

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

**1201 – CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES
CHANGE #10-2009
DECEMBER 2009**

I. OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES

A. THE MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Chapter Four: Child Placement begins with the identification of the mission, vision and values for the child welfare system in North Carolina. By adopting a common mission, vision and values, the state Division of Social Services and 100 county Departments of Social Services share a commitment to excellence.

The Mission, Vision, and Values of the Division of Social Services are as follows:

Mission: The Division of Social Services is committed to providing family centered services to children and families to achieve well being through ensuring self-sufficiency, support, safety, and permanency.

Vision: All programs administered by the Division of Social Services will embrace family centered practice principles and provide services that promote security and safety for all.

Values: The values underlying a family-centered practice approach include:

- Providing services with respect to the individual's family, kin, friend, and community networks
- Acknowledging families as experts in their own situations
- Promoting families generating their own solutions and participating in planning and decision making
- Focusing on strengths
- Promoting both family empowerment and family/service provider accountability
- Respecting diversity
- Engaging and partnering with community, local, and informal supports
- Using the principles of partnerships as a guideline for service provision:
 - Everyone desires respect
 - Everyone needs to be heard

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- Everyone has strengths
- Judgments can wait
- Partners share power
- Partnership is a process

The **mission** makes our purpose clear and tells everyone who we are. The **vision** is a clear statement of what we believe the child welfare system should look like. It is the ideal; it is what we want the system to look like through the eyes of the families and children that we serve. A common vision keeps us focused and challenges us to always find ways to improve system performance, despite the very real considerations of resource limitations and other constraints. The **values** are what we promise to do, the link between our agencies and the public. They provide a guide for service delivery and staff behavior. Collectively, the mission, vision, and values are a strong statement of our advocacy for families and children who come in contact with the child welfare system.

The Mission, Vision, and Values of the Division of Social Services support a commitment to deliver family-centered services to children and families in North Carolina. This commitment is evident throughout all client-serving agencies within the Division.

We believe that the family is the fundamental resource for the nurturing of children and that children have a right to their own families. Parents are supported in their efforts to care for their children in ways that assure the safety and well-being of the child. We support parents by respecting each family's cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious heritage in their interactions with the family and our mutual establishment of goals. We support and require the involvement of children and families throughout their involvement with child welfare. Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings focus on the family's strengths and recognize that families are our partners in the process of service planning and delivery. Judgments about families are often based on incomplete information, and can wait. A crisis can be an opportunity for change; inappropriate intervention can do harm. It is our job to instill hope because even families who feel hopeless can grow and change. This means that we as an agency arrange our schedules to accommodate the child and his/her family, that the family's ideas and resources are given the same legitimacy as those proposed by professionals, and that mutual agreement in decision making is a primary goal. For youth and families whose supports may exist outside the family unit, this means allowing, and encouraging them to invite those whom they wish to attend Child and Family Team Meetings. Shared parenting meetings, which encourage interaction between caregivers and birth families, continue the partnership to enable families to best parent their children.

Service delivery does not exist in a vacuum. In order to best serve the needs of children and families, all agencies that work with the family should work cooperatively in ways that maximize service delivery and resources. To the fullest extent possible, service providers should be within the family's community, convenient for the family and child.

B. CHILD PLACEMENT: SCOPE OF SERVICES AND DEFINITIONS

Foster care placement is **temporary substitute care** provided to a child who must be separated from his or her own parents or caretakers when the parents or caretakers are unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection and care. A child in foster care is a child for whom a licensed public or private child-placing agency has legal custody and/or placement responsibility, whether or not he/she has been removed from his/her home.

System of Care principles can be seen in the delivery of child placement services and are designed to:

- strengthen, preserve and/or reunite families after children have come into agency custody or placement responsibility by helping families improve the conditions in the home that caused agency intervention;
- ensure a single, stable, safe, nurturing, and appropriate temporary living arrangement for children removed from their homes; and
- achieve an alternative safe, permanent home for all children in agency custody or placement responsibility who cannot return home.

Every child needs and deserves a stable, permanent home that is safe and that provides love, care, and nurture. Most children are best served by remaining in the custody of their own families. Therefore, foster care placement shall not be considered until reasonable efforts have been made to preserve a child's safety, health, and well-being in his or her own home. North Carolina law defines a safe home as one in which a child is not at substantial risk of physical or emotional abuse or neglect. North Carolina law defines reasonable efforts as the diligent use of preventive or reunification services by a department of social services when a juvenile's remaining home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable length of time. County Departments of Social Services are required to provide services to preserve or reunify families until the Juvenile Court has made a determination that reunification would be futile or inconsistent with the child's need for safety and permanency within a reasonable length of time.

When removal is necessary to preserve a child's safety and care, it is the responsibility of the County Department of Social Services to ensure that the child is in foster care placement for the shortest time possible. When children must be removed from their homes for their safety and protection, foster care is a family centered service that is **time limited and goal oriented**. Placement of a child in foster care requires a thorough assessment of the child and family's needs and careful planning prior to and throughout a child's placement.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

Extended and/or multiple foster care placements damage a child's ability to form secure attachments to adults and seriously harm a child's development. **Ensuring a child's safety and working to achieve permanency shall always be parallel functions.**

Permanency planning begins before a child enters foster care and if the System of Care principle of child and family involvement is followed, sufficient information should be obtained, allowing for successful planning. One of the seven strategies of the Multiple Response System is to conduct Child and Family Team meetings. It is through these CFT's that families and their supports will identify other possible resources, facilitating a smoother transition to an alternative plan for the child, should it become necessary. Concurrent permanency planning ensures that alternative plans are developed in the event that placement prevention efforts are unsuccessful. In cases of removal, alternative permanency options are developed while reunification efforts are being made. If reunification is unsuccessful, an alternative permanency plan has been developed and can be implemented swiftly. It is not inconsistent to work toward reunification while building a case which will support alternative planning and alternative resolutions. Permanence is defined as a life-long family relationship with at least one adult that promotes a sense of mutual belonging and is legally secure. A legally secure placement is defined as a placement in which the direct caregiver has the legal authority to make parental decisions on behalf of the child; e.g. return to the birth parents, assignment of legal custody or legal guardianship to the person of the child, or adoption of the child.

C. FAMILY CENTERED PRACTICE¹

System of Care, Multiple Response and family centered practice is a social work approach to services that departs significantly from traditional individualized practice approach. Traditional social work services typically focus on the individual and are provided in an office setting. Practitioners tend to be specialists who assess needs and develop strategies to help the individual cope more effectively with his/her environment. Services tend to be intangible services such as counseling, guidance, treatment, assessment, and referral.

In contrast, through the seven strategies of MRS and family centered practice the focus is on the family with full knowledge and appreciation for its dynamics. The social worker goes to the family's home and/or community to provide or arrange for services.

The practitioner is flexible in weaving together a comprehensive service delivery system that involves the family's resources, community resources, and public resources. Services reflect the needs of the family, from the tangible to the intangible. The family-centered services practitioner values family and community resources, respects diversity among families, supports parental efforts to care for their children, and approaches crises as opportunities for change.

¹Barthel, F., "For Children's Sake: The Promise of Family Preservation." Winchell Co., Philadelphia Pennsylvania, 1992.

D. LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES

Under N.C.G.S. § 108A-14, the County Director of Social Services has the responsibility and the duty to investigate reports of child abuse, neglect, and dependency; to take appropriate action to protect such children and to accept children for placement in foster homes; and to supervise placements for as long as such children require foster care.

The Social Services Commission has the statutory authority to adopt administrative rules regulating the provision of foster care services by agencies that have to be licensed for this purpose. Therefore, persons and agencies providing foster care services engage in this work only when authorized to do so by either specific statutory authority or by a license issued pursuant to Commission rules.

Placement responsibility may be given by the voluntary consent of the child's parent or guardian, by the relinquishment of parental rights of one or both parents, or by an order of a court of competent jurisdiction. When placement responsibility is through court order, the Court must specify in the order that the child is to be placed in foster care and must give the County Department of Social Services the responsibility for arranging and making the placement, providing supervision of the placement, and developing a permanent plan for the child.

A child who becomes 18 years of age while in foster care or who becomes emancipated while in foster care may sign a Contractual Agreement for Continuing Residential Support (CARS) with a County Department of Social Services. Also, a youth who was discharged from agency custody between the ages of 16 and 21 and who, between the ages of 18 and 21, wishes to re-enter DSS placement authority under a CARS agreement shall be allowed to do so under certain conditions. (Refer to Chapter IV; Section 1201; VII - Adolescent Services (NC LINKS) for more information) The County Department of Social Services has the option of accepting the agreement. Either the agency or the youth can rescind the agreement at any time

E. PLACEMENT RESOURCES

When a child must be placed out of the home, placement resources include:

- a foster family home or group home licensed by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services;
- a child caring institution that is licensed or approved by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act;

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- a foster care facility, which is under the auspices of a licensed or approved private childcare or child placing agency. Such foster care services programs must have been licensed by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act;
- a foster care facility that is licensed by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services as a public or private group home and is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act;
- a licensed or approved foster care facility located in another state when the placement is made in compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. The other state must agree to supervise the child and the facility must be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; or
- an unlicensed home that is approved by the Court and designated in the court order.

F. CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES

Child placement services shall be provided to any child in the custody or placement responsibility of a County Department of Social Services. The agency shall provide regular community awareness and public education programs on: recognizing and reporting abuse, neglect and dependency; and community coordination and cooperation in service provision. (Refer to Chapter IV; Section 1201; Children's Services Yellow Pages (Tools for Enhanced Practice) for more information about cultural competence.)

Child placement services include but are not limited to:

- services to protect children in their own homes, strengthen families, and prevent out-of-home placement;
- careful planning and decision making with the family about placement, when necessary;
- assessing children's needs to ensure appropriate placement and services;
- arranging and monitoring a placement appropriate to the child's needs;
- involving the kinship network to provide planning, placement and other support for the child and family;
- developing and arranging community-based services to support the child and family;

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- collaborating with other community service providers working with the family to ensure continuity of services and to prevent duplication of services;
- referring the child and family to needed services, including clinical treatment;
- providing treatment services, as appropriate;
- preparing the child, the child's family, and the foster family for separation and placement, including negotiating and preparing visitation agreements;
- assessing family strengths and needs to determine the appropriate plan for service;
- providing ongoing risk assessment to determine risk to the child and to guide the case planning process;
- working with the family to develop and implement the Out of Home Family Services Agreement;
- monitoring and updating the Out of Home Family Services Agreement with the family;
- providing case planning and management;
- concurrent permanency planning with the family to develop alternative options to provide a permanent home for a child should reunification fail;
- helping the family meet Out of Home Family Services Agreement objectives by providing information, instruction, guidance and mentoring on parenting skills;
- providing counseling to the child and family to help the child and family cope with the grief resulting from the separation and placement;
- arranging medical examinations and other services for the child;
- supervising foster care facility to ensure that the child receives proper care during placement;
- maintaining contact with the family and others significant to the case;
- preparing for and participating in court proceedings;
- maintaining a close working relationship with the agency attorney for guidance in the legal process;

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- periodically reviewing the Out of Home Family Services Agreement;
- preparing for and facilitating Permanency Planning Action Team meetings;
- providing transportation for children in foster care when needed and not otherwise available, including visits with parents, siblings, and relatives;
- providing LINKS services to assist older youth in learning life skills necessary to make a successful transition from foster care to living on his or her own;
- ensuring that foster care placements across state lines are in compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children;
- recruiting, developing and supervising foster care families and child care facilities;
- recruiting and assessing relatives and other kin as potential caregivers;
- assessing and periodically reassessing foster care homes and facilities to determine if the home or facility meets the needs of the children it serves;
- providing consultation, technical assistance, and training to assist foster families and foster care facilities to expand and improve the quality of care provided;
- involving foster parents in the planning and decision making for children in foster care;
- facilitating foster/adopt options for children and preparing foster/adoptive parents;
- preparing children for adoptive placements and maintaining life books; and
- maintaining the foster care case record and thorough documentation of case activities.

G. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CASE PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES (FEDERAL PROTECTIONS AND STATE REQUIREMENTS)

Foster care services are provided in compliance with the statutory requirements of Federal and State laws. Federal and State law is intended to provide protections for children in foster care, who need safety and permanency, and for their families to ensure that their legal rights are maintained.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance, and Child Welfare Act of 1980, is one of the most significant Federal laws shaping the provision of services to children needing foster care. Public Law 96-272 frames many requirements for receipt of Federal Title IV-E funding. The requirements of Public Law 96-272 were developed to ensure that children do not linger unnecessarily in foster care placements.

North Carolina requirements of law and policy reflect, and in some cases exceed, the Federal requirements of Public Law 96-272 and its later amendments. Compliance with each requirement must be accurately and thoroughly documented in the case record as specified. (Federal requirements are in bold italics; related North Carolina laws and policies are listed below each federal requirement.)

1. Reasonable efforts shall be made by the agency to prevent placement and to reunify the family after placement.

- Reasonable efforts are defined by North Carolina law as the diligent use of preventive or reunification services by a Department of Social Services when a juvenile is remaining in the home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time.
- At each hearing, the Court shall make findings on whether or not reasonable efforts are necessary and shall state this in every court order regarding a child in foster care placement. If reasonable efforts are required, the Court will determine if sufficient efforts have been made to prevent placement or to reunify families after placement. Findings shall be documented at hearings to determine need for continued non-secure custody, adjudicatory hearings, dispositional hearings and all reviews of custody orders.
- Case documentation, the Out of Home Family Services Agreement, and efforts to achieve plan goals shall be documented accurately and thoroughly to serve as evidence of reasonable efforts. Documentation shall focus on the facts of the case and the family's progress toward correcting the conditions, which led to the removal of their child.
- Efforts made by the DSS shall be identified and stated clearly in the court report.
- Social workers shall present evidence in Court from the case record about the efforts that were made.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- Any court order authorizing continued non-secure custody must contain findings of fact on reasonable efforts made by the agency to prevent or eliminate the need for removal or to reunify a child with his/her family after removal or that reasonable efforts are not required in accordance with state and federal law. Refer to Section 1201, The Juvenile Court Process, for more information.
- 2. No child will be involuntarily removed from his/her home, except on a temporary basis in emergency situations, unless there has been a judicial determination that the child should be removed.**
- The County DSS shall take a child into temporary physical custody without a court order only if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is at imminent risk of harm if it were first necessary to obtain a court order.
 - Prior supervisory approval is required for removal except in the event of an emergency.
 - A petition containing all allegations of abuse or neglect or dependency must be filed before a non-secure custody order is obtained.
 - District Court judges have the authority to issue non-secure custody orders.
 - Children cannot be held in non-secure custody for longer than (7) seven calendar days initially without a hearing on the merits of the petition or a hearing to determine the need for continued custody in Court. Pending a hearing on the merits of the petition, a second hearing to determine the need for continued custody shall be held within seven business days of the first hearing and subsequent hearings shall be held at intervals no greater than 30 calendar days.
 - An adjudicatory hearing shall be held to make a judgment on the existence or nonexistence of the conditions alleged in the petition.
- 3. No child shall be placed in foster care by the voluntary action of his or her parents or guardian unless a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) has been signed by the parent or guardian and the agency.**
- Voluntary placements shall be reviewed by the Court within 90 days of placement. The Court shall review and make findings about the voluntariness of the placement; the appropriateness of the placement; whether the placement is in the best interest of the juvenile; and services that have been or should be provided to eliminate the need for placement.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- A VPA signed by the parent or guardian shall not remain in effect longer than 180 days without the filing of a petition alleging abuse, neglect or dependency.
- 4. Any child removed from his or her home shall be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting in which special needs may be met, within close proximity to his or her family and with relatives when appropriate.**
- Close relatives and those suggested by parents shall receive notice from the agency within 30 days of a child entering the care and custody of the agency about their options to be resources for the child. (Refer to the Relative Notification information found in Chapter IV; Section 1201; IV - Placement Decision Making for more information).
 - If placement with relatives or other kin is determined to be not in the best interest of the child, a foster family home is considered the least restrictive environment. If a group home is selected, documentation must include information regarding how this placement meets the child's special needs. Special care must be taken when considering group care for children 12 years and under. Only when there is clearly no other appropriate choice should group care be considered for these children.
 - Written advance notice shall be provided to parents if the child is to be moved. Circumstances may require a move prior to written notification.
 - The record shall contain documentation of the child's health and educational history. This information shall be provided to foster care providers.
 - For foster children ages 16 to 17, a plan for acquiring needed independent living skills shall be documented in the Transitional Living Plan. The provision of Links services shall be based on a written objective assessment of the youth's strengths and needs. All eligible foster children who can reasonably be expected to be self-sufficient as an adult shall be assessed and offered Links services.
- 5. Reunification services shall be made available to the child and his or her parents, guardian, or custodian after removal from the home, unless the Juvenile Court has determined that reunification would be futile or inconsistent with the child's need for a safe, permanent home within a reasonable length of time.**

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- Services provided shall be defined by the conditions that necessitated the removal and with input from the family. Documentation shall include an assessment of the conditions, the services provided, and the response of the parent, guardian or custodian.
 - The agency's activities and all court-ordered services to the child shall be documented in the case record.
- 6. There shall be a written Out of Home Family Services Agreement developed for each child placed in DSS custody and/or placement responsibility and a case review system ensuring that each child receives a comprehensive case review at least every six months.**
- The Case Decision Summary / Initial Case Plan (DSS-5228) shall be developed upon a finding of substantiation of abuse, neglect or dependency or in need of services.
 - The Out of Home Family Services Agreement (DSS-5240) shall be developed within 30 days of the child coming into custody or placement responsibility and shall be updated every 6 months or when circumstances change and is designed to coincide with the Permanency Planning Action Team Meeting.
 - The Out of Home Family Services Agreement shall include a primary permanent plan goal and an alternative permanent plan goal that will be implemented if the primary goal is determined to be inappropriate or unworkable.
 - The Out of Home Family Services Agreement shall include a written visitation plan (DSS-5242).
 - The first Permanency Planning Action Team review shall occur within 60 days of placement.
 - The second Permanency Planning Action Team review shall occur within 90 days of the first agency team review.
 - Subsequent reviews shall occur no less than every six months thereafter.
 - Each Out of Home Family Services Agreement shall contain documentation to show the involvement of the family in its development and that a copy of the plan was provided to the parent(s), guardian, or custodian.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- The child's record shall contain documentation of placement dates and the reasons for removal.

7. There shall be regularly scheduled review hearings by the Juvenile Court

- There shall be a court review within 90 days from the date of the dispositional hearing.
- There shall be subsequent reviews within 6 months thereafter.
- There shall be a permanency planning hearing within twelve months of placement. The judge may designate another required review hearing as the permanency planning hearing.
- The child welfare agency shall demonstrate that:
 - The child's parents, guardian, or custodian was notified of the right to attend the hearing and be represented by counsel.
 - The child's parents, guardian, or custodian was notified of any changes in placement.
 - The child's parents, guardian, or custodian were notified of the visitation plan.

H. KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE ADOPTION AND SAFE FAMILIES ACT OF 1997 (PUBLIC LAW 105-89).

Public Law 105-89, The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, expands and clarifies the intent of P.L. 96-272. This legislation establishes unequivocally that our national goals for children in the child welfare system are **safety, permanency and well-being**. The following principles are the basis for this landmark legislation:

1. The safety of children is the paramount concern that must guide all child welfare services.

- Child safety is the paramount concern when making service provision, placement and permanency planning decisions.
- While reasonable efforts must be made to preserve and reunify families, states are not required to make efforts to keep children with their parents when doing so places the child's safety in jeopardy.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- 2. Foster care is a temporary setting and not a place to grow up.**
 - To ensure that the system respects a child's developmental needs and sense of time, the law includes provisions that shorten the time frame for making permanency planning decisions, and that establish a time frame for initiating proceedings to terminate parental rights.
 - The law also strongly promotes the timely adoption of children who cannot return safely to their own homes.

- 3. Permanency planning efforts for children should begin as soon as a child enters custody or placement responsibility and should be expedited by the provision of services to families**
 - Quality services that are related to the problems that brought the child into foster care should be provided as quickly as possible to enable families in crisis to address problems.
 - It is only when timely and intensive services are provided to families that agencies and courts can make informed decisions about parents' ability to protect and care for their children.

- 4. The child welfare system must focus on results and accountability.**
 - It is no longer enough to ensure that procedural safeguards are met. It is critical that child welfare services lead to positive outcomes.
 - The law requires reports on state performance in achieving positive outcomes for children.
 - The law authorizes the creation of an adoption incentive payment to States to enable the goal of doubling the number of children adopted.
 - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will study and make recommendations regarding additional performance based financial incentives in child welfare.

- 5. Innovative approaches are needed to achieve the goals of safety, permanency, and well-being.**
 - The law recognizes that we do not yet have all of the solutions to achieve our goals.

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL
VOLUME I: CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CHAPTER IV: CHILD PLACEMENT**

CHANGE # 10-2009 OVERVIEW OF CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES DECEMBER 2009

- Child welfare demonstration waivers provide a mechanism to allow States greater flexibility to develop innovative strategies to achieve positive results for children and families.

I. CHILDREN'S SERVICES DELIVERY AND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE REVIEWS

The North Carolina Division of Social Services conducts a Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) of child protective services and child placement services provided by each County Department of Social Services. The CFSR evaluates county child protective services and child placement services by reviewing adherence to North Carolina's policies for Children's Services Delivery. The goal of the CFSR process is to elevate the level of practice in North Carolina and to promote consistency in service delivery throughout the state.

In 1992, the North Carolina General Assembly directed the Division of Social Services to conduct reviews of county child protective services programs every biennium. This mandate emanated from recommendations to the Division from the American Humane Association and the Child Fatality Task Force that state supervision of county protective services be strengthened and that a system be developed to monitor regularly the delivery of CPS in North Carolina. Standards for CPS service delivery were developed by the Division and the CPS Advisory Committee, composed of a cross-section of people, including county Department of Social Services staff involved with CPS on a daily basis.

The CFSR process has confirmed a rise in the level and consistency of CPS practice across the state. To expand this achievement to all of children's services, in 1994 the Division convened a Child Placement Services Advisory Committee which included both Division and county DSS staff. Standards for foster care and adoption services were developed.

The Family Support and Child Welfare standards have currently been incorporated as policy within their applicable chapters/sections of the Family Services Manual.

J. CHILD FATALITY REVIEWS

The North Carolina Division of Social Services conducts a fatality review whenever a child who has received protective services from a County Department of Social Services dies from suspected abuse or neglect. The purpose of that review is to enable the Division of Social Services, the County Department of Social Services, and the local community to identify important issues related to child protection and to take appropriate action to improve our collective efforts to prevent child fatalities. The review process is a collaborative, multi-disciplinary effort that involves representatives of the Division of Social Services, community law enforcement, members of community child protection and child fatality prevention teams, and persons with special expertise.

The review team issues a formal report designed to stimulate system improvements. Each report is reviewed by the local District Attorney to ensure that its content does not interfere with any criminal investigation or prosecution.

It is important to recognize that this report is intended to provide information that can be put to constructive use in preventing future fatalities. The report is made public in the hope that community agencies, groups, and individuals can take positive action in the wake of tragic circumstances. It is not the purpose of this report to determine whether one person, group or agency could have prevented this fatality.

It is also important to recognize that while the Department of Social Services in each county is charged with investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect, it is not alone in its responsibility to protect children. Each DSS relies on the broader community to provide information and to conduct related investigations and examinations that help DSS and the court system to make important decisions regarding the safety of children. Consequently, the review process places particular emphasis on issues of interagency collaboration, communication and decision-making which is consistent with System of Care Principles and the seven strategies of MRS.

K. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

Training for social work supervisors and staff must include all mandated training courses provided through the Division of Social Services and may include additional relevant training offered by the Division or other training sources. To meet qualifications for the training hour requirements, training must be directly related to the enhancement of skills or knowledge needed in the performance of the duties of the position.

1. Supervisory Caseloads and Training

The average social work supervisor to social worker ratio shall not exceed one supervisor FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) position to five social work FTE positions. Supervisory caseload sizes are derived by adding the number of full and part-time social work positions and dividing by the total number of full and part time supervisory positions who are responsible for those social workers.

Social work supervisors shall meet minimal education and experience requirements to qualify as Social Work Supervisors III.

Social Work supervisors who assumed duties on or after January 1, 1998, shall complete a minimum of 72 hours of preservice training before assuming supervisory responsibilities and a minimum of 54 hours of additional supervisory training within the first year of employment. Supervisors shall complete 24 hours of continuing education annually thereafter.

2. Social Worker Caseloads and Training

Average caseload sizes, calculated based on the total FTE's, shall be no greater than 15 children for foster care and adoptions social workers, and 32 families for foster care and adoption licensing social workers.

Social work staff responsible for direct service shall meet minimum requirements in education and experience to qualify as Social Worker III. Social work staff responsible for recruitment and licensure shall meet minimum requirements in education and experience to qualify as Social Worker II. Agencies may justify reasons for individual exceptions.

Child placement social workers, including placement and licensure social workers, who assumed duties on or after January 1, 1998, shall complete a minimum of 72 hours of preservice training before assuming direct client contact responsibilities and 39 additional hours within the first year of employment. Child welfare social workers shall complete 24 hours of continuing education thereafter.

3. Social Worker Schedules

Agency policy should allow for social workers to have a flexible work schedule in order to meet client needs. System of Care, MRS and family centered practice require that social workers try to accommodate the family when scheduling meetings and visitation, which often involves evening or weekend appointments. This is especially true of Child and Family Team meetings, which should be scheduled at times convenient to families and their support system.

4. Social Worker Safety

The agency shall also have written protocols that define procedures that social workers shall follow in situations that put the social worker at-risk and shall encourage the involvement of law enforcement officers when the social worker's safety may be jeopardized.