

# FOSTER HOME LICENSING COLLABORATIVE – SURRY AND STOKES COUNTIES

## INTER-COUNTY COLLABORATION PROFILE

- **Overview**

- Surry and Stokes Counties each employ one foster home licensing expert to handle all duties and responsibilities related to foster home licensing in their respective counties.
  - Having a single expert handle all matters related to foster home licensing is typical in small, rural counties with limited resources.
- The Surry and Stokes County DSS Directors shared similar concerns regarding the foster home licensing experts in their counties: they were unable to troubleshoot challenging cases with a peer; they could not receive/provide coverage for time out of the office; and/or they were unable to share information regarding new policies and best practices in their field.
- Surry and Stokes Counties established an informal partnership to aid in the delivery of foster home licensing services, conserve limited resources, and provide additional support to the foster home licensing experts in each county.
- Surry County DSS Director Preston indicated that the partnership with Stokes County was a natural fit because of three primary factors:
  - The Foster Care Programs in Surry and Stokes Counties are relatively similar in size and practice;
  - The foster home licensing experts from each county were both relatively new to their positions at the time the partnership formed and had already begun to rely on each other for guidance and support;
  - The DSS Directors from both counties felt comfortable working together and sharing resources and had already facilitated other informal partnerships between their county staff.

- **Operation**

- The operation of this collaboration is informal – there is no Memorandum of Understanding or other written policy that dictates the collaboration’s operation.
- The degree to which the two foster home licensing experts communicate, coordinate, and collaborate is largely up to the individuals in those positions. Program managers from each county would only get involved to help resolve conflicts, but this has not been necessary to date.
- If either Stokes or Surry County requires assistance with a foster home placement, they will first refer cases to each other before reaching out to other neighboring counties. It is very rare that Stokes and Surry Counties are unable to assist each other with placements. This has established an understanding of reciprocity between county departments.
- The partnership has also become essential to the provision of foster care training in both counties.
  - Surry and Stokes Counties identified a training location that would be easily accessible to participants from both counties.
  - Licensing experts from each county coordinate the trainings – they share the responsibility of identifying training needs and then partner for training preparation and delivery.
  - Representatives from the state that assist with trainings only need to come to their area once to provide training to both counties.
  - Training does not require much in terms of financial resources and therefore it has not been necessary to develop a formal breakdown of fiscal responsibility between counties.