

Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group Meeting Minutes – 03.19.18

The eleventh meeting of the Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group (SSWG) was held online by the University of North Carolina School of Government (UNC SOG) on March 19, 2018. A recording of the meeting can be found at https://www.sog.unc.edu/SSWG_online4.

Working Group Members in Attendance

Sen. Tamara Barringer, co-chair
Rep. Sarah Stevens, co-chair
Hon. Robert Stiehl, Chief District Court Judge, Cumberland County
Hon. Page Lemel, Commissioner, Transylvania County
Angie Stephenson, DSS Attorney, Orange and Chatham Counties
Hon. Kevin Austin, Commissioner, Yadkin County
Glenn Osborne, Social Services Director, Wilson County
Chris Dobbins, Consolidated Human Services Director, Gaston County
Susan Osborne, Social Services Director, Alamance County
Hon. Brenda Howerton, Commissioner, Durham County

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

Rep. Jonathan Jordan
Rep. David Lewis
Hon. Bob Woodard, Commissioner, Dare County
Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services, DHHS
Lisa Cauley, Chief, Child Welfare Section of the Division of Social Services, DHHS
Sen. Joyce Krawiec
Sen. Kathy Harrington
Susan Perry-Manning, Deputy Secretary for Human Services, DHHS

Convene

- Welcome by the Co-Chairs
- A. Wall provided an update on public comments for proposed maps
 - Feedback was received from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (ECBI) regarding the SSWG's proposed maps that were recently made available to the public for comment:
 - Cherokee, Graham, Clay, Macon, Jackson, and Haywood counties should be grouped in their own region
 - Rural areas that cover large areas of land but have relatively small populations require more consistent support from the state.

- SSWG considered and adopted two revisions to the report in response to the feedback received by the ECBI:
 - Amend the final report to reference all 6 counties associated with the ECBI that were provided in the ECBI feedback: Cherokee, Graham, Clay, Macon, Jackson, and Haywood.
 - This would not change the regional maps, but would slightly revise the narrative
 - There is an expectation that sufficient support will be allocated to rural counties, even though counties containing metropolitan areas have greater numbers in their caseloads.
 - SSWG moved to adopt these revisions; all SSWG members present were in favor.

Overview of Substantive Changes to Report

- Presentation by A. Wall detailing revisions that have been made to the report since it was last reviewed by SSWG as a group; accompanying PowerPoint slides can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
- Substantive changes, not minor edits
 - Supervisory Functions:
 - General: Tables presented in alphabetical order throughout report to avoid any implication of prioritization
 - Regarding Integrated Data Systems: Pilot rollouts by regions; reports should be exchanged between central/regional/local entities on a regular basis rather than only upon request
 - Regarding Workforce Development: “Staffing Standards and Support” replaces “Workforce Development” to better capture the nature of the supervisory function
 - SSWG members present did not express any objections to the revisions made in this section.
 - Staffing Model
 - General: “Regional Administrator” will be changed to “Regional Director” throughout report.
 - General: Stronger language about shifting positions from central to regional offices
 - Expectation that there will be central office staff and regional office staff
 - “Some of the central office staff *may* be re-deployed to regional offices” changed to “Some central office staff *will* be re-deployed to regional offices”.
 - SSWG expressed concerns that this change in language suggests the central office will be eliminated

- It needs to be clear that the central office will remain appropriately staffed to discharge the duties allocated to them in the supervisory functions
 - Additionally, it should be noted that DHHS must carefully consider the ways in which central staff are re-deployed, prioritizing how the skills and expertise of staff best meet the needs of the regions.
- Mapping
 - Explicit recommendations for 5-7 regions
 - Explain that the number of regions can be changed once the initial infrastructure is established and tested.
 - SSWG members present did not express any objections to the revisions made in this section.
- Involvement of local officials
 - Many of the edits made in this section were minor, not substantive
 - Some of the edits made clarified the authority of stakeholders
 - SSWG members present did not express any objections to the revisions made in this section.
- Accountability
 - This is a new recommendation
 - Cross-references other areas of the report that relate to accountability of regional offices
 - New Content: “the SSWG recommends that DHHS establish a formal mechanism to allow the local social services directors and county managers to provide direct feedback to central office staff on the performance of the regional office and the director.
 - SSWG members present did not express any objections to the revisions made in this section.
- Additional revisions:
 - Oversight body = SSWG
 - Allow for study of legal representation that can inform future reform efforts to enable consistent actions across regions.
 - Budget history for regional offices and the associated language in the report were removed
 - SSWG members present did not express any objections to the revisions made in this section.
- Questions /Comments/Concerns raised by SSWG members:
 - Suggested Revision: If a county is struggling to provide a service, the regional director may be able to negotiate support from other counties for a temporary or even a permanent basis
 - This may be a recommendation that more closely relates to SSWG’s charge in stage two
 - SSWG decided to consider this recommendation during Stage 2.

- There are no representatives from the state available to attend this meeting. Should the SSWG hold this conversation for a time when the state representatives are available?
 - State representatives did receive a copy of the newest report draft and did not express any substantive edits leading into the meeting
- Com. Lemel moved to approve the draft report as revised; C. Dobbins, K. Austin, and Rep. Stevens seconded.
- All members present voted in favor of approving the draft report as revised.

Discussion of Next Steps

- SSWG will be provided a revised copy of the report once revisions are made.
- No SSWG meeting on 03.23.18
- Report to Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
 - Tuesday, April 10 at 9:00 AM
- Stage Two:
 - SSWG members should complete the scheduling poll ASAP
 - Link in most recent email sent to SSWG members
 - Possible dates: April 24, May 1,2,8
- Minutes from the 03.12.18 meeting were adopted without change; P. Lemel moved to adopt minutes; C. Dobbins seconded; all SSWG members voted to adopt minutes from 03.12.18 meeting.

Adjourn