



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • Raleigh, North Carolina 27603
Courier # 56-20-25

James B. Hunt, Jr., Governor
H. David Bruton, M.D., Secretary

E. C. Modlin, ACSW, Director
(919) 733-3055

October 24, 2000

Dear County Directors of Social Services

RE: Multiple Response System for Child Protective Services

We are pleased to inform you that the Division has received a grant from the Governor's Crime Commission to demonstrate the feasibility of a multiple response system to reports of child abuse and neglect. The purpose of this letter is to identify counties that are interested in participating in the planning process for this demonstration.

In a multiple response system, a decision is made at intake regarding the best approach to the case, according to the severity of the allegation and the risk of harm to the children. Such a system allows a more flexible and tailored response to reports of child abuse and neglect. In order to reinforce that violence against children is a crime, more serious incidents of abuse or neglect are jointly investigated by DSS and law enforcement. In recognition that poverty, poor parenting, and the lack of social support are issues in many reports, less serious incidents are assigned for social work assessment, interventions and referrals without the requirement of a formal case decision. In our demonstration, this will be a joint assessment process involving community-based, child and family service providers such as Family Resource Center staff, Family Support providers, and public health/mental health professionals. The family assessment response is intended to be non-accusatory and supportive, offering needed services as soon as possible without the trauma, stigma, or delay of the investigative process. In addition, the assessment response encourages the family to be involved in a collaborative problem-solving process.

Other states with multiple response system demonstrations report several benefits:

- Criminal prosecutions for serious abuse and criminal neglect have been more frequent and successful;
- Most families are evaluated immediately for their service needs without the necessity of "fault-finding;"
- Substantiation is addressed only in the more serious cases;
- The safety of children is not compromised;
- Families are more likely to see the agency as less adversarial and more helpful;
- Social work staff appreciate the clarity of their role, whether investigator or service provider.

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We are seeking to identify planning teams from five counties to assist in the design and plan for the demonstration. Each planning team will consist of at least one representative from DSS, law enforcement, and a community-based child and family service organization. The community-based organization should be one that is interested in working in partnership with DSS to jointly conduct family assessments and provide family-centered services in the less serious cases. This might include a Family Resource Center, Family Support provider, public health or mental health agency, private child and family service agency, etc. The selected planning counties will have priority consideration for implementing the demonstration following the initial planning period; other counties will be allowed to participate if funding allows.

A primary consideration in selecting the planning counties will be the demonstrated interest and capacity of the DSS, local law enforcement, and at least one community-based service organization. If you are interested in participating in the planning process, please send:

- A written statement of interest signed by the DSS Director and all CPS administrative and supervisory staff; and
- A written letter of support from one or more local law enforcement agencies and one or more community-based child and family service organizations stating their interest and willingness to actively participate in the planning process and demonstration.

These letters of interest should be received by 5 PM on Friday, November 17 and should be directed to the attention of:

JoAnn Lamm, Team Leader for Policy and Planning
Children's Service Section
325 North Salisbury Street
MSC Box 2408
Raleigh, NC 27699-2408

Fax numbers (919) 715-6714 or 715-0024

Thank you for your consideration of this important demonstration project.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Harris, Chief
Children's Services Section

Cc: E.C. Modlin
Nancy Coston
Karen Anderson
Melinda Hamrick

Local Support Managers
Children's Program Representatives
Children's Services Team Leaders