

Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group Meeting Minutes – 11.08.2018

The sixteenth meeting of the Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group (SSWG) was hosted by the University of North Carolina School of Government (UNC SOG) on November 8, 2018. A recording of the meeting can be found at https://www.sog.unc.edu/SSWG_meeting12.

Working Group Members In Attendance

Sen. Tamara Barringer, co-chair

Rep. Sarah Stevens, co-chair

Sen. Joyce Krawiec

Hon. Page Lemel, Commissioner, Transylvania County

Hon. Kevin Austin, Commissioner, Yadkin County

Hon. Bob Woodard, Commissioner, Dare County

Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services, DHHS

Hon. Robert Stiehl, Chief District Court Judge, Cumberland County

Glenn Osborne, Social Services Director, Wilson County

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

Lisa Cauley, Chief, Child Welfare Section of the Division of Social Services, DHHS

Chris Dobbins, Consolidated Human Services Director, Gaston County

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

Rep. David Lewis

Rep. Jonathan Jordan

Sen. Kathy Harrington

Angie Stephenson, DSS Attorney, Orange and Chatham Counties

Hon. Brenda Howerton, Commissioner, Durham County

Susan Osborne, Social Services Director, Alamance County

Convene

- Welcoming remarks by the Co-Chairs.
 - Sen. Barringer thanked the group for their important work and shared an email she received from a foster parent concerning the dire lack of resources in their county (lack of specialized therapists; overloaded social workers, judges, attorneys, GALs, foster parents, etc.). Sen. Barringer noted that the concerns expressed in letter are applicable to all counties and highlight the importance of the SSWG's work.
 - Rep. Stevens and other SSWG members recognized Sen. Barringer's tireless work in championing this reform.
 - P. Lemel shared that Transylvania County is one of three communities in the country that has entered into partnership with Sesame Street for children first trainings, toolkits, and other community resources.

- Introductions of the SSWG members, SOG support staff, and meeting attendees.
- M. Henderson reviewed the meeting agenda.
- P. Lemel moved to approve the minutes from the October 16, 2018 meeting.
 - Meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Finalize Inter-County Collaboration Recommendations

- A. Wall presented updates and reviewed changes made to the SSWG's inter-county collaboration recommendations following the October 16th meeting. Presentation slides can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
- SSWG members were asked if the revised ICC recommendations reflect their discussion and if any edits are needed to finalize the recommendations. The revised ICC recommendations can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
 - SSWG members made the following comments and edits (no changes were made to those not referenced below):
 - Regarding recommendations 1a-1c, Rep. Stevens expressed concern for timeliness of a state decision in conflict of interest cases, noting the urgency needed.
 - M. Becketts shared that these decisions can be made in hours if not a few days, but suggested to add to recommendation 1a that the legislature should specifically authorize the Social Services Commission to address the urgency/timing of COI decisions by rule.
 - SSWG members agreed the legislature or the Social Services Commission (with authority from the legislature) needs to ensure COIs are resolved as promptly as possible, within reasonable timeframes depending on the nature of the case or situation.
 - Sen. Barringer suggested to also add to the monitoring component in recommendation 1c to specifically address monitoring the timeliness of COI decisions; SSWG agreed.
 - K. Austin suggested to strengthen language in the arbiter and monitoring components in recommendations 1a and 1c to be clear that the regional office is to be notified of COIs from the start, even if the county intends to voluntarily work it out with a partner county, for verification of a COI and monitor COIs through resolution.
 - Sen Barringer noted the goals of Rylan's law of transparency, accountability, and high quality of service are met with this suggested reporting and monitoring.
 - SSWG agreed.
 - G. Osborne noted the urgency component is vital and urged the timeframe be legislatively given.
 - R. Steihl and other SSWG members agreed.
 - Rep. Stevens suggested reviewing and consolidating social service documentation and reporting.

- G. Osborne noted that the CSF report also touched on the need to lighten documentation and reporting requirements so that other needs can be met by workers.
- R. Stiehl agreed and suggested a bottom-up approach in determining the weight of documentation and reporting requirements.
- SSWG agreed to recommend a review of documentation and reporting requirements of social workers.
 - P. Lemel shared and agreed with G. Osborne’s point (in memo to CSF; can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>) concerning social workers spending significant time on data entry with NCFast.
 - S. Perry-Manning agreed the NCFast product is lacking and work is being done to modify the product to make it more user-friendly and less time consuming for workers.
 - Sen. Barringer and Rep. Stevens added that there is a need to abandon the product and choose to move on to a better, more current product.
 - G. Osborne agreed and shared concern for the continued use of the product with the implementation of the reform the SSWG is working on.
 - Several SSWG members shared this concern.
 - SSWG members agreed that this issue should be included in the “Other” ICC recommendations to emphasize the importance of a data system that is user-friendly and expedites inter-county collaboration and the provision of services.
- Recommendations 2b-2d:
 - Recommendation 2c:
 - Clarification needed in recommendation 2c that this includes adult protective services.
 - M. Becketts shared concern for private, state-funded guardianship contracts not being included in the context of case transfers in this cluster of recommendations.
 - S. Perry-Manning agreed that this context is necessary to understand the entirety of transfer issues between counties.
 - SSWG members not familiar with these contracts asked for more information. A. Wall gave background information on this issue and will share a blog post on

the topics with the SSWG. S. Perry-Manning confirmed the accuracy of A. Wall's explanation.

- Sen. Krawiec agreed that this problem needs to be addressed as she has heard countless complaints in her role on the Committee on Pensions and Retirement and Aging.
- SSWG agreed to add a recommendation to reevaluate the recent changes made to the distribution of guardianship cases and reassessing how these state held cases should be distributed between counties going forward.
- G. Osborne recommended the addition of a recommendation to study the appointment of guardians as a whole to determine what entity is best to serve as guardians.
 - Sen. Barringer noted the concern for the financial incentives post-ABLE Act and the need to be forward looking in protecting wards.
- Recommendation 2b: S. DePasquale pointed out transfer of guardianship between counties and change of venue in courts in the recommendation's rationale needs to be reflected in the recommendation language; SSWG agreed.
- Recommendation 2g: no changes.
 - M. Becketts suggested including county collaboration/communication for emergency situations as well, such as with recent hurricanes.
- Recommendation 2h: no changes.
 - R. Stiehl suggested incorporating the accommodation of people suffering from a disability or other legally recognized barrier under state or federal law who is incarcerated in a facility located across the state.
 - SSWG agreed.
- Recommendation 2i:
 - A. Wall reported on the follow up requested by the SSWG members for AOC to report on the remote conferencing capabilities in state facilities, both adult and juvenile.
 - AOC's response: All prison facilities are equipped with video conferencing equipment (Cisco Telepresence), but detention facilities are not equipped with dedicated video conference equipment.
 - AOC noted an option for detention centers would be to use Cisco Webex (requiring only a PC/laptop and a webcam), however the quality is not equal to a dedicated video conferencing system such as Cisco Telepresence at the prison facilities.
- Recommendation 3a:
 - R. Stiehl suggested inclusion of equal access to information for parent attorneys in cases as well, as Mr. Boyce from AOC at the October 14 meeting noted the

new system will allow for that limited access for attorneys in cases to review the status of cases.

- SSWG agreed.
- Recommendations 4c and 4e:
 - K. Austin suggested to clarify that the balance between innovation and consistency lean toward effectiveness and consistency as priority in best practice sharing.
- G. Osborne emphasized Rep. Stevens’s earlier point of identifying obsolete or unnecessary work of social service workers.
 - Rep. Stevens recommends asking the legislature to charge an entity (the Rules Review Commission, Social Services Commission, DHHS, or a legislatively mandated working group) to review all policy, procedures, and required forms to identify obsolete or unnecessary work of social workers.
 - SSWG agreed to add to “Other” recommendations in the report.
 - R. Stiehl suggests adding to recommendation 4f the creation of a working group or subcommittee charged with reviewing obsolete or unnecessary practices, technology, and reporting.
 - SSWG members agreed.
- SSWG members are asked to review the accompanying criteria and rationales for the ICC recommendations after the meeting for accuracy and make any final edits. Edits can be emailed to A. Wall at wall@sog.unc.edu.

Regional Administration

- A. Wall presented to the SSWG on the Stage Two Charge, the plan the SSWG discussed for developing the vision of regional administration, and information and takeaways gathered from North Dakota, Connecticut, and Idaho. Presentation slides and state profiles can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
 - SSWG confirmed the plan for the vision for regional administration reflected the SSWG’s October 16 discussion.
 - A. Wall pointed out that the North Dakota profile in particular is good for members to review. ND is in a two-year pilot period with an emerging vision to abandon the state regional offices and move towards mandatory regional administration with multi-county “zones,” partially driven by comparisons of scale.
 - R. Stiehl noted vast difference between ND and NC in terms of population and number of counties.
 - A. Wall explained the conceptual differences between Connecticut’s supervision and administration model and NC H 630 to get SSWG members thinking about possible visions for regional administration.
 - R. Stiehl noted Wisconsin (a hybrid system) has differentiated particular services for better efficiency.
- M. Henderson asked the SSWG what the most effective way to distill the information from the SSWG Survey Results identifying benefits and challenges of regional administration would be.

The SSWG Survey Results can be found at

<https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.

- K. Austin suggested scoring the top 3-5 benefits and challenges to select focus points for the report, with others following in abbreviated form.
- P. Lemel pointed out there is a natural break above point 3.5 (clarification: weighted scores given by SSWG members as previous homework).
- R. Stiehl suggested the SSWG criteria include the experience of other states for context, validation and contradiction.
- C. Dobbins suggests submitting all of the nuances in the report with an executive summary focusing on the top four focus points to show all of the work of the SSWG for those interested.
- Rep. Stevens and others noted some duplication in the survey results.
 - SSWG members added the possibility of connecting the survey results by theme.
- SSWG agreed to identify prioritized ideas, include all of the benefits and challenges from the survey results in the report, and use themes to connect related benefits and challenges.
- SSWG members broke into two small groups – one to review benefits and one to review and prioritize challenges identified by the survey results and apply the SSWG’s criteria.
 - Group One reviewed and prioritized the benefits of regional administration:
 - G. Osborne debriefed the large group of the small group discussion highlights.
 - The small group agreed benefits numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 are priority and need to be highlighted in the report.
 - The large group developed themes for grouping the benefits:
 - Improved outcomes
 - 1, 3, 5, 7
 - Improved efficiencies
 - 2, 4, 10
 - The SSWG agreed not to include weight individual SSWG members gave the benefits and challenges.
 - The small group asked to add to the SSWG’s recommendations a thorough evaluation of all services counties administer in order to identify services that are more efficiently administered at the state or regional level, keeping in mind the possibility of a gradual or sliding scale.
 - Examples given of hunting and fishing license issuance; older foster youth placement.
 - Group Two reviewed and prioritized the challenges of regional administration:
 - C. Dobbins debriefed the large group of the small group discussion highlights.
 - The small group agreed that if this path is followed, it is essential that there is a clear plan for how each county in a region contribute financially to programs, services and administration. It is also essential that the plan be developed with county input and final decisions communicated clearly.

- 1) Change process in model
 - Challenges numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 18
 - 2) Management
 - Challenges numbered 5, 6, 8, 9
 - 3) Messaging/education (why should I/we (counties) care about this)
 - Use as an overarching theme/preamble to the report.
- SSWG members were asked if regional supervision should be included in this part of the report.
 - K. Austin asked for contrast of challenges for regional supervision vs. regional administration.
 - Suggestion to score impact of benefits and challenges, by identified theme, in regional supervision vs. regional administration.
 - SSWG agreed.
 - SSWG members discussed the need to look at the internal organization of DHHS to see how existing DHHS staff may be reallocated to a system of regional supervision. Noted this information should be in DHHS's report due winter 2018.
 - SSWG members added the importance of perception in regional administration and good leadership as vital.

Closing Comments

- The next in-person SSWG meeting will be November 20th. The group will review and revise the vision for regional administration.
- The remaining SSWG meetings are:
 - November 20
 - December 11
 - December 20

Adjourn