS and BOCC boards so that their roles, responsibilities, duties and powers are clearly understood by the governing board members
 - There are no current mandates regarding training for DSS boards
- Are there qualifications, experience, or education requirements for members of DSS boards or BOCC? This may be a place to start
 - DSS – no qualifications, just requirements regarding who makes appointments
 - CHSB – board must be comprised of certain professionals (i.e. a nurse, an engineer, a social worker, etc.) which originates from the expectations placed on Boards of Public Health Departments.
- BOCC does not understand their liability or their powers with regards to DSS operations
- BOCC is often only informed of issues if they are budget related
- County managers also need to be kept in the communication loop; their power over the budget is critical throughout this whole process.
 - Needs to be in statute
 - Needs to be in county agreement (localization)
- Some of these issues are rooted in poor practices (lack of communication, lack of understanding) that may be related to poor training
- To what degree can the BOCC be informed of DSS operations without violating confidentiality?
 - DSS boards can have access to confidential information but are subject to the same confidentiality laws as DSS staff that have access to the information
 - BOCC and County Managers do not have similar access
 - This would require statute change
 - DSS may resist this
 - Perhaps BOCC and County Manager should only have access to confidential information in limited circumstances once non-compliance has been identified and the DSS staff has been notified
- The composition of Public Health governing boards may be a good model to look at when considering qualifications/requirements for DSS boards
- “Political Buffering” or “buffer boards” should be considered – what are the benefits? What are the detriments?
- Governing boards (DSS and BOCC) need to be well-trained, qualified members that understand the fiduciary responsibility of board members

- “Best practices” need to be reinforced through statewide, consistent training
- Written reports from DHHS should be shared between DSS Director, DSS board, BOCC, and the county manager
- Complete notification should occur earlier in the timeline – when non-compliance is first identified
 - Non-compliance will be primarily defined in terms of “dashboard indicators”
- Under what circumstances should temporary changes in leadership strategies (emergency powers) be enforced following an urgent circumstance or extended non-compliance?
 - This cannot be an 11th-hour option that simply delays state intervention or corrective action plans
 - Timeline cannot be extended
- How are “urgent situations” defined?
 - This may not be practical to define
- Following state assumption of control of local administration, BOCC should have a formal vote to confirm whether or not they will assume the role of the DSS governing board
- Yellow light -to-red light classification – who should be notified at which point?

Lunch and Small Table Discussion

- Small Table Discussion
 - SSWG members were given time to reconvene and consider strategies that had been offered up to the large group for discussion. SSWG members were asked to either eliminate or promote strategies and come up with a finite number of recommendations to make.

Options for Early Intervention, Continued

- Large Group Discussion
 - Group One:
 - Promoted strategies that focused on training of BOCC and DSS boards (that will foster better communication and coordination); earlier notification of county leaders (BOCC and County Manager) when non-compliance is identified; earlier release of confidential information to BOCC; requirements placed on DSS board and BOCC composition
 - Group Two:
 - Promoted strategies that focused on training of BOCC and DSS boards (that will foster better communication and coordination); codification of

- best practices through training and information sharing; requirements placed on DSS board and BOCC composition; high transparency and understanding regarding compliance/non-compliance for all stakeholders involved (DSS staff, DSS board, and BOCC)
- Group Three:
 - Promoted strategies that focused on training of BOCC and DSS boards (that will foster better communication and coordination); high transparency and understanding regarding compliance/non-compliance for all stakeholders involved (DSS staff, DSS board, and BOCC); requirements placed on DSS board and BOCC composition (specifically, a requirement regarding personnel and budgeting expertise)
- As a large group, SSWG settled on the following points to be highlighted in their recommendations regarding BOCC intervention:
 - Education and training for governing boards that fosters better communication, coordination, and consistency
 - Formalize the relationship between county entities through written agreements
 - Determine a timeline through which confidential information can be released to the BOCC prior to extended non-compliance or urgent situation
 - Address issues related to confidentiality
 - Place composition requirements on the DSS board
 - More professional
 - Develop clear, shared goals and expectations regarding compliance maintenance, make available to all stakeholders at the county level
- SOG will use these themes to develop broad recommendations regarding options for early intervention and will present them to the SSWG for review and discussion.

Finalizing Regional Supervision Map

- Presentation by A. Wall reviewing feedback received on the regional map proposals recently made available to the public for comment; accompanying PowerPoint slides and draft maps can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
- Large Group Discussion
 - SSWG members were asked to voice any shifts in thought/priorities regarding mapping factors that have occurred since receiving public feedback on map proposals:
 - Larger regions (3-4) with sub districts
 - Consider people served in each region rather than total population

- 6 regions may make personnel sharing (regional staff) between regions easier
- Small Group Discussion
 - SSWG members reconvened as small groups at their tables to discuss adjustments in mapping priorities and develop requests for additional mapping options (should they think it's necessary).
- Large Group Discussion
 - Group 1:
 - No perfect solution; performed cost benefit analysis of different options; no strong preference for any map
 - 5 may be more beneficial in terms of ensuring quality staff and sufficient resources
 - 7 may be more beneficial to counties in terms of frequency of support received by regional offices
 - No additional maps are needed
 - Group 2:
 - Judicial district alignment should continue to be prioritized because of the critical relationship it has to a number of social service programs
 - Preference for 6 districts
 - Medicaid map may be another external partner to align with
 - Group 3:
 - No preference in terms of number of regions
 - Driving time and availability of regional staff is a concern regardless of whether the seven region or the five region map is chosen
 - Judicial district alignment should remain a priority
 - Additional comments:
 - Co-chairs Sen. Barringer and Rep. Stevens noted that there does not need to be a single map proposal at this time, but rather SSWG needs to be clear about the mapping factors they would like to prioritize.
 - Question as to whether external partners will consider SSWG regional maps when developing/adjusting their regional presence (Medicaid, Judicial Districts)
 - Some SSWG members indicated that this is not likely
 - SSWG should not be constrained by the reform efforts being made in other departments; SSWG should be focused on choosing a map that best fits their vision for regional supervision
- A summation of mapping priorities with SSWG member consensus:
 - Judicial District alignment
 - Population and geographic area balance

- Striking balance between quality staff (five regions) and frequent contact with the counties (seven counties)- perhaps six regions
- Rural/urban balance in each region

Additional Agenda Item, Supervisory Functions Update

- Update on small group charged with making final revisions to list of Supervisory Functions
 - Presentation by A.Wall on two new possible supervisory functions for the SSWG to consider: Inter-County Coordination and Quality Improvement. Presentation of these two supervisory functions included a draft table that described the allocation of responsibilities related to that function between the state, regional, and county offices.
 - Inter-County Coordination
 - This new function is intended to replace and expand the “Conflict of Interest Management” function. It includes many of the same concepts but expands the scope beyond coordination for COIs to other situations, such as emergency management and continuity of operations. SSWG members were in favor of including the new function in their list of Supervisory Functions
 - No additional comments
 - Quality Improvement
 - This new function is intended to shift some of the quality improvement items from the “compliance monitoring” function into a new and separate function. G. Osborne explained that it should be separate because it serves a different purpose and is an important area of emphasis for the work of the SSWG and the social services reform efforts overall.
 - SSWG members were in favor of including the new function in their list of supervisory function
 - Activities related to quality improvement should consolidated under their own supervisory function
 - It should be made clear that the duties associated with the Quality Improvement and Monitoring Compliance functions may be addressed by the same personnel; they do not necessarily have to be separated
 - In addition to Inter-County Coordination and Quality Improvement, SSWG was also asked to consider whether or not the regional offices should play a role in supervising the attorneys that represent county departments of social services.
 - Agreement that this should be considered by SSWG members for inclusion in the final report, flagged for future discussion

Wrap-Up

- Review of upcoming meeting dates and times to complete Stage One
- Review of Stage Two Proposal
- Closing thoughts from SSWG