

Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group Meeting Minutes – 11.20.2018

The seventeenth 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 20, 2018. A recording of the meeting can be found at https://www.sog.unc.edu/SSWG_meeting13

Working Group Members In Attendance

Sen. Tamara Barringer, co-chair

Rep. Sarah Stevens, co-chair

Sen. Joyce Krawiec

Hon. Kevin Austin, Commissioner, Yadkin County

Hon. Page Lemel, Commissioner, Transylvania County

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

Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services, DHHS

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

Glenn Osborne, Social Services Director, Wilson County

Susan Osborne, Social Services Director, Alamance County

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

Angie Stephenson, DSS Attorney, Orange and Chatham Counties

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

Rep. David Lewis

Rep. Jonathan Jordan

Sen. Kathy Harrington

Hon. Brenda Howerton, Commissioner, Durham County

Hon. Bob Woodard, Commissioner, Dare County

Chris Dobbins, Consolidated Human Services Director, Gaston County

Convene

- Introductions of the SSWG members, SOG support staff, and meeting attendees.
- M. Henderson reviewed the meeting agenda.
- S. Stevens moved to approve the minutes from the November 8, 2018 meeting. A. Stephenson seconded.
 - Meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Regional Administration

- A. Wall reviewed revisions made to draft report section on regional administration based on discussion from last meeting and highlighted recent changes for SSWG members to review today.

- Initial comments/discussion
 - P. Lemel noted that the last sentence on page 9 is confusing. Revisions and clarifications proposed.
 - Discussion about the nature of a mandatory system of regional administration
 - Would it be like LME/MCOs?
 - Would it be state-administered?
 - Would the regions be separate local government entities?
 - A. Wall reminded the group that counties have the option beginning in March 2019 to create new public authorities to offer social services on a regional basis.
 - Discussion about whether regional supervision will need to exist if there is a system of regional administration
- Small group discussion
- After preliminary conversations about the framework in the draft report, SSWG members decided to return to a full group discussion to revisit the approach to this section of the report.
 - Current approach is too complicated; difficult to interpret
 - Provide narrative that summarizes the comparison between regional administration and regional supervision, providing examples rather than an exhaustive list and comparison.
 - Explicitly state that proposed system of regional supervision is preferred to a mandatory system of regional administration because supervision will garner similar benefits without some of the most significant challenges presented by administration.
 - Shift lists of potential benefits and challenges to an appendix and simplify significantly.
 - K. Austin offered draft language for the narrative.
- Returned to small group discussion to review the list benefits and challenges and confirm those that should be highlighted in the text of the report.
 - Benefits – agreed that the report should highlight the potential to
 - Improve outcomes,
 - Increase efficiency,
 - Offer more consistent support to local staff,
 - Improve access to services across the region,
 - Allow knowledge and resources to be shared between counties within a region,
 - Improve communication within a region and across the state, and
 - Facilitate sharing of best practices across the state.
 - Challenges – agreed that the report should highlight
 - Complex management
 - Change process
 - Governance structure/county role/accountability/fairness
 - K. Austin drafted report language for these three challenges

Inter-county collaboration

- Large group discussed revised draft and suggested changes
- Amend 1.a. to:
 - Require the Social Services Commission (Commission) regulations to establish *specific* timelines for resolving COIs.
 - Require the Commission to report to the legislature when the regulations are adopted.
- Amend 1.c. to clarify the information that should be included in the repository and require DHHS to use the information in the repository to support monitoring of COI management. R. Stiehl drafted revised report language.
- Amend rationale accompanying COI recommendations to identify that some COI cases tend to be recurring – some of the cases move from county-to-county. Monitoring and guiding that process may be helpful.
- Discussion of Recommendation 2.b. focused on understanding the priorities that govern appointment of guardians. SSWG members agree with the current statutory scheme that requires clerks to appoint publicly-funded guardians only as a last resort.
- Amend 3.a. to clarify that a DSS director should be allowed to delegate authority to a staff person to access case information in the new court system.
- Amend 4.c. and 4.e. to change “prioritized” to “maintained.” The term “prioritized” implies that strict policy adherence always trumps innovation even if innovation is what is needed to help a family.
- Amend 4.f. to recommend that DHHS review not only *existing* reporting requirements but also others that are *proposed*. Also add language indicating that reporting requirements can be consolidated (in addition to being eliminated or modified).
- Amend 4.g.
 - Significant discussion about NCFAST
 - S. Perry-Manning expressed concern about the recommendation primarily because it addresses *all* social services programs. Several programs are already using NCFAST and she explained that the state has invested tremendous resources in adapting the system to make it as functional as possible for those programs. She asked whether the recommendation could be narrowed in scope to address only child welfare and adult protective services.
 - S. Osborne explained that the counties are working with the state to make changes to the “front end” (intake/assessment) part of NCFAST for child welfare. She noted that the improvements are significant and counties are expected to start using that part of the system next year. She further explained that the “back end” of the system, which has more of a case management focus, is not

functional and needs significant changes before the counties can effectively use it to support families. M. Becketts said that the modifications to the back end are planned.

- Several SSWG members discussed past conversations with vendors and others who have developed case management systems that may be able to interface with NCFAST. Some SSWG members are interested in having the state explore whether it would be better to go that direction rather than modify NCFAST to be a case management system.
- SSWG members agreed to modify the recommendation to limit the scope of re-evaluation to the case management functionality for child welfare and adult services
- SSWG members disagreed about who should be responsible for re-evaluating NCFAST. Some members would like the legislature's Program Evaluation Division to do a quick evaluation at no additional cost. DHHS representatives would like an outside consultant to do the evaluation because a consultant would (1) have technological and child welfare expertise and (2) be able to help the DHHS with the plan for implementation of any alternative interface or system. DHHS representatives indicated that there would be a cost involved with hiring a consultant (possibly from \$500,000-\$1 million). DHHS representatives also indicated that such an evaluation could not be done as quickly as the group was discussing (~45 days).
 - The group agreed to present two alternative recommendations and indicate that there is not consensus in the group on this particular issue.
- SSWG members agreed to add a new recommendation that the state should make a commitment to ongoing evaluation and improvement of the existing NCFAST components. G. Osborne noted that while they are functional, they are far from perfect and still need significant improvement to maximize efficiency and service.

Closing Comments

- The next in-person SSWG meeting will be December 11th. The group will review and revise the draft Stage Two report.
- The remaining SSWG meeting is
 - December 20

Adjourn