

NC DEPARTMENT OF **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of Social Services
Child Welfare Services

2019 Annual Progress and Services Report for the
North Carolina Child and Family Services Plan
2015-2019

*North Carolina's Child and Family Services Plan
FY 2015 - 2019*

2019 Annual Progress and Services Report

SUBMITTED JUNE 2018

Application for Funding:

- Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services (CWS)...
Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, Subpart 1
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)...
Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, Subpart 2
- Monthly Caseworker Visit Funds
- Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payment
Funds
- Child Welfare Waiver Demonstrations...
- Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) and
Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Programs ...
- Training Activities in Support of the CFSP...

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
I. General Information	6
II. 2019 APSR Requirements	6
1. Collaboration	6
2. Update on Assessment of Performance.....	10
3. Update to the Plan for Improvement and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes	18
4. Update on Service Description	31
A. Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (title IV-B, subpart 1).....	31
B. Services provided in the four areas under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (title IV-B, subpart 2).....	32
C. CFCIP and ETV.....	45
D. Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment.....	55
E. Services for Children in Foster Care Under Age Five	60
F. Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries.....	62
5. Program Support	63
6. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes.....	69
7. Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants	722
8. Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments.....	733
9. Child Welfare Demonstration Activities	733
10. Quality Assurance	733
III. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Update	755
IV. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program	866
V. Targeted Plans Update	1000
1. Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan	1000
2. Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan.....	1066
3. Disaster Plan	1077
4. Training Plan	1088
VI. Statistical and Supporting Information	1088
1. CAPTA Annual State Data Report Items	1088
2. Sources of Data on Child Maltreatment Deaths.....	1100
3. Education and Training Vouchers.....	1111
4. Inter-Country Adoptions.....	1111
5. Monthly Caseworker Visit Data	1111
VII. Financial Information	1122
1. Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1	1122
2. Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2	1122

Appendices	112
A. Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Application	112
B. Update to North Carolina’s Training Plan	11245
C. Agenda for 2018 Indian Child Welfare Gathering	11269
D. 2017 CCPT Final Report.....	11270
E. North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan	251
F. Disaster Plan	302
Attachments	347
1. CFS-101, Part I, II, III.....	347

Introduction

The 2019 Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) focuses on updates changes since the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (DSS) submitted its 2015 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) as well as the 2016, 2017, and 2018 APSRs. The CFSP, APSRs, and other federal reports are located on the DSS website and may be found following the link below:

<https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/stats/cw.htm>

In 2015, North Carolina participated in Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The final CFSR report, which North Carolina received in January 2016, can be found here:

https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/stats/docs/child_welfare_docs/NCFinalReport2015Reissued.pdf

As a follow up to the 2015 CFSR, NCDHHS, in collaboration with the Children’s Bureau (CB) developed a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) which was approved and made effective January 1, 2017. It was and revised in December 2017. North Carolina’s PIP—which includes strengthening and clarifying of child welfare policies and practices and developing and implementing a family engagement and leadership model, a technical assistance model, a quality assurance system, and a statewide information system—reflects North Carolina’s deep commitment to improving outcomes for children and families served by the child welfare system. This commitment aligns with other efforts to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all North Carolinians. North Carolina’s top priorities now include:

- Developing a statewide *Early Childhood Action Plan* to give children a healthy start and to develop their full potential in safe and nurturing families, schools, and communities. (For more on this effort, see “Collaboration” in section II.1 of this report.)
- Transforming Medicaid to move North Carolina from a fee-for-service physical health system to a managed care system that integrates physical and behavioral health. This effort will also address several key social determinants of health (e.g., food insecurity, transportation needs, housing insecurity, intimate partner violence) that typically correspond to the family risk and protective factors for child maltreatment and children’s well-being. (For more on this effort, see the CBCAP application found in Appendix A.)
- Reforming the social service system as directed by the Family and Child Protection and Accountability Act (HB 630 / S.L. 2017-41), creates a structure of regional supervision of counties and directs a third-party organization to evaluate, then develop a new vision and strategic direction for social services. The strategic direction will address leadership and governance at the state and regional levels, improving outcomes for children and families throughout social services. The law requires development of a child welfare reform plan that make recommendations in ten (10) areas of child welfare administration and service provision which includes improvements to child fatality oversight, enhancements to preventive and in-home services and the implementation of a statewide, trauma informed, culturally competent child welfare practice framework.
- Responding to the opioid crisis through a multi-systemic, comprehensive *Opioid Action Plan* that involves strategies regarding prevention, treatment, prescriptions, law enforcement,

and legislation. (For more on this effort, see "Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment" in section II.D of this report).

- Implementing the provisions of the Families First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123), which have implications for requirements and services related to Title IV-B and Title IV-E funding, including but not limited to time-limited foster care prevention program and services, licensing standards for foster family homes, adoption assistance, adoption and legal guardianship incentive programs, and the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.

I. General Information

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State Agency Administering the Programs

The NCDHHS is the designated state agency with authority to prepare and submit the APSR and is the sole state agency responsible for administering or supervising the administration of the Child Welfare Services Program in North Carolina. Therefore, in accordance with *45 CFR 1356.60(b)(2)*, activities will be cost allocated based on the benefiting program concept. Training activity costs will be shared under Title IV-E and other federal and local resources as part of the DSS Comprehensive Child Welfare Training Plan. These sources of funding, in combination with state appropriations, cover the expenses of the entire child welfare training program.

North Carolina is a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. North Carolina law (NC GS § 7B-302) specifically states that County Directors of Social Services are responsible for the provision of protective services for all children for whom allegations of abuse, neglect, or dependency are made.

II. 2019 APSR Requirements

1. Collaboration

In Round 3 of the CFSR Item 31 (*Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders*) and Item 32 (*Coordination of CFSP Services with other Federal Programs*) were identified as areas needing improvement in North Carolina. As the examples below illustrate, DSS is conscientiously working to improve performance in these areas to ensure key stakeholders are regularly engaged in efforts to assess and improve the performance of North Carolina's child welfare system.

Program Improvement Plan

DSS has substantially and meaningfully engaged stakeholders to develop and implement its PIP, which began January 1, 2017, and continues through the December 31, 2018. Specifically, DSS worked closely with the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) to develop 13 PIP implementation teams to address the activities outlined in the PIP. Special attention was given to the composition of these workgroups to ensure representation from county department of social services agencies, tribal communities, the court system, family and youth partners, university partners, and other stakeholders whose mission aligns with the improving the child welfare system.

Since the submission of the 2018 APSR, a number of these implementation teams concluded their work, including the Policy and Practices Workgroup, the Training Systems Workgroup, the Quality Assurance Workgroup, and the Technical Assistance Workgroup. These groups ended due to their purpose being fulfilled. In the upcoming year, DSS will continue to collaborate in areas pertaining to the Supervisor Academy, Guardianship Assistance Program, Family Engagement and Leadership, and Court Engagement. In June 2018 DSS began a series of facilitated Child Welfare Public Input Sessions across the state, which will allow stakeholders to continue to be involved in the monitoring of the progress and the implementation of the goals, objectives, and interventions outlined in this APSR.

In addition, DSS has engaged in meaningful collaboration across child-serving systems to increase opportunities to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children served by the foster care program. These efforts help DSS engage stakeholders in discussions regarding the progress DSS has made since the last submission of the APSR and to better integrate all programs, from prevention and protection through permanency. Several key collaboration activities are listed below.

Court Collaboration

DSS is closely involved with the court system through an Interagency Collaborative. Participating agencies include the Court Improvement Program, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), DSS, the Guardian ad Litem Program, the Indigent Defense Fund, the University of North Carolina (UNC), the Department of Justice, and county departments of social services agencies. These agencies meet at least bi-monthly to review data and plan for how each entity can work to improve permanency outcomes for children served by the foster care program. This Interagency Collaborative work is in addition to the specific activities outlined in North Carolina's PIP regarding the development of a Permanency Performance Profile and Court Engagement.

Over the past year, North Carolina has seen an increase in meaningful collaboration between its child welfare and court systems. Today both parties view themselves as intrinsically linked and recognize that each plays an important role in ensuring the safety, permanence, and well-being of children. The progress in this relationship is due in part to an inaugural "court convening" held on February 23, 2018. At this event, representatives from 20 counties, representing 10 judicial districts participated in data analysis and action planning directly related to the timely achievement of permanence for children in their jurisdictions. North Carolina expects the court-child welfare relationship to grow even stronger in the future as "District Permanency Collaboratives" are established across the state.

The District Permanency Collaboratives are local teams comprised of key partners—including, but not limited to the county child welfare agency director who acts as the local team lead; judges (chief

and/or juvenile); GAL district administrator; GAL attorney advocate; parent attorney representative; county child welfare agency attorney; and clerks of court (elected and/or juvenile) from across the judicial district. The Collaboratives are expected to meet quarterly to examine local permanency data and practices together to decrease a child's time in custody and make the child welfare system a stronger support for children and families. Following the meetings, the Collaborative submits a documentation tool that summarizes the discussion, identifies any practices that are demonstrating success in the area of permanency, and reports progress to DSS. The documentation tool also allows the Collaborative to note any challenges it is encountering. DSS and AOC will use this information to promote and distribute promising practices, as well as, identify areas needing training and technical assistance.

DSS coordinates with AOC to independently identify areas requiring additional training and technical assistance. Together they are examining existing training offerings and exploring opportunities for cross-training of court and child welfare staff. One topic identified as meriting additional training or technical assistance is the requirement that resource caregivers be given notice of court hearings. Planning to meet this need is underway with the intention of producing a webinar to address this issue in Fall 2018.

Collaboration with Tribes

DSS, specifically the Program Monitoring Team, continues to work with county child welfare agencies to ensure they are educated about the requirement to notify American Indian tribes, including state-recognized tribes, when children of American Indian heritage become involved with child welfare. Additionally, the Deputy Director for Child Welfare now serves on the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs Standing Committee on Indian Child Welfare. More information regarding North Carolina's collaboration with Tribes is provided in Section 6-- Consultation and Coordination with Tribes.

Collaboration across NCDHHS Divisions

NCDHHS leverages work from the various divisions under its authority to support the work of child welfare services. These include prevention activities of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS), the Division of Public Health (DPH), the Division of Medical Assistance (DMA), the Division of Health Benefits (DHB), and the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). Key collaborations across various divisions under NCDHHS authority supporting child welfare services include, but are not limited to:

- DSS collaborations with DPH to promote the Care Coordination for Children (CC4C) Program. CC4C is an at-risk population management program that serves children from birth to 5 years of age with risk of maltreatment. The main goals of the program are to improve health outcomes, connect families to services, and support children reaching their developmental potential.
- DSS collaborates with DMH/DD/SAS to support the North Carolina Child Treatment Program (NC-CTP) which trains clinicians in several evidence-based, trauma-informed treatments. NC-CTP maintains a roster of clinicians by county for increased access to timely services. These treatment models, which cover ages 0-21, help mitigate the effects of child maltreatment and promote child well-being.

- DSS is collaborating with DHB on a Specialty Plan for the foster care population within Medicaid Transformation
- DSS is collaborating with DCDEE on an Early Childhood Action Plan.
- DSS is working with DMA to help ensure adult victims of child abuse, if they are eligible, have access to full Medicaid benefits. This increases the likelihood of maximizing the well-being of these former foster youth and preventing intergenerational maltreatment.
- DSS collaborates with DPH on Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Programming.

North Carolina Child Welfare Family Advisory Council

North Carolina developed a family engagement and leadership model following its 2015 Child and Family Services Review (PIP Goal 1, Strategy 5). Known as the NC Child Welfare Family Advisory Council (CWFAC), the model includes a state-level council to provide parents opportunities to be full partners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of services as required by federal legislation. The state-level council is comprised of young adults with former experience with the child welfare system, biological parents who have received child protection services, foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship parents.

Launched in April 2018, the purpose of CWFAC is to promote and support the involvement of families at case practice, policy, and system levels. The CWFAC will become an integral part of informing how DSS will lead child welfare activities across the state.

The model also includes state support for the pilot implementation of three county-level family engagement committees (FEC). The FECs are comprised of biological parents with current or past involvement in the child welfare system to discuss and implement strategies to improve family engagement, safety, and permanency for children. FECs are currently being implemented in Durham, Forsyth, and Richmond counties.

Prevention Collaboration

DSS partners closely with other state-level, child-serving systems to maximize child abuse education and prevention efforts. These include, but are not limited to, the administration and support of the North Carolina Child Fatality Prevention System and the Community Child Protection Teams; a collaborative partnership with Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC); the public and private funder network; and direct funding and technical assistance for community-based agencies providing family strengthening and support services.

Stakeholder Collaboration

In addition to the areas highlighted above, DSS collaborates with multiple stakeholder groups to discuss concerns and ideas to strengthen child welfare services. These stakeholder groups assist DSS to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children and families. They include advocacy organizations, cross-system councils, state and national committees, and provider agencies:

- Benchmarks
- Center for Child and Family Health
- Commission on Children with Special Health Care

- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (ECBI)
- Essentials for Childhood Programming and Collaboration
- Infant Mental Health Association
- Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs)
- Mental Health Block Grant Planning Council
- National Alliance for Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds
- NC Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS)
- NC Brain Injury Council
- NC Child
- NC Commission on Indian Affairs
- NC Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD)
- NC Department of Public Instruction
- NC Department of Public/Juvenile Justice
- NC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
- NC Families United
- NC Family Focused Treatment Association (FFTA)
- NC Institute of Medicine (NCIOM)
- NC Interagency Coordinating Council - Early Intervention Programs through IDEA, Part C
- NC Lifespan Respite Project
- NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Project
- NC Pediatric Society
- NC State Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families
- Rapid Resource for Families
- SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out)

2. Update on Assessment of Performance

During Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in 2015, DSS conducted a state-led record review comprised of 109 cases. The outcome of the review was the following:

Data Element	Required Performance	State Performance
<i>Safety Outcome 1 -- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</i>		
Item 1 -- Timeliness of investigations	95% Strength	75% Strength
<i>Safety Outcome 2 -- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</i>		
Item 2-- Services to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care	90% Strength	66% Strength

Data Element	Required Performance	State Performance
Item 3 -- Risk and safety assessment and management	90% Strength	57% Strength
Permanency Outcome 1 -- <i>Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</i>		
Item 4 -- Stability of foster care placement	90% Strength	76% Strength
Item 5 -- Permanency goal for child	90% Strength	64% Strength
Item 6 -- Achieving reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement	90% Strength	41% Strength
Permanency Outcome 2 -- <i>The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</i>		
Item 7 -- Placement with siblings	90% Strength	78% Strength
Item 8 -- Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	90% Strength	59% Strength
Item 9 -- Preserving connections	90% Strength	73% Strength
Item 10 -- Relative placement	90% Strength	79% Strength
Item 11 -- Relationship of child in care with parents	90% Strength	58% Strength
Well-Being Outcome 1 -- <i>Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs.</i>		
Item 12 -- Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents	90% Strength	44% Strength
Sub-Item 12A -- Needs assessment and services to children	90% Strength	80% Strength
Sub-Item 12B -- Needs assessment and services to parents	90% Strength	40% Strength
Sub-Item 12C -- Needs assessment and services to foster parents	90% Strength	87% Strength
Item 13 -- Child and family involvement in case planning	90% Strength	46% Strength
Item 14 -- Caseworker visits with child	90% Strength	61% Strength
Item 15 -- Caseworker visits with parents	90% Strength	34% Strength
Well-Being Outcome 2 -- <i>Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</i>		
Item 16 -- Educational needs of the child	95% Strength	88% Strength
Well-Being Outcome 3 -- <i>Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</i>		
Item 17 -- Physical health of the child	90% Strength	76% Strength
Item 18 -- Mental/behavioral health of the child	90% Strength	67% Strength

After reviewing the results of the CFSR, DSS negotiated with the CB to focus on all areas for the agency’s PIP. In 2017, DSS collected baseline data through another round of case reviews using the online Onsite Services Review Instrument (OSRI) developed by the Children’s Bureau. The reviews consist of a case file review, as well as interviews from the family, social worker, and potentially foster parents, GALs, or other key individuals. The results of that review are highlighted below, along with the identified PIP goal (*far right column*).

CFSR Item	Item Description	Baseline	PIP Goal
Item 1	Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	69.6%	74.6%
Item 2	Child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care	61.7%	66.4%
Item 3	Risk and safety assessment and management	58.7%	64.8%
Item 4	Stability of foster care placement	66.1%	70.6%
Item 5	Permanency goal for child	50.0%	54.7%
Item 6	Achieving reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement	43.5%	48.3%
Item 12	Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents	44.0%	47.6%
Item 13	Child and family involvement in case planning	48.6%	52.2%
Item 14	Caseworker visits with child	63.3%	66.7%
Item 15	Caseworker visits with parents	45.0%	48.7%

The following table provides a comprehensive look, including the most recent data, pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes in North Carolina.

Item	Item Description	2015 CFSR Data	2017 Baseline Data	PIP Goal	Data from August 2017 to January 2018
Safety					
Item 1	Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	75%	69.6%	74.6%	69%
Item 2	Child(ren) in the home and prevent removal or re-entry into foster care	66%	61.7%	66.4%	68%
Item 3	Risk and safety assessment and management	57%	58.7%	62.2%	49%
Permanence					
Item 4	Stability of foster care placement	76%	66.1%	70.6%	65%
Item 5	Permanency goal for child	64%	50.0%	54.7%	49%
Item 6	Achieving reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement	41%	43.5%	48.3%	45%
Well-Being					
Item 12	Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents	41%	44.0%	47.6%	44%
Item 13	Child and family involvement in case planning	46%	48.6%	52.2%	51%
Item 14	Caseworker visits with child	61%	63.3%	66.7%	62%
Item 15	Caseworker visits with parents	34%	45%	48.7%	43%

The following table provides information regarding North Carolina’s performance related to the Systemic Factors assessed by the CFSR.

Systemic Factor	Current Status	Planned Work for Next Year
<p><u>Information System</u> <i>The state is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum can, readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of every child who is in foster care.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 19 (Statewide Information System) was rated as an Area Needing Improvement • Piloting NC FAST in 11 counties • Ongoing discussions regarding defects, change requests, and enhancements to the system • Increased access to data • NC FAST remedies NC’s longstanding lack of 1 unique identifier for children in the child welfare system • Converting data from antiquated legacy systems into NC FAST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement NC FAST statewide by the end of 2018 • Redesign the system for enhanced usability by the workforce • Continued discussions regarding reporting mechanisms needed for data use
<p><u>Case Review System</u> <i>The state provides a process that ensures each child has a written case plan, to be developed jointly with the child’s parents, that includes the required provisions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 21 (Periodic Reviews) and Item 22 (Permanency Hearings) were rated as Strengths during the 2015 CFSR. • Items 20 (Written Case Plan), 23 (Termination of Parental Rights), and 24 (Notice of Hearings and Review to Caregivers) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. • NC has strengthened its policy and guidance regarding the use of case plans. The revised policy is currently being implemented in the 10 PIP pilot counties. • Sought feedback from family partners regarding the usability of written case plans. Their feedback was incorporated whenever possible. • NC developed a Permanency Performance Profile, which is a consolidated synopsis of the key components of OSRI data, CFSR Data Indicators, and J-Wise data, which includes a data point specifically addressing TPRs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand use of the revised policy manual to the entire state • Increase involvement of children and parents in case planning • Provide training and technical assistance to county child welfare staff and judicial partners regarding the importance of timely TPR actions, as well as providing notice of hearings and reviews to caregivers • Use the Permanency Performance Profile to demonstrate improvements in noticing caregivers of hearings and reviews
<p><u>Quality Assurance System</u> <i>The state is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates implemented program improvement measures.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 25 (Quality Assurance System) was rated as an Area Needing Improvement • CFSR Measurement Plan is indicative of NC’s QA system (for details, see section II.10 of this report) • Continuing to sample and review 213 cases statewide annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish PIP Performance Goals • Review cases as dictated in the CFSR Program Improvement Measurement Plan • Provide ongoing training to QA professionals regarding fidelity to the OSRI • Begin using OSRI as NC’s CQI tool for Foster Care and In-Home Services and implement strategies

Systemic Factor	Current Status	Planned Work for Next Year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting case reviews and/or quality assurance of reviews using OSRI 	to improve performance through technical assistance.
<p>Staff and Provider Training <i>The state is operating a staff and provider development and training program that provides ongoing training to address the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties regarding services included in the CFSP.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 28 (Foster and Adoptive Parent Training) was rated as a Strength. Items 26 (Initial Staff Training) and 27 (Ongoing Staff Training) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. Revising core courses for the child welfare workforce Third party vendor is evaluating NC's training system and will make recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain train the trainer TIPS-MAPP training for child welfare social workers to support quality training for foster and adoptive parents. Completion date – ongoing through June 2019. Review recommendations from the Center for the Support of Families to identify strategies to ensure well-trained staff. Completion date – July 2018 Fulfill the administrative responsibilities in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) between county child welfare agencies and NCDHHS as noted in section 13 (4) a. Staff Training and Workforce Development. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training requirements for county personnel. Publish annually a list of required and recommended trainings for county personnel. Completion date – by December 2018. Develop training curricula and provide timely, adequate access to statewide training opportunities. This includes continuing to modify training courses to reflect modified policy and meet the needs of the child welfare workforce. Completion date – ongoing through June 2019. Publish a training calendar, at least quarterly to notify counties of training opportunities. Completion dates – July, October, January, June Provide timely written guidance to new federal and state statutes or regulations. Completion dates – ongoing through June 2019. <p>Provide technical assistance and training in</p>

Systemic Factor	Current Status	Planned Work for Next Year
		<p>areas where quality control, monitoring or data indicates a lack of correct application of law, rule or policy. Completion dates – ongoing through June 2019.</p>
<p><u>Services Array and Resource Development</u> <i>The state has services that are accessible in all districts that assess the strengths and needs of children and families.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Items 29 (Array of Services) and 30 (Individualizing Services) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. ● Convened regional summits between county child welfare agencies and LME/MCOs ● Continuing to analyze priority needs, identify service gaps, and target those within the state’s capacity ● Continuing to talk with community partners about service needs and ways to address gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue ongoing dialogue with and provide technical assistance to LME/MCOs and county child welfare agencies regarding meeting the needs of the foster care population ● Seek opportunities to collaborate with new partners to help address services gaps, particularly in the areas of children’s mental health, early childhood services, and adult substance use ● Continue developing trauma-informed programming and scaling up evidence-based treatment models across NC ● Collaborate with stakeholders around the implementation of the provisions of Families First Prevention Services Act
<p><u>Agency Responsiveness to the Community</u> <i>The state engages in ongoing consultation with its partners and consumers about services delivery.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Items 31 (State Engagement and Consultation with Stakeholders Pursuant to CFSP and APSR) and 32 (Coordination of CFSP Services with Other Federal Programs) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. ● Established a state-level Child Welfare Family Advisory Council available to provide ongoing consultation ● Produced a 20-minute informational video for stakeholders regarding the CFSP, APSR, and CFSR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host statewide, regional “Child Welfare Public Input Sessions” to give external stakeholders and the community at large, opportunities to share DSS leadership their views on identified issues and concerns related to serving children and families involved with child welfare ● Continue to engage and consult with family partners on policy and practice via the state-level Child Welfare Family Advisory Council ● Establish three family engagement committees at the county level and explore statewide implementation

Systemic Factor	Current Status	Planned Work for Next Year
<p><u>Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention</u></p> <p><i>The state licensing standards are aligned with national standards and are applied to all approved FHs and child care institutions receiving IV-E or IV-B funds. In addition, the state complies with Federal background check requirements, has a diligent recruitment plan in place, and has an effective process to handle cross-jurisdictional placements.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Item 33 (Standards Applied Equally) was rated as a Strength. ● Items 34 (Requirements for Criminal Background Checks), 35 (Diligent Recruitment), and 36 (State Use of Cross-Jurisdictional Resources for Permanent Placements) were rated as Areas Needing Improvement. ● Established a standardized process for completing criminal background checks on prospective foster parents ● Implemented state-level diligent recruitment and retention (DRR) plan that provides concrete goals for statewide achievement, consistency, and structure, while also allowing for county-level planning for DRR of foster and adoptive families ● Developed a data profile so that county and private child-placing agencies can capture data regarding the children and families served ● Assessing and addressing cross-jurisdictional placements on a case-by-case and agency-by-agency basis ● Providing technical assistance to strongly encourage agencies to be open to placements out-of-state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue using data to inform the DRR planning process ● Continue examination of rules and policies governing requirements for background checks of all persons providing care to children in the legal custody of county child welfare agencies as a means of ensuring safety for children ● Collect data from the county child welfare agencies and private child-placing agencies around the number of applicants who are denied licensure based on negative findings on criminal background checks completed during initial screening ● Provide technical assistance to county child welfare agencies and private child-placing agencies on targeted, child-specific recruitment (when applicable) ● Provide technical assistance to counties and private child placement agencies about the use of Adoption Promotion funds to address financial barriers around out-of-jurisdiction placements

Historically, North Carolina has had difficulty assessing its performance due to poor data quality. This issue stems in large part from the limitations in its information systems. The state is in the process of addressing this problem through the implementation of an enterprise, statewide, integrated case management system. This system, known as North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST), began its child welfare services implementation in August 2017. This system, once complete will serve as North Carolina’s Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS).

NC FAST has developed and begun to implement a data conversion strategy aimed at ensuring unique individuals are identified and not duplicated within the system. Leveraging prior NC FAST program implementations, as well as the Common Name Data System (CNDS), only individuals who can be “exact matched” on first name, last name, DOB, SSN, and gender are brought into NC FAST. For all future clients, NC FAST requires the user to verify possible matches within the system to avoid duplication of individuals within the system. To ensure they have as much information as possible, program staff must continue to check individuals in both NC FAST and the legacy system (i.e., the Central Registry) for possible prior child welfare involvement in North Carolina.

The initial five pilot counties began using NC FAST August 7, 2017. The pilot extended to six more counties March 26, 2018. It is anticipated this system will yield the sufficient, accurate, timely data North Carolina needs to assess performance effectively. As NC FAST implementation continues, DSS will use the data to perform reviews of practice. These reviews will include verification of the data as accurate representation of the case actions and status.

3. Update to the Plan for Improvement and Progress Made to Improve Outcomes

Update to the Plan for Improvement

Revisions to Goals, Objectives, and Interventions

Following the release of its CFSR report in February 2016, North Carolina has striven to inclusively design and implement a PIP that would positively impact children and families. North Carolina’s PIP was formally approved by the CB in January 2017 and revised in December 2017. The approved PIP can be found on the Program Statistics and Reviews page of the DSS website (<https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/stats/cw.htm>).

North Carolina has added its PIP to its 2015-2019 CFSP; thus, updating its CFSP goals, objectives, and interventions. North Carolina believes the PIP provides an opportunity to strengthen child welfare services in North Carolina, including its quality assurance system and technical assistance protocols, laying the groundwork to support a comprehensive CQI model in the future.

Specific updates related to CFSR data indicators, systemic factors, and case review outcomes will be included in the forthcoming PIP Progress Report.

	Goal	Objectives	Outcomes for Children and Families OR Service Delivery Elements	Rationale / Data Analysis / Measures	Implementation Supports Needed
1	Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being through the establishment of clear performance expectations for practice in CPS Assessments, In-Home Services and Foster Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and clarify North Carolina’s child welfare policies and practices Enhance the training system to support the consistent application of the revised policies and practices Strengthen the capacity of county departments of social services to sustain the consistent application of the revised policies and practices through the development and implementation of a supervisor academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased safety for children Increased permanency for children Increase engagement of families 	<p>NC is seeing variations in case practice that affect children’s safety, permanency, and well-being as measured by the OSRI. NC seeks to standardize practice with through revised policies and by selecting a practice model. NC has successfully executed many of the PIP strategies linked to this goal. Notable examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extensively revised child welfare policy manual has been piloted and will go statewide in July 2018 Training courses are being revised to reflect policy changes and will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training regarding the consistent application of policies and practices Coaching, mentoring, and teaching of staff on policy and practice changes

Outcomes for Children and Families OR Service Delivery Elements					
Goal	Objectives	Outcomes for Children and Families OR Service Delivery Elements	Rationale / Data Analysis / Measures	Implementation Supports Needed	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a technical assistance model for DSS to provide multi-level assistance to county child welfare staff regarding the consistent application of policies, practices and training. Develop and pilot county level child welfare family engagement committees and a state level family advisory council that promotes and supports the involvement of families at case practice, policy, and systems levels. 		offered in SFY 2018-2019		
2	<p>Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being through the utilization of a statewide quality assurance system which will identify the strengths and needs of the service delivery system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalize the state level quality assurance system so that areas of child welfare practice needing improvement are consistently identified and addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Assurance results reflect practice and the experiences of children and families involved in the child welfare system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the OSRI to review cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training regarding using the OSRI with fidelity Regular meetings with all QA staff in NC—both state-level and county-level Regular conversations with Children’s Bureau on the latest trends and guidance regarding the preferred use/interpretations for the OSRI
3	<p>Improve the permanency outcomes for children through collaboration with the judicial system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop with NC AOC and other judicial system partners a plan to engage local court and county departments of social services to address issues of: notice to resource parents, timely establishment of case goals, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved permanency for children Enhanced relationships with judicial partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the Permanency Performance Profile to measure progress of counties and judicial districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training regarding the Permanency Performance Profile Training that is responsive to identified needs and trends

		Outcomes for Children and Families OR Service Delivery Elements			Implementation Supports Needed
Goal	Objectives		Rationale / Data Analysis / Measures		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concurrent planning, permanency and timely TPR actions DSS, Indigent Defense Services, Guardian ad Litem and the Court Improvement Program will provide targeted engagement to county department of social services and court personnel in judicial districts and counties across the state to support children achieving permanency and stability in their living situations Implement a Guardianship Assistance Program for all counties in North Carolina to support permanency and stability in children's living situations 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted technical assistance to counties and judicial partners when needs are identified Development of ways to share promising practices in NC 	
4	Strengthen cross-system service provision to improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish agreements between county departments of social services and Local Managing Entities/Managed Care Organizations to collaborate on and hold each other accountable for accessible, quality, and timely behavioral health services for child welfare-involved children as well as families involved with Child Welfare who are referred to the LME/MCOs for services Strengthen and reframe the statewide foster and adoptive parent diligent recruitment plan to support the recruitment of families who meet the needs of the children they serve and who reflect the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to mental and/or behavioral health services Children able to be placed with an appropriate foster family that meets the needs and reflect their ethnic and racial diversity Stakeholders are engaged in child welfare programs and services to the point of offering input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child welfare services and programs that reflect input from the stakeholder/customers Increase in placement stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training regarding how to use data to inform diligent recruitment and retention plans Ability to host regular input sessions Provide training for customers regarding child welfare programs and services

Outcomes for Children and Families OR Service Delivery Elements					
Goal	Objectives	Outcomes for Children and Families OR Service Delivery Elements	Rationale / Data Analysis / Measures	Implementation Supports Needed	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic and racial diversity of children served by the Foster Care program Strengthen the external stakeholders understanding of, and input into the development of, the North Carolina Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) goals, objectives and annual updates and establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms 				
5	Enhance the statewide data quality, collection and dissemination of information regarding services provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the statewide information system through the development of a child welfare module within NC FAST (North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology) to improve data quality, consistency, and access to timely statewide data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accurate representation of the experiences of children and families in the system Better collaboration and coordination of services to children and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved data quality More accessibility of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular, ongoing training regarding NC FAST Continued consideration of how NC FAST and child welfare practice support and complement one another

Update on Progress Made to Improve Outcomes

Progress Measures

North Carolina uses the OSRI case review data as the primary means of assessing system performance statewide. To ensure all internal and external stakeholders see the data, DSS is publishing the Quarterly OSRI Report. This report will present the data in tables, charts and figures; provide analyses of state performance on each item; and include a description of what counties should do and what the state is doing to support practice for improved performance. In addition, the table below summarizes the state’s performance by 6-month reporting period after the 2015 CFRS case reviews.

Table A: Percent of Cases Rated as a Strength by OSRI Case Review Period
Statewide, 10 OSRI Counties, and the Remaining 90 Counties

Item and Benchmarks	Six-Month Case Review Period	North Carolina		10 Pilot Counties		90 Counties	
		# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength	# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength	# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength
Item 1: Timeliness of case initiation of child maltreatment reports							
2015 CFSR = 75% Baseline = 71.7% PIP Goal = 76.7%	May-Oct 2016	30	80%	18	89%	12	67%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	42	79%	18	83%	24	75%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	35	74%	12	58%	23	83%
	Feb-Jul 2017	36	75%	12	67%	24	79%
	May-Oct 2017	46	72%	16	75%	30	70%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	52	69%	24	75%	28	64%
Item 2: Concerted efforts made to prevent child's entry or re-entry into foster care							
2015 CFSR = 66% Baseline = 61.7% PIP Goal = 66.4%	May-Oct 2016	34	91%	21	86%	13	100%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	51	90%	26	81%	25	100%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	54	87%	26	77%	28	96%
	Feb-Jul 2017	59	76%	30	70%	29	83%
	May-Oct 2017	60	62%	29	62%	31	61%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	62	68%	30	70%	32	66%
Item 3: Concerted efforts made to assess and address risk and safety concerns							
2015 CFSR = 57% Baseline = 58.7% PIP Goal = 62.2%	May-Oct 2016	65	58%	41	56%	24	63%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	102	68%	52	60%	50	76%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	107	77%	56	66%	51	88%
	Feb-Jul 2017	110	65%	60	57%	50	76%
	May-Oct 2017	109	59%	57	56%	52	62%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	108	49%	57	51%	51	47%
Item 4: Placement stability							
2015 CFSR = 76% Baseline = 66.1% PIP Goal = 70.6%	May-Oct 2016	36	72%	22	68%	14	79%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	57	77%	29	69%	28	86%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	59	78%	31	77%	28	79%
	Feb-Jul 2017	59	73%	31	74%	28	71%
	May-Oct 2017	62	66%	32	66%	30	67%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	66	65%	35	66%	31	65%
Item 5: Timely establishment of permanency goals							
2015 CFSR = 64% Baseline = 50% PIP Goal = 54.7%	May-Oct 2016	36	75%	22	64%	14	93%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	57	67%	29	62%	28	71%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	59	68%	31	68%	28	68%
	Feb-Jul 2017	59	61%	31	55%	28	68%
	May-Oct 2017	62	50%	32	44%	30	57%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	65	49%	35	46%	30	53%
Item 6: Concerted efforts made to achieve permanency							
2015 CFSR = 41% Baseline = 43.5% PIP Goal = 48.3%	May-Oct 2016	36	42%	22	36%	14	50%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	57	35%	29	28%	28	43%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	59	49%	31	35%	28	64%
	Feb-Jul 2017	59	53%	31	42%	28	64%
	May-Oct 2017	62	44%	32	41%	30	47%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	66	45%	35	43%	31	48%

Item and Benchmarks	Six-Month Case Review Period	North Carolina		10 Pilot Counties		90 Counties	
		# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength	# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength	# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength
Item 7: Siblings in foster care are placed together when appropriate							
2015 CFSR = 78% Baseline = 85% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	25	88%	16	81%	9	100%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	38	87%	20	85%	18	89%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	39	90%	21	90%	18	89%
	Feb-Jul 2017	38	95%	21	90%	17	100%
	May-Oct 2017	46	85%	21	81%	19	89%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	45	80%	24	75%	21	86%
Item 8: Sufficient, quality visitation for siblings and parents							
2015 CFSR = 59% Baseline = 47% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	28	61%	17	59%	11	64%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	47	60%	25	60%	22	59%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	46	72%	24	79%	22	64%
	Feb-Jul 2017	43	63%	24	63%	19	63%
	May-Oct 2017	45	47%	25	48%	20	45%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	50	58%	25	56%	25	60%
Item 9: Preservation of child's connections to family, neighborhood, and culture							
2015 CFSR = 73% Baseline = 71% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	36	78%	22	64%	14	100%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	57	81%	29	62%	28	100%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	59	83%	31	71%	28	96%
	Feb-Jul 2017	59	81%	31	74%	28	89%
	May-Oct 2017	62	71%	32	69%	30	73%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	65	77%	35	83%	30	70%
Item 10: Child placed with relatives when appropriate							
2015 CFSR = 79% Baseline = 70% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	36	78%	22	68%	14	93%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	56	75%	29	69%	27	81%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	58	69%	31	71%	27	67%
	Feb-Jul 2017	59	61%	31	68%	28	54%
	May-Oct 2017	60	70%	31	81%	29	59%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	64	86%	34	88%	30	83%
Item 11: Promote positive relationships between foster child and foster family							
2015 CFSR = 58% Baseline = 53% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	26	50%	16	44%	10	60%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	38	55%	19	53%	19	58%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	34	68%	17	76%	17	59%
	Feb-Jul 2017	38	61%	21	62%	17	59%
	May-Oct 2017	43	53%	23	61%	20	45%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	45	58%	24	67%	21	48%
Item 12: Assess needs and provide services to children, parents, and foster parents							
2015 CFSR = 44% Baseline = 45% PIP Goal = 48.5%	May-Oct 2016	65	45%	41	44%	24	46%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	102	51%	52	44%	50	58%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	107	61%	56	57%	51	65%
	Feb-Jul 2017	110	54%	60	55%	50	52%
	May-Oct 2017	109	45%	57	47%	52	42%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	108	44%	57	47%	51	41%

Item and Benchmarks	Six-Month Case Review Period	North Carolina		10 Pilot Counties		90 Counties	
		# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength	# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength	# of Cases Reviewed	% Rated Strength
Item 13: Child and family involvement in case planning							
2015 CFSR = 46% Baseline = 48.6% PIP Goal = 52.2%	May-Oct 2016	63	52%	40	48%	23	61%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	99	59%	51	51%	48	67%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	104	71%	55	67%	49	76%
	Feb-Jul 2017	108	58%	60	55%	48	63%
	May-Oct 2017	107	49%	56	50%	51	47%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	106	51%	56	55%	50	46%
Item 14: Caseworker visits with child							
2015 CFSR = 61% Baseline = 62.4% PIP Goal = 65.8%	May-Oct 2016	65	60%	41	56%	24	67%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	102	63%	52	60%	50	66%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	107	69%	56	71%	51	67%
	Feb-Jul 2017	110	66%	60	68%	50	64%
	May-Oct 2017	109	62%	57	70%	52	54%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	108	62%	57	74%	51	49%
Item 15: Caseworker visits with parents							
2015 CFSR = 34% Baseline = 43% PIP Goal = 46.7%	May-Oct 2016	57	44%	34	35%	23	57%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	87	54%	44	43%	43	65%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	90	59%	49	51%	41	68%
	Feb-Jul 2017	98	49%	55	45%	43	53%
	May-Oct 2017	100	43%	53	42%	47	45%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	98	43%	53	42%	45	44%
Item 16: Educational needs of the child							
2015 CFSR = 88% Baseline = 90% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	40	85%	25	76%	15	100%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	69	90%	36	81%	33	100%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	67	94%	33	91%	34	97%
	Feb-Jul 2017	62	92%	32	94%	30	90%
	May-Oct 2017	70	90%	38	89%	32	91%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	75	84%	40	75%	35	94%
Item 17: Physical and dental health of the child							
2015 CFSR = 76% Baseline = 78% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	50	86%	30	80%	20	95%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	75	85%	38	74%	37	97%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	76	80%	42	69%	34	94%
	Feb-Jul 2017	79	77%	45	73%	34	82%
	May-Oct 2017	85	78%	46	83%	39	72%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	90	76%	47	83%	43	67%
Item 18: Mental/behavioral health of the child							
2015 CFSR = 67% Baseline = 76% PIP Goal = N/A	May-Oct 2016	44	80%	30	73%	14	93%
	Aug 2016-Jan 2017	67	79%	37	65%	30	97%
	Nov 2016-Apr 2017	68	84%	35	71%	33	97%
	Feb-Jul 2017	72	85%	39	79%	33	91%
	May-Oct 2017	72	76%	38	74%	34	79%
	Aug 2017-Jan 2018	71	73%	36	69%	35	77%

Round 3 CFSR Data Indicators

Although North Carolina is in the process of adopting NC FAST statewide and despite the issues around the quality of the current administrative data, the state still reviews performance on the CFSR Round 3 Data Indicators. The following table reflects North Carolina’s performance between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017.

ROUND 3 CFSR DATA INDICATORS FOR NORTH CAROLINA
July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, as estimated by DSS

	National Standard	SFY 2014-2015	SFY 2016-2017	SFY 2017-2018
Maltreatment in foster care <i>(goal is to be below national standard)</i>	8.5	10.5*	8.4	6.0
Recurrence of maltreatment <i>(goal is to be below national standard)</i>	9.00%	10.8%	10.6%	10.4%
Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care <i>(goal is to be above national standard)</i>	40.5%	30.8%*	32.3%*	31.6%*
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months	43.6%	45.2%*	44.1%	44.6%
Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care for 24 months or more <i>(goal is to be above national standard)</i>	30.3%	34.4%	35.4%	37.7%
Re-entry to foster care in 12 months <i>(goal is to be below national standard)</i>	8.30%	4.07%	4.15%	2.08%
Placement stability <i>(goal is to be below national standard)</i>	4.1	4.8	4.7*	4.8*

* does not meet national standard

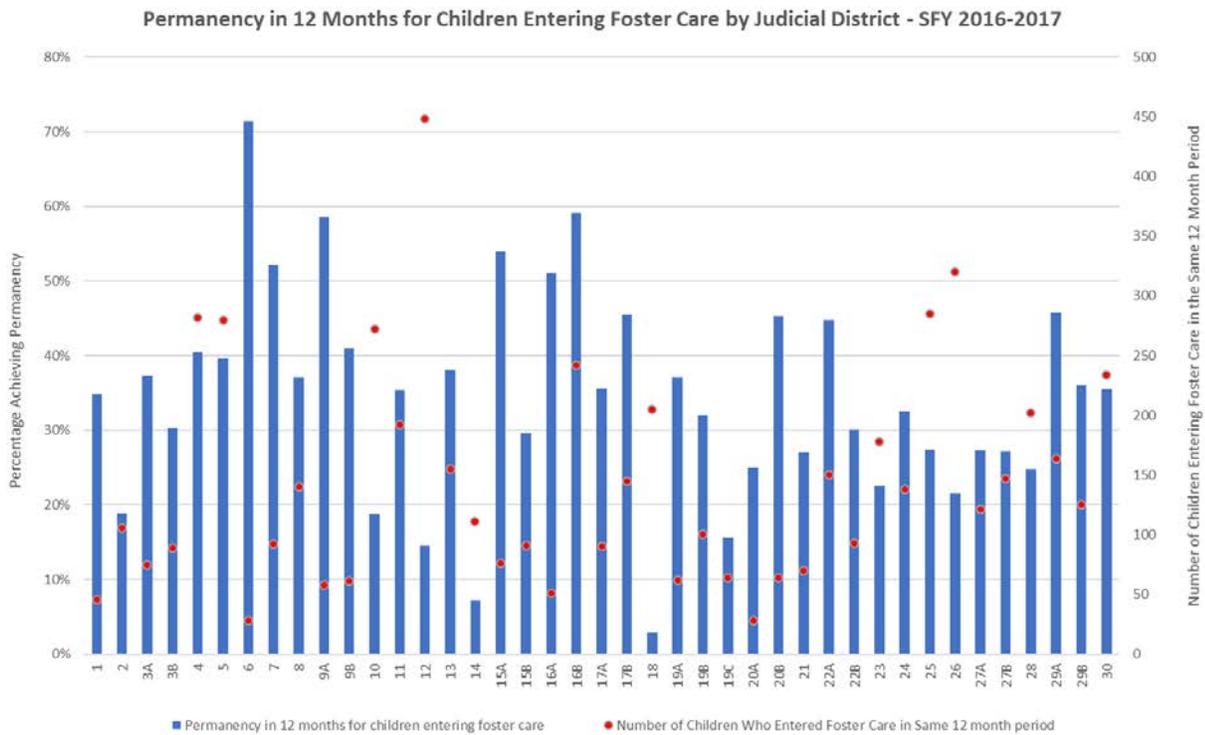
Based on the best available administrative data, North Carolina is meeting the federal standards for four out of seven of the Round 3 CFSR Data Indicators. The permanency in 12 months indicators continue to pose a challenge for the state. However, North Carolina’s District Permanency Collaborative initiative is particularly designed to improve the state’s performance on this measure by requiring local child welfare stakeholders to consider factors together that delay children’s exits to permanency. North Carolina is encouraged to see the rate of maltreatment while in foster care decline significantly over the last three years.

Permanency Performance Profile

Goal 3 of North Carolina’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP) prescribes improvement in the permanency outcomes for children currently in the custody of county child welfare agencies. The Court and Child Welfare Collaboration Initiative began in February 2018, when child welfare and court personnel from 20 counties representing 10 judicial districts convened to discuss using data to drive child welfare-court collaboration. DSS developed and populated “Permanency Performance Profiles” with data from 13 data measures (five CFSR Data Indicators and eight court administrative data points and all OSRI items). The Profiles also include the state- and county-level performance on all OSRI items for the six-month period of interest. The initial meeting was structured to communicate the expectation that districts will meet locally at least quarterly, review their updated profiles together, develop a plan to improve performance

where needed, and report to DSS and AOC after every local meeting. The expectation is that the DSS and AOC will analyze county- and district-level data and respond to low-performing districts with technical assistance and training.

Below is a chart summarizing performance on the CFSR Data Indicator *Permanency in 12 Months* by judicial district. The percentage of children achieving permanency in 12 months in each of North Carolina’s 30 judicial districts is highlighted by the blue bars referencing the left vertical axis. To give the reader a sense of context, the number of children is indicated by the red dot that references the right vertical axis. DSS and NC AOC are using data and figures like this to identify districts in need of specialized state technical assistance.



The Permanency in 12 months chart is an example of how the state is using local data to evaluate local performance and intervene as needed. Similar figures are being developed for the other 12 measures published in the Permanency Performance Profiles. By requiring counties and judicial districts to review the same data together on a quarterly basis and report on it, the state has set up a process by which these local jurisdictions can self-evaluate and develop local solutions to delays in permanency.

HB 630 Performance Measures

As part of social services reform enacted by the North Carolina General Assembly (HB 630), DSS has developed performance measures the state will use to evaluate county performance. The table below lists the first round of child welfare measures that will be released in July 2018. These measures are likely to be amended in the next year, given the enhanced data capabilities with NC FAST.

HB 630 Child Welfare Performance Measures*	Service Area
County child welfare agency will initiate XX% of all screened in reports within required time frames.	CPS
County child welfare agency will complete 95% of assessments within 45-day time frame.	CPS
County will ensure XX% of open assessment cases are provided contacts monthly.	CPS
County will have no more than XX% of children in closed In-Home Services cases will experience repeat maltreatment within 12 months of case closure.	In-Home
County will document permanency goals for XX % of foster youth will be established within 60 days of a child entering custody or for whom the county has placement authority.	Foster Care
County will ensure XX% of all foster youth have face-to-face visits by the social worker each month.	Foster Care
County will ensure XX % of monthly visits with foster youth where the child resides.	Foster Care
County will ensure XX % of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.	Foster Care
County will ensure that the annual rate of repeat maltreatment of current foster children remains below XX %.	Foster Care
County will ensure that of all children entering foster care in a 12-month period who were discharged within 12 months to reunification, kinship care, guardianship, no more than 8.3% re-enter foster care within 12 months of discharge.	Foster Care
County will ensure that of all children entering foster care in a 12-month period, the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care will not exceed XX%.	Foster Care
County child welfare agency will achieve its adoption baseline	Adoption

**Precise child welfare performance measures for HB 630 have yet to be developed*

Progress Benchmarks

By May 31, 2018, North Carolina successfully completed the following benchmarks as outlined in the PIP:

- The policy manuals for CPS Intake, CPS Assessments, CPS In-Home Services, and Permanency Planning have been revised to cover the specific areas outlined in the PIP.
- The child welfare supervisors of North Carolina have received training on the revised policies so that they can return to their agencies to train their staff on the policies and practices, as well as the correct application of them.
- The training curricula for the four functional areas of Child Welfare Services in North Carolina have been revised. Those courses are *Intake in Child Welfare Services*; *CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services*; *CPS In-Home Child Welfare Services*; and *Permanency Planning in Child Welfare Services*.
- Child welfare supervisors have been piloting the Supervisor Academy, which is comprised of three new courses: *Nuts and Bolts of Child Welfare Supervision*, *Using Data to Improve Practice and Performance*, and *Using Data to Improve Practice and Performance with Community Partners*. As of May 30, 2018, 48 supervisors have completed all three courses that constitute the Academy.
- North Carolina is implementing a multi-level technical assistance model designed to improve the consistent application of the revised policies and practices utilizing a coaching, mentoring, and teaching approach. North Carolina currently has a project with the Capacity-Building Center for States to further support the documentation of the model, as well as the supports needed to successfully implement it.
- North Carolina has successfully launched its Child Welfare Family Advisory Council, which is a state-level approach to promoting family engagement at the policy and systems levels. Three counties in North Carolina (Durham, Forsyth, and Richmond) are piloting Family Engagement Committees aimed at supporting family involvement at the case practice level. North Carolina also has a project with the Capacity-Building Center for States related to family engagement and leadership. The Center is instrumental in supporting North Carolina successfully implement the state-level council, as well as providing training and technical assistance to the counties around their identified strategies.
- North Carolina developed a Permanency Performance Profile, a tool to engage local courts and county child welfare agencies in discussions addressing issues of achieving timely permanence for children in the legal custody of the county child welfare agency. This Profile is comprised of data from the OSRI Online Management System, CFSR data indicators, and Court Improvement Program measures.
- North Carolina successfully held a court convening event titled “Improving Permanency Outcomes Through Collaboration”, which 20 counties representing eight judicial districts attended. During this kickoff event, the attendees developed an action plan for the establishment of regular meetings back in their locales, with the expectation that the meetings will be held quarterly.

- North Carolina continues to provide ongoing technical assistance to further expand the utilization of the Guardianship Assistance Program. NCDHHS will be leading a workgroup comprised of county child welfare agency partners to discuss and plan ways to further expand the program.
- In 2017, North Carolina wrote and published its Diligent Recruitment and Retention (DRR) plan focusing on state-level efforts. As of May 30, 2018, North Carolina has received DRR plans from 98 of its 100 counties; with those two plans coming by the end of the state fiscal year. Private child-placing agencies have collaborated and participated in the development of the county-level DRR plans. Private agencies may also submit their own DRR plans to DSS. DSS provided technical assistance regarding the county-level DRR plans, as well as offered assistance regarding the MEPA requirements.
- North Carolina completed an analysis of current child welfare business functions and compared them to the existing Cúram software. This report was used to inform the design of NC FAST.

Feedback Loops

DSS uses multiple strategies to ensure it continually consults with stakeholders regarding the provision of child welfare services. These include the following efforts in SFY 2017-2018:

- Launched an e-mail account (CFSP.APSR@dhhs.nc.gov) and phone number (919-527-6359) for receiving feedback from stakeholders impacted by child welfare services or stakeholders providing services.
- Launched the North Carolina Child Welfare Family Advisory Council (CWFAC) and instituted *Family Partner Feedback Days* for its members. In addition to CWFAC meetings, which offer an opportunity to discuss global issues, the Family Partner Feedback Days (at least six a year) provide a structured forum for obtaining feedback on specific aspects of child welfare services. (See below for more details.)
- Utilized *Staying Connected* Calls with county and community partner to share information and ideas and discuss ways to strengthen the provision of services.
- Used the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services Children's Services Committee to share information and ideas and discuss ways to strengthen programming.
- Offered Child Welfare Public Input Sessions across the state, which allow stakeholders to continue to be involved in the monitoring of the progress and the implementation of the goals, objectives, and interventions outlined in this APSR.
- Used various stakeholder groups to gain additional insight into programming and adjust as needed to improve outcomes. These include, but are not limited to, the Guardianship Assistance Program Workgroup, the Adoption Promotion Workgroup, the Fostering Health NC Advisory Committee, and the Community Child Protection Team Advisory Board.
- Conducted a survey of all county Community Child Protection Teams regarding their experiences and recommendations for future consideration.

- Conducted an online survey of North Carolina’s public and private supervising agencies to better understand the training needs of the state’s foster families.

These structured mechanisms, coupled with informal interactions with counties and community stakeholders, ensure DSS has continual feedback for monitoring progress throughout the year.

Two additional specific examples of feedback loops are detailed below. One, *Family Partner Feedback Days*, elicits feedback from individuals impacted by interventions. The other, the *Adoption Promotion Workgroup*, elicits feedback from those implementing the intervention.

1. *Family Partner Feedback Days*. DSS has engaged members of the CWFAC (including biological parents, foster/adoptive/kinship parents, and youth) in targeted discussions related to the development of training materials, revisions to a handbook for biological parents, the structure and requirements of a community-based program, the format for case plans in NC FAST, and new forms (e.g., relating to visitation and in-home services). For example, based on the feedback Family Partners provided on the handbook for biological parents, the order of information was adjusted, content was significantly modified, and the title of the document was changed.

The process of Family Partner Feedback Days includes several steps designed to ensure family partners have a positive experience and DSS gets their needs met:

- a) Family partners receive materials ahead of meetings to familiarize them with the information.
- b) Family partners typically participate in a “prep” meeting before the event to answer questions, align expectations, and help them feel ready to join in the discussion.
- c) Agency and family partners engage in a small group discussion regarding the topic; this typically includes a community facilitator who can help translate and clarify any language/interpretation issues and be a support person for family partners.
- d) Family partners typically participate in a debrief session to follow-up on the experience, clarify any questions, and collect lessons learned.
- e) Agency staff complete a form about the event; this form documents how they will use the feedback and collects lessons learned.
- f) As feedback is incorporated into programming, DSS shares that information with family partners to close the feedback loop.

Family partners who have experienced the entire sequence have shared that they “felt inspired that they were listened to and their opinions were validated.” They also expressed excitement for continuing this process.

2. *Adoption Promotion Workgroup*. DSS identified a need to strengthen its Adoption Promotion Program. DSS conducted presentations and meetings to discuss the program with those who are implementing the program. A small workgroup was formed with representatives from public and private agencies and the DSS budget and program offices. A series of meetings were held to review data regarding the effectiveness of the program, identify major concerns and areas for improvement, and redesign the program to increase timely permanence for children.

The providers who participated in this process found the experience helpful. One stated, “I also think the level of transparency and openness can’t be understated. It is nice to know that we can have honest, even difficult, conversations as stakeholder group and still stay focused on advancing a shared and important goal.”

4. Update on Service Description

Part II of the CFS-101 provides specific information for each service category regarding the estimated number of individuals and families to be served. Part III of the CFS-101 provides an update on Title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2 (Family Preservation, Family Support, Time-Limited Reunification, and Adoption Promotion and Support Services), CFCIP, and ETV regarding the population served, geographic areas where services are available, and estimated number of individuals and families to be served.

A. Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (title IV-B, subpart 1)

DSS cost allocates IVB-1 funding in combination with other funding streams to support training paraprofessional staff; staff development and training of child welfare social workers and supervisors; and the recruitment of foster and adoptive parents. Additional specific programs are outlined below.

Family Support Network of North Carolina

The Family Support Network of North Carolina (FSN), which is part of the UNC School of Social Work, provides services across North Carolina to protect and promote the welfare of all children, prevent child abuse and neglect or exploitation, and help children remain at home or return home when safe/appropriate. The Family Support Network subcontracts with regional FSN programs to provide education, training, and support services to all families caring for children who are medically fragile or have special needs, including children who are substance-exposed, HIV positive, or developmentally delayed. Research supports the concept that education and support of these vulnerable families helps reduce the likelihood of abuse or neglect of their children. The goals of FSN are to: (1) provide education and training to foster, adoptive, birth, and kinship families caring for medically fragile or special needs children in order to improve their knowledge about the conditions affecting the children and how to care for them; (2) reduce isolation and improve family functioning through social support programs, including facilitating and leading support groups; and (3) enhance collaboration among local family support programs and service providers, including county departments of social services agencies, family resource centers, county foster parent associations, and neonatal intensive care units.

During SFY 2016-2017, FSN served 3,491 families with information and referral services, 282 parents/caregivers with 15 training workshops, 161 parents with parent-to-parent matches, 234 individuals with social activities at 3 separate events, 295 parents with intensive one-to-one support, and 95 family members with support groups through the DSS family support services programs grant.

The actual and projected number served by FSN for SFY 2017-2018 can be found below.

Service	Number Served SFY 2016-2017: Q1-Q3 (Projected Q4 total)
Information and Referral	2,581 families (3,100 projected total)
Training Workshops	155 parents, 10 events (185 projected total 14 projected events)
Parent-to-Parent matches	97 parents (116 projected total)
Social activities for families	273 family members, 3 events (400 projected total, 4 events)
Intensive one-to-one support	56 parents (67 projected total)
Support groups and SibShops™	104 parents + 32 children in 9 groups, 53 meetings = 513 total adult attendees +123 children (617 projected total adult attendees + 148 children in 64 meetings)

In SFY 2018-2019, FSN will serve approximately 2,044 families across North Carolina (144 with intensive one-on-one support; 143 with parent-to-parent matches; 260 with parent training; 829 with information and referral services; 575 with social support activities; and 93 with support group services). With the reauthorization of the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services program under the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), DSS does not anticipate any changes to the administration of this program in the coming fiscal year.

B. Services provided in the four areas under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (title IV-B, subpart 2)

1. Family Preservation

Since North Carolina created the 2015-2019 CFSP, DSS has strengthened its intensive family preservation services (IFPS) program and included improvement strategies into a request for applications (RFA). The term of the competitive award is three years, from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2019. Six community-based agencies were awarded contracts to provide IFPS across 11 regions serving all 100 NC counties. Each agency is required to use the same measurement tools and track the same short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. The IFPS program is based on the evidence-based Homebuilders model. The community-based agencies delivering the IFPS program must:

- Provide services based on the values and beliefs of family preservation services.
- Serve the eligible population at risk of child’s removal from the home.
- Implement the Homebuilders model and comply with agency and program requirements.
- Promote the five protective factors and children’s social and emotional well-being.
- Demonstrate the ability to provide trauma-informed services as they relate to clients and staff.
- Demonstrate positive outcomes through accountability and evaluation tools.
- Demonstrate a commitment to meaningful parent engagement and leadership opportunities.
- Demonstrate collaborative relationships with community partners in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

New Strategies for Improvement

In the SFY 2016-2017 budget, the North Carolina General Assembly invested significant state funding for IFPS on a one-time basis. The state funding provided enabled current providers to increase their capacity to deliver services to 684 families. In SFY 2017-2018, the NC General Assembly made this funding recurring, which provided stability for IFPS providers to hire staff and continue to expand the number of families they could serve. In SFY 2017-2018, IFPS providers are on track to serve 812 families. In SFY 2018-2019, IFPS agencies will enter their third year of the grant cycle. An estimated 1,009 families who are deemed high risk by the Family Risk Assessment will be served across North Carolina through a combination of IVB-2 and state funding. DSS does not anticipate any additional changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year.

The recently passed FFPSA will inform DSS strategic investments in child maltreatment prevention across the child welfare continuum. FFPSA will expand North Carolina's written prevention plan by allowing for the federal financing of tertiary prevention programs to prevent out-of-home placement. By allowing federal reimbursement for mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training to prevent children from entering foster care, FFPSA will make it possible for DSS to provide additional support through evidence-based and trauma-informed services to families who qualify for family preservation services.

DSS anticipates spending approximately 20% of IVB-2 funding on crisis intervention and family preservation activities.

2. Family Support/Prevention

As the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead agency, DSS has used a combination of federal CBCAP and IVB-2 funding, and North Carolina Children's Trust Fund revenues to support evidenced-based and evidenced-informed parenting education/support programs, as well as, respite and Community Response Program services.

All agencies contracted to provide these programs and services are required to promote donations to the Children's Trust Fund via the "Kids First" license plates. This allows North Carolina to increase revenue for prevention, as proceeds from the sale of these license plates go into the Children's Trust Fund to sustain and/or increase community-based child abuse prevention programs. (See also Appendix A, "Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Application.")

A. Evidence-Based Parenting Programs

Beginning July 1, 2016, DSS awarded competitive grants for the provision of primary and secondary child maltreatment prevention services. The awards were issued for a three-year grant period from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2019. Agencies implement a program that demonstrates an acceptable level of evidence-based or evidence-informed practice. In addition, each program includes qualitative and quantitative evaluation plans that have proven outcomes in increasing protective factors for the prevention of child abuse.

The following requirements must be met to be eligible for funding:

- Provide services based on the principles of family support practice.
- Demonstrate a commitment to meaningful parent engagement and leadership opportunities.

- Demonstrate collaborative relationships with community partners in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- Implement primary and/or secondary prevention services.
- Serve target populations most at risk of child abuse or neglect.
- Promote two or more of the five protective factors linked to lower incidence of child abuse and neglect.
- Provide a service or implement a program that demonstrates an acceptable level of evidence-based or evidence-informed practice.
- Demonstrate a clear plan for implementation support.
- Use outcome accountability and evaluation tools that demonstrate positive outcomes for children and families.

Eighty percent (80%) of available funds were granted to thirty (30) agencies implementing one or more of the following evidenced-based, evidenced-informed models:

- Incredible Years Pre-School BASIC Parent Program for parents of children age 3-6
- Incredible Years School-Age BASIC Parent Program for parents of children age 6-12
- Strengthening Families Program for parents of children age 6-11
- Circle of Parents
- Darkness to Light, Stewards of Children

Twenty percent (20%) of available funds were granted to seven (7) agencies implementing evidence-based, evidence-informed models and activities not listed in the 80% category above. These programs are implementing the following models:

- In-Home SafeCare
- Motivational Interviewing
- Nurturing Parenting and Circle of Parents
- Nurturing Parenting and Incredible Years
- Parent Child Interaction Therapy
- Parents as Teachers
- Parents as Teachers Play Groups

North Carolina's intent is to use this funding to support community-based programs to provide outreach, support, and services to individuals and families identified as being at-risk of compromised health and safety to eliminate or reduce those risks by promoting protective factors that strengthen and support families. DSS does not anticipate any changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year.

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS anticipates these IVB-2 funded evidence-based parenting programs will reach 2,097 caregivers and 2,469 children across North Carolina who have been identified as being at-risk of compromised health and safety.

New Strategies for Improvement

Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)

Triple P is an evidence-based parenting and family support system designed to prevent and treat behavioral and emotional problems in children and teenagers. It aims to prevent problems in the family, school, and community before they arise and to create family environments that encourage children to realize their potential.

North Carolina, primarily through DPH and DSS, with The Duke Endowment, is currently investing in the scaling-up of the Triple P system of interventions in 36 counties. Additionally, there are 12 counties that have trained Triple P practitioners, but do not yet have a local support agency. Several overarching goals are being pursued with Triple P:

- To promote the development of non-violent, protective, and nurturing environments for children;
- To reduce the incidence of child maltreatment and behavioral/emotional problems in childhood and adolescence;
- To promote the independence and health of families through the enhancement of parents' knowledge, skills, confidence, and self-sufficiency;
- To promote the development, growth, health, and social competence of young children; and
- To develop implementation and evaluation support for counties providing Triple P.

In the SFY 2016-2017 budget, the North Carolina General Assembly allocated \$1,475,000 of state funds to DSS for Triple P. DSS met with its public and private partners to determine the purposes that best serve child welfare needs in the state and built on existing Triple P initiatives. Accordingly, DSS entered an internal memo of agreement (IMOA) with DPH for \$861,750 to expand the number of trained practitioners providing Triple P services. DPH subcontracted with local health departments and nonprofits to train 423 local practitioners in one or more levels of Triple P to support county departments of social services clients.

In SFY 2016-2017, DSS also contracted with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for \$613,250 to provide services that build on the existing Triple P implementation evaluation. These services included:

- Conducting qualitative interviews with county and state stakeholders to identify emerging themes concerning Triple P implementation;
- Developing two Triple P implementation tools and one Triple P implementation learning module;
- Developing a guidance brief on enhancing Triple P quality and monitoring;
- Completing a quality assurance and improvement plan for external implementation support to Triple P communities;
- Facilitating three regional workshops (locations: Boone, Charlotte, Greenville);
- Developing implementation support plans;

- Selecting two pilot communities (the Raleigh-Wake Triple P Collaborative and the Madison-Buncombe Regional Triple P Cluster) for direct implementation support to build capacity and infrastructure; and
- Selecting an agency (Prevent Child Abuse NC) to develop statewide implementation support.

In the SFY 2017-2019 budget, the North Carolina General Assembly allocated \$1,975,000 in recurring state funds to DSS; this allocation included funding for Triple P. In SFY 2017-2018, DSS contracted with FPG for approximately \$506,000 to build on work completed in SFY 2016-2017 by creating implementation resources for North Carolina counties and stakeholders interested in or currently scaling up Triple P. In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will continue to provide information, learning, and active implementation support to North Carolina counties interested in or currently scaling-up Triple P through a contract for \$688,630. In addition, FPG will design and implement a strategic governance system for North Carolina Triple P.

DSS also initiated a two-year IMOA with DPH for \$2,000,000 to maintain active implementation of Triple P and to expand the model's infrastructure statewide so that all 100 counties have local implementation support for agencies scaling up Triple P. This work will increase the evidence-based services available to North Carolina children and their families and strengthen the implementation support available to Triple P practitioners.

B. Community Response Program

Between July 1, 2012, and June 30, 2016, DSS used NC Children's Trust Fund dollars to support four pilot sites implementing a Community Response Program (CRP). CRP builds on a family-centered, System of Care approach to child welfare and North Carolina's Multiple Response System by filling a gap in the continuum of child maltreatment prevention programming by reaching out to families who have been reported to child protection services, but whose cases have been screened out at CPS Intake or closed with a decision of "services recommended," "no services needed," or "unsubstantiated."

In 2016, DSS transferred the CRP funding source from Children's Trust Funds to IVB-2 to support a new three-year RFA targeted to county child welfare agencies. The number of CRP grant awards was increased from four in the prior funding period to eight in the current grant period (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019). A total of \$800,000 is allocated each year. DSS does not anticipate any changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year.

CRP recipients are required to:

- Target families with children ages birth to five.
- Demonstrate collaborative relationships with community partners in the delivery of services and community child maltreatment prevention strategies.
- Provide services based on the principles of family support practice.
- Demonstrate a commitment to meaningful parent and family engagement.
- Ensure families have access to supports and services to meet their basic needs, including economic support, benefits access, employment coaching, and financial literacy programming.

- Provide and/or make referrals to a service or program that demonstrates an acceptable level of evidence-based or evidence-informed practice.

DSS anticipates these services will reach 285 caregivers and 415 children in eight North Carolina counties (Alamance, Catawba, Durham, Henderson, Iredell, Rutherford, Wake, Wilson) in SFY 2017-2018.

NCDHHS is committed to addressing Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) as a component of overall health including food insecurity, housing instability, unmet transportation needs, and interpersonal violence. Data shows up to 70% of a person's overall health is driven by social and environmental factors and the individual's behavior influenced by them. NCDHHS is developing a standardized set of screening questions for these SDoH and will work with partners to create a North Carolina Resource Platform that can connect people who screen positive for an unmet resource need with available community resources. By meeting a family's unmet food, housing, or transportation needs or by addressing unsafe living environments, North Carolina can mitigate the risks of child maltreatment.

DSS is addressing SDoH in its prevention service array, predominately through CRPs. The program requires an allocation of flex funds to assist families in crisis and to ensure that families have access to supports and services to meet their basic needs, including economic support, benefits access, employment coaching, and financial literacy programming. For more about North Carolina's efforts related to Social Determinants of Health, please refer to Appendix A (CBCAP Application).

C. Respite

Beginning July 1, 2018, DSS will award \$400,000 of competitive three-year grants for respite services to promote protective factors that strengthen and support families to reduce the risk of child maltreatment. Eight agencies will be awarded contracts. Respite is a short-term service provided in the temporary absence of the regular caregiver to children who are at risk of maltreatment, who have experienced maltreatment, and/or who have disabilities or chronic or terminal illness. This service is provided within or outside the child's home and is intended to enable the family to stay together and to keep the children living at home and in the community. DSS does not anticipate any changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year.

In SFY 2018-2019, it is anticipated that this program will serve 582 caregivers and 858 children covering 18 North Carolina counties (Alamance, Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Forsyth, Graham, Guilford, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, New Hanover, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Wake, Wayne, Wilkes, and Yadkin).

DSS anticipates spending approximately 27% of IVB-2 funding on prevention and family support activities.

3. Time-Limited Family Reunification

Beginning July 1, 2013, North Carolina allocated Time-Limited Family Reunification IVB-2 funds directly to all 100 county child welfare agencies. The funding formula includes (1) a base of \$5,000 for each county and (2) a percentage of the remaining funds available based on the number of children who entered the county's foster care system in the prior fiscal year. County child welfare agencies are expected to provide the services and activities to eligible families working toward the goal of reunification as defined in the Social Security Act. To be eligible for the time-limited reunification services, at least one caretaker must voluntarily agree to participate and be able to work toward achieving the goals in the case plan, and the child must be in the

placement authority of a county child welfare agency in an out-of-home placement (or recently moved back to the home on a trial basis).

As county child welfare agencies have developed a greater understanding of these reunification funds, the amount of available funding, the number of children served, and expenditures have increased. In SFY 2016-2017, DSS significantly increased allocations to counties to strengthen these efforts. Counties served approximately 1,600 children in SFY 2013-2014 and it is projected that counties will serve more than 3,000 children in SFY 2017-2018. DSS does not anticipate any changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year. County agencies are using these reunification dollars as intended.

FFPSA eliminates the time limit for family reunification services. This will give county child welfare agencies the opportunity to extend reunification services to families needing additional time to meet required service goals. This new flexibility has the potential to improve outcomes.

DSS will allocate 20% of IVB-2 funding to support time-limited family reunification.

4. Adoption Promotion and Post Adoption Support Services

A. Adoption Promotion

DSS uses TANF and state funds, historically supplemented with IVB-2 funds, for adoption promotion services to county child welfare agencies and to contracted private child-placing agencies. Adoption Promotion services are offered statewide in all 100 county child welfare agencies and 14 contracted private licensed child-placing agencies. The purpose of adoption promotion is to help secure permanent homes for hard-to-place children. Participating agencies are reimbursed for adoption promotion services that culminate in the finalization of an adoption. When public and private agencies collaborate in an adoption, the use of an adoption services agreement (ASA) determines funding awards to each agency. The four service areas for reimbursement are:

- **Recruitment**: the process of finding, screening, and identifying prospective adoptive placement resources.
- **Pre-adoption Training**: preparatory training for prospective adoptive families to provide knowledge and skills necessary for parenting children with special needs.
- **Post-Placement Support**: services provided by an adoption agency between the time a child is placed in the home of his or her prospective adoptive parents and the time the child's adoption is finalized in court.
- **Facilitation of Legal Procedures**: completion of legal work to finalize an adoption.

In SFY 2017-2018, additional enhancements were made to the program and communicated through an annual Dear County Director Letter (published October 2017, CWS-41-2017), which currently serves as the primary source of program guidance and policy for county child welfare and private child-placing agencies. The letter included clarifying guidelines for negotiating the Adoption Services Agreement when agencies partner to facilitate an adoption and a separate attachment regarding appropriate use of program funding.

NCDHHS conducted an extensive review of the Adoption Promotion Program beginning in July 2017. The primary focus was to determine factors behind a significant rise in program expenditures over the last

three years. Initial issues identified included the decision to honor every adoption rather than operate on a first-come, first-serve basis, as well as a flawed baseline methodology that allowed agencies to have significant windfall years of reimbursement after years of poor to mediocre performance. The evaluation led DSS to determine that the program, in its current state, is not fiscally sustainable. It also confirmed, as the table below illustrates, that increased spending was not producing increases in the adoption rate.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Expenditures	\$3,284,827	\$2,970,121	\$3,511,628	\$3,895,280	\$6,537,929
Total Adoptions	1,201	1,162	1,161	1,422	1,370

There were also challenges with collaboration between county child welfare services and private child-placing agencies due to the inability to agree on the sharing of responsibilities and funding surrounding adoptions. In the end, DSS concluded the Adoption Promotion Program required a total redesign.

DSS extensively studied the program history through available program and fiscal data, as well as legislative requirements to determine how the program got to its current state. In February 2018, two detailed presentations were provided; one to private agency partners and another to county child welfare agencies. In March 2018, a workgroup of three public agency directors, three private agency directors, and DSS leadership (including fiscal and program subject matter experts) was formed. Tasked with identifying strategies to allow the program to remain in budget and increase the number of adoptions statewide, the group held a series of meetings in March and April. As the group met, it became clear it would take time to develop effective strategies to overcome the barriers impeding North Carolina from increasing the rate of annual adoptions.

The following strategies were proposed to NCDHHS to achieve the short-term solution for SFY 2018-2019 that would stabilize the program budgetarily, improve collaboration between public and private partners, and begin introducing strategies to increase the rate of adoptions in North Carolina. The following strategies were identified to achieve the short-term stabilization plan:

1. Maintain spending within the appropriate budget with no supplementary funds from other program areas. County child welfare agencies will receive approximately 58% less than in recent years and private agencies will receive a decrease of 32%.
2. Use the Federal Baseline formula methodology for county child welfare agencies. Unlike the previous approach, this methodology allows for consideration of the population in need. Additionally, it allows for year-end proportional distribution of available funds to county child welfare agencies who exceeded their baseline.
3. Establish the NC Kids Waiting 100 Program. The identified children have been listed on North Carolina’s Foster Care and Adoption Exchange for more than one year while waiting for an adoptive home. This program aims to promote collaboration between public and private agencies and increase adoption finalizations of hard-to-place children by providing incentives to agencies who achieve permanence through adoption for children in this program. Federal Adoption Incentive funds will be used for this program.
4. Require all children who are legally free for adoption and in need of an adoptive home, as well as

all waiting pre-adoptive families from private agencies, to be registered with NC Kids. This strategy will create a larger pool of registered children and families for matching, which could potentially increase and expedite the number of adoptions in North Carolina.

5. Introduce a reimbursement structure based on collaboration to achieve finalization of an adoption. As part of this, introduce a collaboration agreement and eliminate “splitting” of funding between public and private agencies. In the new approach, agencies will get joint credit for their supportive roles in the process.

One PIP goal is to engage stakeholders and revise North Carolina’s DRR. In June 2017, the DRR plan was finalized. A main directive within the plan is for each county child welfare agency to write its own localized DRR plan in SFY 2017-2018, with implementation beginning in 2018 and continuing through 2019. In SFY 2017-2018, DSS provided ongoing technical assistance and training to public and private agencies in support of diligent recruitment and retention, including the use of the Adoption Promotion program as a mechanism for enhancing recruitment and retention of adoptive families. More information regarding DRR can be found in section V.1 of this document.

In SFY 2016-2017:

- Thirty-three (33) out of 100 county child welfare agencies submitted requests for reimbursement for a total of 869 completed adoptions. Of those completed adoptions, 487 were reimbursable via the Adoption Promotion Program Fund for a total amount of \$4,822,128.
- Thirteen (13) out of 14 private contracted child-placing agencies submitted requests for reimbursement totaling \$1,715,800. Private agencies collaborated with public agencies in the finalization of 219 adoptions.

As of May 1, 2018:

- Nineteen (19) out of 100 county child welfare agencies have submitted requests for reimbursement for a total of 319 completed adoptions. 142 of those completed adoptions were reimbursable via the Adoption Promotion Program Fund for a total amount of \$1,312,200.
- As is the trend in years past, most of the requests for reimbursement from county child welfare agencies are submitted in the final months of the fiscal year. Expenditures are anticipated to remain close to the same amount as in SFY 2016-2017.
- Invoices received through March 2018 indicate 12 out of 14 private contracted child-placing agencies have submitted requests for reimbursement totaling \$1,363,800. Private agencies collaborated with public agencies in the finalization of 241 adoptions.

Planned Activities

Upon NCDHHS approval, DSS will implement the Adoption Promotion Stabilization Plan outlined above for SFY 2018-2019. A communication plan will be developed and executed by June 30, 2018, to educate county child welfare and private agencies on the program changes and enhancements.

DSS will reconvene the workgroup to develop a long-term plan, which will be implemented in SFY 2019-20. The focus of this plan will be to promote an increase in adoptions finalized across the state. DSS will be partnering with Third Sector, who will provide intensive technical assistance on the development of an outcome-based contracting process using data to drive performance.

Historically, an annual Dear County Director Letter is the only program guidance issued related to Adoption Promotion. Next year, DSS will establish Adoption Promotion Program Overview and Protocols. These will provide agencies with concrete policy and guidance for the program. Sections will include: History and Program Overview, Funding Allocation Protocols, Program Components, Participating Agency Requirements and Monitoring, Adoption Baseline Methodology, and Expenditures and Forms. This information will be incorporated in North Carolina's child welfare manual, allowing for easy updates once the program redesign is complete.

In the coming year, DSS, in partnership with public and private agencies, will advocate for additional state funding to support the Adoption Promotion program.

New Strategies for Improvement

Upon NCDHHS approval, DSS will use the five Adoption Promotion Stabilization Plan strategies outlined above. These strategies will allow DSS to remain within budget, more effectively evaluate county performance, improve collaboration to focus on the most challenging to place children, and increase the pool of families and children for matching.

Through partnership with Third Sector, DSS will obtain concrete strategies to create a performance-based program to deliver specific, measurable outcomes. This will allow DSS to evaluate data currently available and identify data needs for improving outcomes and overall program evaluation.

The Adoption Promotion Workgroup process was a positive learning experience for DSS. Though difficult conversations were necessary, it embodied a true spirit of collaboration and desire to improve the program and permanency outcomes for North Carolina's children. As a result, upon completion of the program redesign, an Adoption Promotion Stakeholder group, comprised of representatives from contracted private agencies, county child welfare agencies, and DSS, will be established. This group will serve the following purposes:

1. Vet future programmatic changes and enhancements to ensure they serve the long-term goal of the program.
2. Evaluate program changes and enhancements at set intervals to evaluate their impact and effectiveness.
3. Provide an opportunity to build partnership and collaborative relationships that will further the state's desired outcomes.

FFPSA continues North Carolina's eligibility to earn incentive payments for adoption and legal guardianship programs each year from FFY 2016 to FFY 2020 and extend annual discretionary funding authority for each year from FFY 2017 to FFY 2021.

Methods to Measure Progress

Using the Federal Baseline Methodology, DSS will be able to capture and evaluate each county child welfare agency's performance regarding achievement of permanency through adoption directly related to the population in need. County child welfare agency performance in this area will be directly measured and monitored through achievement of their annual baseline.

DSS will apply additional tools developed in partnership with Third Sector to measure program performance. Data will be a driving force in evaluating progress for private and public agencies.

DSS, in ongoing and meaningful engagement with the Adoption Promotion Stakeholder workgroup, will continue to assess and make recommendations for structural improvements for the Adoption Promotion program in SFY 2018-2019 and beyond.

Private contract providers who do not meet their target outcome measures for the Adoption Promotion program will receive consultation from DSS to discuss any challenges or barriers that prevented them from achieving their goals. If after consultation providers are unable to meet outcome measures, contracts will be evaluated to determine whether funding should be reduced or the contractual partnership discontinued.

B. Post Adoption Support Services

Post Adoption Support Services (PASS) are provided by contracted, community-based agencies across 11 regions serving all 100 counties. Agencies are currently in their first year of a 3-year, competitive award cycle. Agencies continue to provide evidenced-based, trauma-informed services to any North Carolina family of an adopted child, regardless of whether they adopted through the child welfare system. Services have included but are not limited to case management, clinical services, crisis intervention, respite, and parenting education/support. At the end of Quarter 3, March 2018, 1,317 families had received post adoption support services statewide for the current state fiscal year.

There are five PASS agencies serving the 11 regions of the state. To build upon agency strengths and improve service provision across the state, DSS instituted Quarterly Provider calls in SFY 2017-2018. These calls are an opportunity for providers to engage with each other and encourage partnership across the regions. Results to date have been favorable--providers responded with excitement and DSS has received positive feedback. As a result of these calls, providers have collaborated to pool resources and hold joint post adoption conferences among neighboring regions. They are also cross-training each other in areas of expertise and looking to collaboratively improve post adoption services to youth and families across the state.

This past year saw three significant enhancements to Post Adoption Support Services:

1. Respite: These services are mandatory and must be incorporated into the project model. Respite is a critical tool in helping families maintain their family unit following an adoption. Adoptions, especially those involving children who have experienced trauma, often experience periods of stress during different stages of development. Agencies are not only providing crisis out-of-home respite services, but case-specific planned services designed to alleviate extreme stress in the household. The intent is to provide short-term relief to families to avoid placement disruptions. As of Quarter 3 (March 2018), 49 families have received respite services through North Carolina's Post Adoption Support Services programs.
2. Services provided to families regardless of type of adoption: While post adoption services have always been available to all adoptive families, this was not always widely marketed or advertised. In years past, the largest number of families served were those who had adopted through foster care. DSS remains committed to the concept that any family, regardless of the type of adoption

(foster care, relative, international, stepparent, independent, adult) can benefit from access to concrete post adoption support services. PASS providers are charged with providing outreach and education to families who have adopted outside of foster care to inform them that they are eligible for services. Providers have performed several tasks during SFY 2017-2018 to achieve outreach to this specific population, including marketing on Facebook and agency websites, contacting adoption attorneys, and sending program information to all private adoption agencies statewide. Their most successful outreach was designed to specifically incorporate the program enhancement described in the next paragraph.

3. Provide supports and services to support 2016 Illegal Custody Transfer Law: PASS providers must incorporate into their program supports and services to families at risk of dissolution to prevent potential illegal custody transfers, as well as supports for families and children who have experienced an illegal custody transfer. This has been a challenge for PASS providers, as most had no experience with illegal custody transfers. To learn about this issue, providers participated in the webinar, “Unregulated Custody Transfer/Re-homing: An Introduction for Adoption and Hotline/Intake/Screening Staff,” conducted by the Capacity Building Center for States. This provided a foundation of information and helpful handouts. National data indicates children at highest risk of illegal custody transfers following an adoption are those adopted from another country. This underscored the need to connect with private adoption agencies across these state, specifically those facilitating international adoptions, to ensure agencies know that PASS is available for their families and to educate them about illegal custody transfers. As a result of the first Quarterly Provider Call, the providers made the decision to tackle this assignment as a united team and make it a statewide event. PASS providers coordinated three regional Lunch and Learn meetings in January 2018 and February 2018. All North Carolina adoption agencies were invited. A representative from each of the five PASS provider agencies was present at each Lunch and Learn to share information. Additionally, they educated the groups about the passing of the Illegal Custody Law and subsequent services through PASS. Providers reported excellent participation at each session. There was a common theme that these agencies were not aware services were available for their families, and often expressed how grateful they were to know how and where to direct their families for services. As a result of the meetings, PASS providers have private agencies on their email lists, have provided cross-training for their staff, and have already begun receiving referrals. In fact, one provider has begun working with 25 families referred from private child-placing agencies.

As of March 2018, PASS providers have served seven families at risk of an illegal custody transfer. None of the providers have encountered a case where an illegal custody transfer has occurred.

In SFY 2017-2018, DSS enhanced efforts to increase the quality of data used to measure the effectiveness of post adoption support services by updating the way performance measures are tracked when agencies provide services to more than one region. Previously, each agency reported outputs, outcomes, and quality measures for all regions combined, which made it difficult to determine how effectively services were being provided in specific areas of the state. Now outputs, outcomes, and quality measures are reported by region, even when an agency manages multiple regions. Additionally, all contract agencies now use the same three outcome measures; this will create consistency in data and DSS to compare performance among regions and providers. Though we have not completed a full year to truly evaluate if

these changes have improved the measure of outputs and outcomes, it has allowed DSS to identify areas of the state where participation is higher and more consistent, and the types of services that garner the most participation. This information can be used to assess what practices are most effective and what programs are in high demand or underutilized. During quarterly provider calls, DSS and PASS providers share this information to provide input and suggestions to regions facing challenges.

PASS providers informed DSS via their Quarterly Performance Reporting Tool that one of the biggest challenges is engaging county child welfare agencies. County child welfare agencies are their largest source of family referrals. At the end of March 2018, 59 of the 100 county child welfare agencies had families represented and had engaged with PASS providers. It should be noted that 4 out of 11 regions have 70% or higher collaboration with their county child welfare partners and report strong relationships. For some of the smaller and/or remote counties with low PASS participation, a lack of finalized adoptions or geography and transportation could be explanations. However, providers are concerned that some county child welfare agencies do not understand the service or its importance.

To address this challenge, DSS gave a PASS presentation during the two February Staying Connected calls. DSS also updated the Post Adoption page on the NCDHHS website to include counties served by each provider, specific contact information (name, phone and email) for each provider, and the link to each provider's Post Adoption Services website.

In SFY 2017-2018, DSS partnered with Child Trends in a "Post Adoption Life Study" to learn how young people who were adopted from foster care in North Carolina are doing as young adults, and to better understand their experiences with, and opinions about, the adoption process. The research has the potential to provide child welfare agencies and other organizations with valuable information that can help structure and shape future services. DSS identified the eligible population (youth adopted at age 8 or older who will turn 18 in 2018) and sent packets to 546 families of eligible youth. DSS also issued a Dear County Director letter advising all agencies of the study and potential benefits.

In SFY 2017-2018, DSS estimates that through IVB-2 funding, 1,879 parents and 427 children in all 100 counties will receive post adoption support. These services are available to any North Carolina family of an adopted child.

Planned Activities

In SFY 2018-2019, agencies will continue to provide evidenced-based, trauma-informed services to any North Carolina family of an adopted child, whether adopted through the child welfare system or not. Providers will engage community partners and provide targeted outreach to families who have adopted outside of child welfare. Agencies will also continue to provide education and services to support families at risk of or experiencing an illegal custody transfer.

DSS will promote PASS services to all 100 county child welfare agencies and encourage participation by referring families to appropriate providers. This will be facilitated through a Dear County Director Letter and by presenting at Children's Services Committee.

New Strategies for Improvement

SFY 2018-2019 is the second in a three-year bid cycle for PASS. This bid cycle will continue to implement the following strategies as described above: (1) Respite services, (2) Services to families regardless of type of adoption, and (3) services to support the 2016 Illegal Custody Transfer Law.

DSS will continue to facilitate Quarterly Provider calls with topics to enhance skills, collaboration, and services to families across North Carolina.

Methods to Measure Progress

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will update the Quarterly Performance Reporting Tool to include tracking the number of non-foster care families served through PASS to evaluate outreach methods and look for trends in populations served.

DSS will deploy satisfaction surveys to county child welfare agencies to provide feedback on PASS services. The survey will seek to obtain performance-related feedback from agencies who refer families for post adoption services or partner with the providers. Data gathered from the surveys will be used to verify information reported by the provider in their quarterly performance status reports and monitoring visits. Additionally, survey results will factor in to provider scores during future Request for Application (RFA) processes if the provider seeks a contract award to serve the same region.

DSS will also evaluate the first-year results of region-specific performance outputs, outcomes, and quality measures to determine benefits of measuring by region and decide if further enhancements should be made.

Providers who do not meet their target outcome measures and address the strategies for improvement to the program will receive consultation from DSS to discuss any challenges or barriers that prevented them from achieving their goals. If providers continually fail to meet their outcome measures, a corrective action plan will be implemented.

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS anticipates spending approximately 27% of IVB-2 funding on adoption promotion and support services.

C. CFCIP and ETV

All CFCIP and ETV services may be accessed through any county child welfare agency. In North Carolina, Independent Living programming is referred to as the NC LINKS program.

A. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (NC LINKS)

The purpose of the NC LINKS program is to build a network of relevant services with youth so that they will have ongoing connections with family, friends, mentors, the community, employers, education, financial assistance, skills training, and other resources to facilitate their transition to adulthood. The NC LINKS program is administered to youth and young adults in the county child welfare agencies. NC LINKS is flexible in its design so that counties may deliver services based upon resources within the community and with a youth development approach.

The responsibilities of county LINKS workers include, but are not limited to:

- Developing good working relationships with eligible youth and young adults, their caretakers,

supporters and social workers, using a positive youth development approach that will provide a challenging and supportive environment which will help their preparation for adulthood;

- Working collaboratively with eligible youth and young adults to develop and conduct a relevant, effective county LINKS program, which includes learning what is important to the young people and engaging young people in service and program planning on an individual and group level;
- Engaging the broader community in providing a supportive learning and living environment for youth and young adults currently or formerly in foster care, which may include engaging community partners in mentoring youth in jobs; provide tangible supports to the LINKS program; sponsoring achieving youth; training youth in groups about subjects such as banking, credit, car purchases, comparison shopping; and other life skill areas;
- Conducting outreach efforts to young adults ages 18 to 21 who aged out of foster care to provide appropriate services to those young adults; and,
- Creatively advocating for youth in foster care and for young adults who have aged out of foster care and encourage youth to be self-advocates and leaders.

In North Carolina, Chafee funds support county LINKS programs directly through allocations, support individual youth and young adults in their transition to adulthood through LINKS Special Funds, and support certain contracts with agencies that provide direct services and supports to youth, as described in *B. Contracts Supporting LINKS (CFCIP)*.

County Allocations

Allocations of Chafee funds to counties can be used in the following ways:

- Resource Development: Counties may use LINKS program allocations to purchase or rent program materials, supplies and equipment for the establishment, implementation or revision of the county LINKS program, and/or for evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.
- Youth Incentives: Counties may use LINKS program allocations to provide reasonable incentives (cash, gift certificates, food, etc.) to youth to encourage program participation or goal achievement. Incentives are offered to encourage youth to reach toward a goal. The efficacy of using incentives is periodically examined by counties to determine its continued use to motivate youth and young adults.
- Goods or Services for Individual Youth and Young Adults: Counties may use some or all their allocation to pay for goods or services on behalf of one or more individual youth or young adults. LINKS Special funds, described below, are also available to reimburse counties for expenditures made on behalf of eligible youth and young adults.
- Program Operations: Counties may use a portion of its program allocation for staff positions, for contracted services, or for time spent on the planning and delivery of services.

Special Funds

LINKS Special Funds are reimbursed to the county for expenditures made on behalf of eligible foster youth and young adults up to age 21 who were in foster care as teenagers. LINKS Special Funds are in addition

to the county allocation dollars.

- **Housing:** Housing funds are only available to young adults who aged out of foster care at 18 but are not yet 21 years of age. This includes young adults participating in the Foster Care 18 to 21 Program. Housing funds can be used for housing costs such as rent, rent deposits, or room and board arrangements that include meals as part of a rental agreement. Eligible young adults may receive up to \$1,500 per year to assist with their housing costs.
- **Transitional:** Transitional funds are available to assist youth and young adults who are 13 years of age or older, but not yet 21, who were in foster care as teenagers and, because of life circumstances, behaviors, or lack of needed resources are at risk of not making a successful transition to adulthood unless appropriate intervention is initiated. These funds can support youth who are currently in foster care or were in foster care as teens. Transitional funds may only be used to assist youth or young adults in achieving the LINKS outcomes, as follows:
 - 1) all youth leaving the foster care system shall have sufficient economic resources to meet their daily needs,
 - 2) all youth leaving the foster care system shall have a safe and stable place to live,
 - 3) all youth leaving the foster care system shall attain academic or vocational/educational goals that are in keeping with the youth's abilities and interests,
 - 4) all youth leaving the foster care system shall have a sense of connectedness to persons and community,
 - 5) all youth leaving the foster care system shall avoid illegal/high risk behaviors,
 - 6) all youth leaving the foster care system shall postpone parenthood until financially established and emotionally mature,
 - 7) all youth leaving the foster care system shall have access to physical and mental health services and a means to pay for those services, and
 - 8) all youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 have regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally-appropriate activities.

Eligible young adults may receive up to \$3,000 per year in Transitional Funds to support their achievement of one or more LINKS outcomes.

In addition, Chafee funds support two contracts as described in *B. Contracts Supporting LINKS (CFCIP)*. The services provided by contract organizations, and any relevant updates or changes to these service, supported by state or federal funds, to support youth and young adults are described below.

Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo)

DSS uses Chafee funding, in combination with other funds, to support leadership training for youth served by the foster care system, as well as the adults who interact with them. SaySo is a statewide organization of youth aged 14 to 24 who are or have been in out-of-home care in North Carolina. As described on the next page in item B.1, in calendar year 2018 SaySo changed administrative homes from Independent Living Resources, Inc. to Children's Home Society of NC (CHS). DSS does not anticipate any other changes to the administration of this program in the coming fiscal year. The anticipated amount of funding supporting

this program in SFY 2018-2019 is \$263,125. In SFY 2018-2019, DSS anticipates SaySo programming will reach approximately 170 adults, 587 youth, and provide information to approximately 5,500 individuals via the SaySo website (www.saysoinc.org).

Education and Training Voucher Program

NC ETV makes available vouchers for youth who were in foster care at age 17 and youth who were adopted out of foster care or placed in a relative guardianship on or after their 16th birthday. These vouchers can be used to attend appropriately accredited postsecondary institutions of higher learning or access vocational training. DSS does not anticipate changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year. The anticipated amount of funding supporting this program in SFY 2018-2019 is \$856,330. In SFY 2018-2019, this statewide program is expected to process 700 applications and provide vouchers for 350 individuals.

NC Reach

NC Reach makes available scholarships to youth who were adopted from foster care after age 12 or who aged out of foster care at age 18. These scholarships can be used to attend North Carolina public universities and community colleges. Since the program's inception in 2007, DSS has contracted with Orphan Foundation of America, doing business as "Foster Care to Success," to administer NC Reach. DSS does not anticipate changes to the administration of this program in the upcoming fiscal year. The anticipated amount of funding supporting this program in SFY 2018-2019 is \$2,373,618.

- \$339,493 of this funding supports the contract with Foster Care to Success, which provides case management services to NC Reach students;
- \$50,000 is an administration fee paid to the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, which distributes the scholarship funds to the schools; and,
- \$1,984,125 goes directly to school costs for NC Reach-funded students.

In SFY 2018-2019, this statewide program is expected to process 700 applications and provide scholarships for 360 individuals.

YVLifeSet

Youth Villages, Inc., using the YVLifeSet model, delivers highly individualized services tailored to meet the strengths and needs of individual youth and young adults ages 17 to 21 who are likely to or who have already aged out of foster care. The YVLifeSet program works to establish permanent connections for young adults transitioning from care, assist and support youth and young adults in completing their high school diploma or equivalent and, for students who have completed high school, assist them in determining what course of study they want to pursue, create partnerships with community businesses willing to hire young adults, assist young adults in the acquisition of housing that can be maintained upon discharge from YVLifeSet, work with young adults on activities that build real world knowledge such as budgeting, getting along with peers, obtaining medical insurance, and provides crisis intervention. The anticipated amount of funding supporting this program in SFY 2018-2019 is \$3,375,020 (\$2,250,000 in State Funds, \$1,125,020 in Provider Match). In SFY 2018-2019, this program is expected to serve 320 youth and young adults age 17-21.

The NC LINKS program is available in all 100 counties. Between July 2017 and April 2018, 4,284 North Carolina youth were served by CFCIP. The table below provides the number of current and former foster youth in the 13-15 and 16-21 age groups served by NC LINKS in this period.

**Current/Former Foster Youth Served by NC LINKS
between July 2017 and April 2018, by Age**

AGE	YOUTH SERVED*
Age 13-15	1,462
Age 16-21	2,822

*Data Source: SIS Monthly. *Note: youth who had birthdays during the period appear in both age categories.*

In SFY 2019-19, DSS will continue administering CFCIP as it did in SFY 2017-2018 and anticipates serving approximately 5,000 youth across North Carolina.

Planned Activities for SFY 2018-2019

- Continue to provide LINKS services as described above.
- NC FAST: Launch Transitional Living (LINKS/Chafee) functionality in NC FAST. This functionality allows county child welfare agencies to create Transitional Living cases (i.e., LINKS cases) and manage transitional and independent living services (including life skills assessments and transitional living plans) through the NC FAST Transitional Living case.
- Review current LINKS programming and policy to determine needed updates in response to the FFPSA. Specifically, DSS will review the provisions that make ETV programs available to eligible youth until age 26, allow Chafee program services to be provided to youth up to age 23, and ensure youth who age out have documentation that they were in foster care. See also, section IV. *Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*.

New Strategies for Improvement

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will measure progress in statewide provision of Chafee services as follows:

- Develop and Refine Monitoring Process. Current DSS procedures will be expanded to incorporate fiscal and programmatic aspects. These changes will involve the state LINKS program coordinator, children’s program representatives, program monitors, and local business liaisons.
- County and State Plans. New county and state LINKS planning tools will be developed in collaboration with county agencies. These tools will incorporate planned services to the foster care population across the state, factoring in county-specific needs (e.g., training).
- Use of Data to Inform Programming Strengths and Needs. DSS will use data collected through the Services Information System (SIS), National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) surveys, other legacy data systems, and NC FAST (upon roll-out of LINKS functionality) to analyze program strengths, needs, and youth outcomes and inform program improvement and growth.

Methods to Measure Progress

In addition to the above, in SFY 2018-2019 the following activities will be performed specifically for the purposes of monitoring Chafee funding and services:

- Desk Monitoring. DSS will monitor, monthly, reimbursement requests from county agencies for the expenditure of funds related to the support of current and former foster youth toward the stated program goals (Chafee goals/outcomes). This monitoring will ensure funds are being used appropriately.

Monthly Web Conferences. DSS will conduct monthly web conferences for county program staff and other partner agencies. These will be forums for discussing LINKS funding and services, presenting vital information and resources related to program goals, and sharing program successes.

B. Contracts Supporting LINKS (CFCIP)

The following contracts support and enhance LINKS services provided by county departments of social services to youth and young adults. Chafee funds support the contract with Children’s Home Society of North Carolina and SaySo, and Orphan Foundation of America/Foster Care to Success for the Education and Training Voucher Program. State funds support the contract with Youth Villages, Inc. to provide the YVLifeSet program, and Orphan Foundation of America/Foster Care to Success for the NC Reach scholarship program.

1. Children’s Home Society of North Carolina and SaySo

Planned Activities for 2019

DSS previously contracted with Independent Living Resources, Inc., the original administrative home Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo), to provide comprehensive and professional training, leadership, and life skills activities to transition-aged youth and young adults involved with LINKS and SaySo, and to adults serving youth through county child welfare agencies across the state. In calendar year 2018, SaySo changed administrative homes to Children’s Home Society of NC (CHS).

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will contract with CHS to administer SaySo and SaySo programming. This is partially funded through Chafee funds. Performance requirements for this contract include:

- Provision of LINKS programming targeting youth ages 13-24 who live or have lived in foster care in North Carolina and are served by LINKS and SaySo;
- Provision of training to professionals, paraprofessionals, volunteers, foster parents, and others who work with youth and young adults in foster care within North Carolina;
- Offering two (2) day-long life skills conferences for youth ages 13-16;
- Offering three (3) day-long transition conferences for youth ages 16-21;
- Administration of SaySo, including youth Board of Directors’ orientation and meetings; recruiting, training, and supervising work experience opportunities for young adults and foster youth alumni; and providing stipends for youth participation in meetings and conferences;
- Offering one (1) day-long SaySo Saturday event which provides youth, social workers, and supportive adults opportunities to learn about issues important to young people in foster care and make new connections;
- Provision of community support for current and aged-out LINKS/SaySo youth, including an interactive website designed by young adults and which provides information and resources; and,

- Creating opportunities and connecting youth to opportunities to participate in leadership activities and events such as a one-day SaySo Survivor Leadership Retreat, a one-week legislative page program, and other opportunities.

New Strategies for Improvement

SFY 2018-2019 will be the first year that DSS has contracted with Children’s Home Society of North Carolina for the administration of the SaySo program. Unlike Independent Living Resources, Inc., SaySo’s prior administrative home, Children’s Home Society is a non-profit organization. This fact will likely offer expanded opportunities for the growth of SaySo, and the services SaySo provides. Therefore, during SFY 2018-2019, DSS will explore and identify resources to support and expand programming for youth and social workers who access services, training, and leadership opportunities through CHS and SaySo programming under this contract with the goal of providing these opportunities to more youth, young adults, and social workers. Specifically, DSS will work with CHS to determine how the organization’s infrastructure can support the expansion of SaySo programming.

Methods to Measure Progress

All DSS contracts are monitored using the NCDHHS/DSS Subrecipient Contract Monitoring Plan. The monitoring process encompasses a variety of tools used throughout the contract period. Fiscal and program reports, desk monitoring, onsite monitoring reviews, and ongoing telephone/email contact with the contractor provide valuable information to determine the subrecipient’s contractual compliance and program success. During SFY 2018-2019, DSS will monitor this contract in accordance with the NCDHHS / DSS Subrecipient Contract Monitoring Plan.

DSS will continue to invite SaySo program staff to participate in monthly calls with county LINKS staff and partner agencies to provide updates SaySo programs and services, including information about training events for youth and social workers and leadership opportunities for youth and young adults. In addition, DSS will partner with SaySo to engage youth and young adults in the data collection and analysis of NYTD data, as well as the state’s NYTD Review, and work with SaySo to improve LINKS and SaySo services in areas indicated by the analysis of NYTD data.

2. Orphan Foundation of America/Foster Care to Success

Planned Activities for 2019

DSS contracts with the Orphan Foundation of America (doing business as “Foster Care to Success”) for the administration of the federal Education and Training Vouchers program and the state’s NC Reach program. Both programs exist to help former foster youth pursue post-secondary education and/or career and technical training. DSS will continue to contract with this organization for the administration of both programs during SFY 2018-2019.

Performance requirements for the ETV contract include the following:

- Program outreach: including maintenance of the NC ETV information webpage, production and distribution of web-based ETV materials and brochures, maintenance of a toll-free phone number that youth and stakeholders can call for information and assistance, work with college financial aid offices and student services to raise awareness of the program, and work with county child welfare staff to coordinate services and funding youth may be receive both through ETV, Foster Care 18 to 21, or the Guardianship Assistance Program.

- Identification of qualified applicants: including management of the ETV program through the Foster Care to Success web portal, which hosts an online mobile-friendly ETV program application, houses student data, and allows the state to confirm applicant eligibility.
- Awarding of ETV funding: including confirmation of student enrollment, proper documentation has been received by the contractor and the school, and management of fiscal aspects of the ETV program.
- Monitoring and supporting student progress: including collecting and recording data from students' transcripts; using a distance model that combines phone calls, email, and text messages to communicate with on-the-go, busy students; conducting monthly phone meetings with each student to discuss progress and problems, academic challenges, information gaps, and to reinforce attitudes and behaviors of successful students; and working with DSS, county child welfare agencies, and private agencies to further students' academic goals and provide personal support and enrichment opportunities.

Performance requirements for the NC Reach contract include the following:

- Educate stakeholders: sharing information about the NC Reach program, its benefits, and how students may access the program with NC Reach applicants, foster and adoptive parents, secondary and post-secondary education staff, and youth-serving agencies/organizations.
- Promotion of student retention and progress toward degree completion: this involves providing case management support to students, documenting regular contact and supportive services provided, coaching students to understand the NC Reach GPA requirements, enrolling students at risk of losing their eligibility in the Aim Higher Success Program, and recording end-of-term transcripts.
- Ensure student funding from all sources is considered to meet the cost of attendance (COA): including tuition, fees, etc. as well as stable housing and reliable transportation. The contractor works with colleges and county child welfare agencies to prevent students from exceeding their COA and to prevent the duplication of funding for specific expenses. The contractor also works with students to improve their money management skills. Contractor also works with college financial aid offices to address issues impacting students' financial aid awards and to ensure students' funding is appropriately disbursed from DSS through the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) to the schools.
- Demonstrate student satisfaction with the NC Reach program: this involves providing timely and comprehensive information, services, and support through ongoing contact with students; addressing student needs, issues, or complaints immediately upon notification; and administering an annual satisfaction survey.
- Demonstrate NC Reach staff caseworkers are skilled and trained: this involves keeping on record job descriptions and resumes for each staff member; submitting job descriptions and resumes to DSS contract administrator; balancing caseloads between staff caseworkers to ensure caseloads are commensurate with their ability to support NC Reach program and student needs; and conducting performance evaluations of staff caseworkers semi-annually to reflect accomplishment of program goals and objectives.

- Actively work with students to develop a proactive post-secondary-to-employment plan.
- Address student transitional and crisis needs through comprehensive case management support: this involves conducting entry interviews with students to determine needs and follow-up with appropriate services; offering information, guidance, and referrals; and ensuring accessibility of caseworkers to students.
- Meet with NC Reach students on campus a minimum of one time per semester to fully support their individual needs.

New Strategies for Improvement

In SFY 2018-2019, Orphan Foundation of America/Foster Care to Success will continue to administer the ETV and NC Reach programs to support former foster youth in pursuing and attaining college degrees or career and technical training that will help them secure employment and obtain economic self-sufficiency. DSS will continue to invite Foster Care to Success staff to participate in monthly calls with county LINKS staff and partner agencies to provide updates on the ETV and NC Reach programs, including information about funding availability; time lines for students to complete FAFSA, ETV, and NC Reach applications; and opportunities for county LINKS programs to partner with Foster Care to Success to present program information directly to young people. In addition, DSS will work with Foster Care to Success and county LINKS staff to ensure youth have the information they need to complete their ETV and/or NC Reach applications, which will help facilitate timely eligibility determinations. This information may include, but is not limited to, information and assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); how to complete the ETV and NC Reach applications; and any information that may be needed to complete the ETV and/or NC Reach applications (ex. adoption finalization date, date of exit to guardianship, letters confirming foster care status, etc.).

Methods to Measure Progress

All DSS contracts are monitored using the NCDHHS / DSS Subrecipient Contract Monitoring Plan. The monitoring process encompasses a variety of tools used throughout the contract period. Fiscal and program reports, desk monitoring, onsite monitoring reviews, and ongoing telephone/email contact with the contractor provide valuable information to determine the subrecipient's contractual compliance and program success. During SFY 2018-2019, DSS will monitor this contract in accordance with the NCDHHS / DSS Subrecipient Contract Monitoring Plan.

In addition, in SFY 2018-2019 DSS will partner with Foster Care to Success to engage youth and young adults in the data collection and analysis of NYTD data, as well as the state's NYTD Review. The analysis of NYTD data, coupled with data and satisfaction survey information collected and reported to DSS by Foster Care to Success could yield important information about NC LINKS, ETV, and NC Reach program strengths and areas needing improvement.

3. Youth Villages – Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund

Planned Activities

SFY 2018-2019 is the fourth year in a multi-year plan that will ultimately offer YVLifeSet to every youth aging out of foster care across the state to help assure a successful transition to adulthood. The purpose of this contract is to replicate the success of the program model so more young adults can participate in

this outcome-based program. Performance requirements for this contract include the following:

- Offer services to 320 youth and young adults between the ages of 17 and 21 who are likely to or have already aged out of the foster care system in the following counties: Durham, Chatham, Alamance, Orange, Caswell, Person, Granville, Vance, Franklin, Wake, Halifax, Warren, Guilford, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Union, Rowan, Stanly, Henderson, Buncombe, Madison, Yancey, McDowell, Transylvania, Polk, Rutherford, Jackson, Mitchell, Pitt, Craven, Pamlico, Beaufort, Forsyth, Yadkin, Wilkes, Watauga, Caldwell, Ashe, Alleghany, Avery, Haywood, Macon, Davie, Surry, Stokes, Iredell, Catawba, Gaston, Rockingham, Randolph, Moore, Lee, Harnett, Hoke, Cumberland, Johnston, Wilson, Nash, Edgecombe, Greene, Martin and Lenoir. Additionally, as opportunities emerge to secure additional funding in the existing footprint, Youth Villages will explore expansion possibilities to areas not listed above to further the goal of serving more counties across the state.
- Deliver highly individualized services tailored to meet the strengths and needs of individual youth and young adults as components of the YVLifeSet program:
 - Permanency: establish permanent connections for young adults transitioning from care.
 - Education: assist and support youth and young adults in completing their high school diploma or equivalent and, for students who have completed high school, assist them in determining what course of study they want to pursue (e.g. vocational training, college courses, etc.).
 - Employment: create partnerships with community businesses willing to hire young adults with the hope that, when these young adults are discharged from the program, they will be able to maintain their employment.
 - Housing: assist young adults in the acquisition of housing that can be maintained upon discharge from the program.
 - Basic Independent Living Skills: work with young adults on activities to build real world knowledge such as budgeting, getting along with peers, obtaining medical insurance, etc.
 - Crisis Intervention: in case of crisis, young adults may contact the contractor at any time and a trained staff member will respond. Crisis resolution may include responding by phone or in person regardless of the hour or day of the week.
 - Timeline for and Context of Service Delivery: services are rendered in the young adults' natural environments and in a highly individualized manner. Timeline for delivery of services and discharge from the program varies based on the needs of the young adults.

New Strategies for Improvement

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will contract with Youth Villages, Inc. for the administration of the YVLifeSet program. This contract year will continue to replicate the success of the program model so more young adults can participate in this outcome-based program.

DSS will continue to invite Youth Villages staff to participate in monthly calls with county LINKS staff and partner agencies to provide updates on the YVLifeSet program, including information about any new service areas that Youth Villages expands to during the year. In addition, DSS will explore ways to provide

ongoing support through the contract monitoring process for Youth Villages to expand the YVLifeSet program to areas not currently served, as outlined in the contract Scope of Work.

Methods to Measure Progress

All DSS contracts are monitored using the NCDHHS / DSS Subrecipient Contract Monitoring Plan. The monitoring process encompasses a variety of tools used throughout the contract period. Fiscal and program reports, desk monitoring, onsite monitoring reviews, and ongoing telephone/email contact with the contractor provide valuable information to determine the subrecipient's contractual compliance and program success. During SFY 2018-2019, DSS will monitor this contract in accordance with the NCDHHS / DSS Subrecipient Contract Monitoring Plan.

Youth Villages requested that NCDHHS, consider participating in a randomized control trial (RCT) evaluation in North Carolina of YVLifeSet services led by researchers from Chapin Hall, the Urban Institute and Child Trends (see section IV. *Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Supporting Transitioning Youth Updates*), and other methods for Youth Villages to meet the impact evaluation and measurement criteria of the appropriating legislation.

D. Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment

In addition to children under the age of five at risk for maltreatment served by the Community Response Program outlined in the *Family Support/Prevention section under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (title IV-B, subpart 2)* of this document, DSS is targeting three key populations at greatest risk of maltreatment. These include 1) substance-affected infants; 2) children who enter foster care in part due to parental substance abuse; and 3) children who are victims of human trafficking. These vulnerable populations include those involved in child welfare, as well as those served by other child-serving systems such as Public Health. Substance abuse and human trafficking negatively impact children's healthy development trajectories, and therefore is of great interest to North Carolina. When intervention is early, the effects of these traumatic events can be mitigated, thereby improving the health and safety of children.

Infants with Prenatal Substance Exposure

The rising number of opioid overdose deaths and deaths associated with opioid use have created a public health crisis in North Carolina. It is under these circumstances that North Carolina received a \$31 million 21st Century Cures Act, State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The grant has been used to increase access to prevention, treatment and recovery supports, reducing unmet treatment need, and reducing opioid-related overdoses and deaths. Through statewide partnerships, North Carolina drafted an Opioid Action Plan for the period 2017-21. The plan addresses seven core strategies:

1. Create a coordinated infrastructure
2. Reduce oversupply of prescription opioids
3. Reduce diversion and flow of illicit drugs
4. Increase community awareness and prevention
5. Make naloxone widely available; link overdose survivors to care
6. Expand treatment and recovery-oriented systems of care

7. Measure the impact and revise strategies based on results

Related to this epidemic is the number of hospitalizations associated with drug withdrawal in newborns. This number has skyrocketed from 125 in 2004 to 1,252 in 2015 (NC State Center for Health Statistics, Hospital Discharge Dataset, 2004-2015 and Birth Certificate records, 2004-2015 Analysis by Injury Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit).

DSS addresses the needs of these infants and all infants with prenatal substance exposure through its response to the provisions outlined in CAPTA/CARA. DSS child welfare policy requires that every infant identified as “substance affected” be connected to Care Coordination for Children (CC4C), an at-risk population management program serving children ages 0-5. Data collection on this population began in August 2017, and the table below summarizes the number of infants who were identified by healthcare providers as substance affected and provided notification to CPS; the number screened-in or screened-out for CPS Assessment; and the percentage provided a Plan of Safe Care and referral to CC4C.

Month	Number of Infants	Screened-In	Screened-Out	POSC	Referred to CC4C
August 2017	458	338 (73.80%)	128 (27.95%)	455 (99.34%)	440 (96.10%)
September 2017	412	287 (69.66%)	119 (28.88%)	392 (95.15%)	396 (96.12%)
October 2017	424	311 (73.35%)	118 (27.83%)	424 (100%)	410 (96.69%)
November 2017	323	248 (76.78%)	76 (23.53%)	310 (95.98%)	322 (99.69%)
December 2017	379	275 (72.56%)	107 (28.23%)	366 (96.57%)	377 (99.47%)
January 2018	385	290 (75.32%)	92 (23.90%)	368 (95.58%)	366 (95.06%)
February 2018	346	268 (77.46%)	77 (22.25%)	326 (94.22%)	331 (95.66%)
March 2018	397	289 (72.79%)	107 (26.95%)	381 (95.96%)	389 (97.98%)

Services with CC4C are voluntary. However, approximately 80% of infants identified as substance affected have received services through CC4C.

Additionally, DSS child welfare policy requires children who are identified as substance affected be screened for referral to the North Carolina Infant Toddler Program through the local Children’s Developmental Services Agency for early intervention services

Children and Families Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse

Though not directly connected to the opioid epidemic, North Carolina has experienced a corresponding increase in the number of children and families impacted by substance use.

As noted in the first table below, parental substance abuse was one of the contributing factors in removal for 39.2% of children entering foster care in SFY 2016-2017. This number was even higher for children ages 0-5, whose entry into foster care was related to parental substance abuse in 46.3% of cases.

**Children Ages 0-17 Entering Fostering Care with
Parental Substance Abuse as a Reason¹, SFY 2005-2016**

SFY	Number of Children Entering Foster Care	Number with Parental Substance Abuse as a Reason	% with Parental Substance Abuse
2005-2006	6716	1854	27.6%
2006-2007	6374	1819	28.5%
2007-2008	5605	1443	25.7%
2008-2009	5160	1290	25.0%
2009-2010	5060	1330	26.3%
2010-2011	5180	1460	28.2%
2011-2012	5010	1515	30.2%
2012-2013	5239	1591	30.4%
2013-2014	5791	1790	30.9%
2014-2015	5770	2051	35.5%
2015-2016	5837	2177	37.3%
2016-2017	6209	2432	39.2%
Total	64093	19795	30.9%

**Children Ages 0-5 Entering Fostering Care with
Parental Substance Abuse as a Reason¹, SFY 2005-2016**

SFY	Number of Children Entering Foster Care	Number with Parental Substance Abuse as Reason	% with Parental Substance Abuse
2005-2006	3230	1087	33.7%
2006-2007	3123	1072	34.3%
2007-2008	2699	876	32.5%
2008-2009	2519	809	32.1%
2009-2010	2523	825	32.7%
2010-2011	2668	931	34.9%
2011-2012	2557	988	38.6%
2012-2013	2663	1007	37.8%
2013-2014	2878	1091	37.9%
2014-2015	2909	1270	43.7%
2015-2016	2980	1327	44.5%
2016-2017	3167	1467	46.3%
Total	33916	12750	37.6%

¹ Multiple actions or conditions associated with the child's entry into the county child welfare agency's custody/placement responsibility may be indicated as a reason for entering foster care.

To better understand the impact parental substance abuse is having on child well-being, NCDHHS has also reviewed data on children who do not enter foster care but who are determined to be maltreated and are in need of ongoing services. As the chart below reflects, this review reveals a similar trend, with 21.8% of In-Home services cases in SFY 2016-2017 having parental substance abuse as a contributing factor.

Children Entering In-Home Services with Primary Caretaker Drug Abuse as a Contributory Factor for the Child’s Assessment, SFY 2012-2016

SFY	# of Children Entering IHS	Primary Caretaker Drug Abuse as Contributory Factor	% Primary Caretaker Abuse
2012-2013	17582	3161	18.0%
2013-2014	17730	3189	18.0%
2014-2015	17868	3505	19.6%
2015-2016	17707	3927	22.2%
2016-2017	16446	3588	21.8%
Total	87333	17370	19.9%

The prevalence of substance use in child welfare cases is a risk factor and is also connected to child fatalities. Looking at this connection, NCDHHS tracks data related to child fatalities in its Child Fatality Database. Data from state fiscal years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 reveal the following:

- The age range for safe sleep fatalities is from 0 to 1, with an average age of 2 months at time of death.
- There is a connection between parental substance use and “safe sleep” fatalities.
- In child fatalities where substance use was a factor, 27% occurred during an open CPS Assessment.

Parental substance use raises the risk of a child dying. A review of child fatalities found that in child deaths which involved a parent or other adult abusing a substance, the risk of the adult falling asleep next to the child and creating conditions for child suffocation was elevated. In many of these deaths, the child had a crib or some other safe sleeping arrangement, yet the child was not sleeping in his or her identified sleeping area at the time of the death.

Recognizing the connection between substance use and risk of harm in child welfare cases, NCDHHS has taken steps to identify how policy and practice (infrastructure) can be improved. These steps include:

- Implementation of “7-day reviews” of In-Home Services and Foster Care fatalities. Since November 2017, 10% of 7-day reviews were open to Foster Care cases and 37% were open to CPS Assessments and In-Home cases. See Section II.10 of this report to learn more about 7-day reviews.
- North Carolina will implement its Modified Manual statewide in July 2018, which will provide child welfare staff with tools around safe sleep and family engagement to ensure that children are safe.
- North Carolina has continued to monitor the implementation of its Substance Affected Infant policy, provide technical assistance, and ongoing education and support regarding the provision of services to this population.

- In June 2018, DSS offered a statewide webinar to all county child welfare professionals entitled “Child Welfare Practice and Safe Sleep,” in which UNC’s Child Abuse and Neglect Service Team and presenters from DSS will provide information and strategies to help North Carolina improve practice around “safe sleep.”
- In June 2018, DSS will publish an issue of *Children’s Services Practice Notes* focused on appropriate child welfare practice with families struggling with opioids. This issue will address relevant topics such as Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), safe sleep, and policy and practice related to Plans of Safe Care.

Additionally, DSS collaborates with DPH, which is the administrative home of the North Carolina Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (NC MIECHV) to support children at risk of child maltreatment. The goal of the NC MIECHV is to coordinate an effective statewide planning and implementation system through a strong alliance with key partners in early childhood services at the state and local levels that ensures all children grow up in environments that are safe and supportive, and that maximally promote each child’s physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral health. This is accomplished through the following objectives:

- Use the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and other partnerships to optimize strong and effective leadership, coordination, and implementation of the NC MIECHV Program at both the State and the local levels.
- Educate communities, policy makers, and families on the goals and objectives of the NC Home Visiting Program throughout implementation, using a public health approach.
- Implement a strong support network to assist local community service providers with implementation of evidence-based home visiting models adhering to fidelity requirements.
- Increase the capacity of local partnerships working to coordinate, improve, and expand delivery of early childhood programs and services.
- Improve coordination of services for at-risk communities.
- Ensure accountability with program standards and measurement mechanisms to track identified outcome indicators. NC MIECHV will continue to implement two evidence-based home visiting programs – *Healthy Families America* and *Nurse-Family Partnership* – in seven targeted communities.

Children and Families Affected by Human Trafficking or Who Are at Risk for Trafficking

North Carolina continues to see a rise in documented human trafficking cases. Reports to the National Human Trafficking Hotline concerning North Carolina victims nearly doubled between 2015 and 2017, rising from 116 to 221 reported human trafficking victims (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2017).

DSS recognizes that human trafficking is a complex problem requiring a multi-disciplinary response at the local, state, and national level. To achieve a robust, statewide, multi-disciplinary response to and prevention of the trafficking of children, DSS needs to conduct strategic, long-term, and outcome-focused planning. These efforts must include the connection of a prevention service array network with statewide efforts to raise awareness and increase identification of children and youth who have been trafficked or

are at risk of being trafficked. Please refer to sections III (CAPTA) and IV (CFCIP) for more information about North Carolina's ongoing efforts to address human trafficking.

NCDHHS anticipates that with the implementation of NC FAST that documentation around contacts will improve outcomes for both populations.

E. Services for Children in Foster Care Under Age Five

NCDHHS is developing a statewide *Early Childhood Action Plan* designed to give children a healthy start and to develop their full potential in safe and nurturing families, schools, and communities. Focusing on young children from the prenatal period to age eight, the plan will address strategies to improve children's health, safety, well-being, school readiness, and education. The *Early Childhood Action Plan* is being developed in collaboration with NC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which was reestablished through an Executive Order by Governor Cooper in February 2018. This effort will involve public and private partners, community stakeholders, and the prevention community. The plan will incorporate benchmarks, strategies, and recommendations from multiple sources and initiatives; create an early childhood action plan; support aligned activities, evidence-based practices, and innovation; promote shared measurement and measurement practices; build public will; advance policy; and mobilize funding. Building on current collaborations, and with brain and developmental science as its foundation, the *Early Childhood Action Plan* will be designed to strengthen and support all families. Creating a system where services are evidence-based, innovative, with shared accountability across systems will help those families currently involved in child welfare services and help to prevent additional child abuse and neglect.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NCDHHS and NC Early Childhood Development has been signed for NC Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems (ECIDS). ECIDS is a single source of information regarding childhood education, health, and social services. ECIDS provides aggregate statewide reports that can be customized by county, child demographics, and state fiscal year. ECIDS create a high quality, comprehensive, integrated early childhood data system for North Carolina to inform child welfare policies and practices that produce better outcomes for children and families.

DSS funds, collaborates, and provides developmentally-appropriate services to children in foster care under five through multiple strategies. They include, but are not limited to:

- Collaboration with Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSAs)
- Collaboration with North Carolina Pediatric Society/Fostering Health NC Program
- Collaboration with North Carolina Child Treatment Program
- Collaboration with Community Care of North Carolina

Through the county-specific DRR plans that will be implemented in 2018 and continuing through 2019, county departments of social services agencies will use foster care data to identify the populations of children for which they lack a sufficient number of placement providers. Based on this information, counties will develop resource parent recruitment strategies. Counties that identify a shortage of placement providers for children ages 0-5 will develop specific strategies to address this need.

North Carolina data shows that there is room for continued improvement achieving permanence for children who enter foster care under the age five. In SFY 2015-2016, 29% of this population achieved permanence with 12 months. Of those who achieved permanence during this period, 73% were either reunified, adopted, or achieved permanence through guardianship with relatives.

During the upcoming year, North Carolina will focus on the development of concrete strategies to move children ages 0-5 to permanency in a timelier manner. Priorities will be: (1) providing technical assistance for county DRR plans, specifically recruiting homes to meet the needs of the 0-5 population and (2) an emphasis within policy on quality parent-child visits for children ages 0-5, which research suggests is correlated with timely and successful reunification. Separate from these priorities, North Carolina will reach out to other jurisdictions to research and pursue implementation of additional promising practices around improving timeliness to permanency for this age group.

**Did Children Entering Care in 2015-16
Achieve Permanency in 12 Months?**

Children Ages 0-5 at Entry

Perm in 12?	# of Children	%
No	2073	70.56%
Yes	865	29.44%
Total	2938	100.00%

Children Ages 6-17 at Entry

Perm in 12?	# of Children	%
No	1880	66.55%
Yes	945	33.45%
Total	2825	100.00%

**Of the Children Achieving Permanency in <12 Months,
What type of Permanency Was Achieved?**

Children Ages 0-5 at Entry

Type of Permanency	#	%
Unknown	1	0.12%
Adoption	52	6.01%
Non-Removal Parent or Relative	165	19.08%
Court approved caretaker	36	4.16%
Guardianship with a Relative	218	25.20%
Guardianship with Court-Approved	35	4.05%
Reunification	358	41.39%
Total	865	100.00%

Children Ages 6-17 at Entry

Type of Permanency	#	%
Adoption	12	1.27%
Non-Removal Parent or Relative	209	22.12%
Court approved caretaker	45	4.76%
Guardianship with a Relative	191	20.21%
Guardianship with Court-Approved	36	3.81%
Reunification	452	47.83%
Total	945	100.00%

F. Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries

Once a child who has been adopted internationally is brought to the United States, if the adoption was finalized in the country of origin, the family has the option to “re-adopt” the child in North Carolina and receive a North Carolina-issued Decree of Adoption and Certificate of Foreign Birth. If the adoption was not finalized in the country of the child’s birth, the family will then complete the adoption upon their arrival in North Carolina. Families that choose to re-adopt or finalize their adoption in North Carolina are notified of the readiness of their Certificate of Foreign Birth through a letter sent to them by DSS. North Carolina’s birth certificate notification letters to all adoptive parents, including those who have adopted and re-adopted their foreign-born children, includes the statement: “Post Adoption Services are available to all families in North Carolina who have finalized an adoption. To learn more about these services please visit <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/> and contact the provider for your region.” DSS has a specific page where families can go for information on post adoption support services and to locate their local provider.

Children adopted from other countries are at highest risk of unlawful custody transfer. As such, in 2016 Session Law 2016-115 was passed. This law, entitled “An Act to Prohibit the Unlawful Transfer of Custody of a Minor Child and to Make Conforming Statutory Changes,” makes it illegal for anyone to participate in or facilitate an unlawful transfer of custody in North Carolina. An “unlawful transfer of custody” is defined as the transfer of physical custody of a minor child in willful violation of applicable adoption law or by grossly negligent omission in the care of the child, without a court order or other authorization under law, to a person other than a relative or another individual having a substantial relationship with the child.

SL 2016-115 also required NCDHHS to develop a program to provide needed supports to families at risk of adoption dissolutions to keep families together. As national statistics indicate that foreign adoptees are at highest risk of unlawful custody transfer, DSS provided additional requirements for advertising and education around post adoption support services and unlawful custody transfer outside of the foster care community. Although post adoption support services have always been available to families who completed an out of country adoption, the post adoption support services contracts for SFY 2017-2018 through SFY 2019-2020 require each contractor to provide targeted outreach and education to families at risk of an illegal custody transfer and those who completed adoptions separate from the child welfare system. While service provision has not changed, the intent of this requirement is to more broadly advertise and educate about the availability of post adoption support services for families and children adopted through an out-of-country adoption.

In SFY 2017-2018, PASS providers began this effort by individually reaching out to private and independent adoption agencies, adoption attorneys, and clerks of court to share information about available services. The PASS providers jointly coordinated and provided three regional “Lunch and Learn” sessions for private and independent adoption agencies to educate about the new law and availability of services for families of private and international adoptions. These events were especially successful. The PASS providers have already seen an influx in referrals for international adoptions.

5. Program Support

Provision of Training and Technical Assistance

Mass Communication Vehicles. DSS supports child welfare programs statewide using communication through periodic “Dear County Director Letters”; frequent webinars and publications (e.g., *Children’s Services Practice Notes, Fostering Perspectives, Training Matters*) which are described in more detail in the section V.4 (Training Plan Update); and twice-monthly online meetings called “Staying Connected” calls, which allow DSS to address a wide variety of topics of interest to the counties in a format that is responsive, flexible, and timely. DSS also has multiple listservs it uses to communicate to internal and external stakeholders.

TA Gateway. Described in North Carolina’s CFSP and in previous APSRs, the TA (Technical Assistance) Gateway is a web-based portal that offers counties a streamlined method to request assistance and guidance from DSS. To date, use of the TA Gateway has been limited. However, North Carolina has built use of the TA Gateway into its PIP (see PIP Goal 1, Strategy 4, Activity G). To prepare for expanded use of the TA Gateway, representatives from the UNC School of Social Work held a re-orientation session for DSS staff in September 2017, and on October 1, 2017 DSS staff began actively using the Gateway to help track and meet the technical assistance needs of a limited number of counties. In SFY 2017-2018, the TA Gateway’s Knowledgebase (KB) has been used to support the modified child welfare policies and practices that were revised as part of PIP Goal 1, Strategy 1. During SFY 2018-2019, DSS will evaluate the expansion of requesting assistance and guidance by counties through the TA Gateway.

DSS Teams. The DSS Child Welfare Section is organized into the following teams: (1) policy; (2) staff development; (3) licensing and regulatory; (4) adoption indexing and NC Kids; (5) community-based services; (6) Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC); (7) program monitoring; (8) OSRI/case review; (9) local support; and (10) REAP/CQI. These teams provide program support to the counties to facilitate the delivery of child welfare services and play a key role in facilitating the achievement of CFSP, APSR, and PIP goals. Following are updates on key team activities from the past year.

Program Monitoring Team

In SFY 2017-2018, this team continued generating and reviewing data and records to evaluate county child welfare programs. Additionally, the team’s evaluations include review and evaluation the county’s program development plan (PDP). Each PDP addresses agency practice issues identified in the evaluations and is used as a guide for technical assistance provided by DSS. After each evaluation, DSS surveys county participants to solicit feedback. To date, 95% of survey respondents report a better understanding of their agency functioning and effectiveness.

The Program Monitoring team has been working to identify the areas measured that directly impact the CFSR outcomes. DSS is also aggregating the outcomes of program evaluations across county child welfare agencies and using them to identify statewide trends. In the last year, DSS and community partners developed a variety of training opportunities to help counties improve practice related to these trends. These included the following:

- *Preventing Premature Case Closure in CPS In-Home Services: A Course for Supervisors.* This self-paced, on-demand, online training explains why premature case closure is a problem and provides guidance and tools to help supervisors know when a case is ready for closure. It identifies what needs to be assessed prior to case closure, including elements of the Family Service Agreement that build toward case closure. (Corresponding PIP outcome: Goal 1, Strategy 1, Activity A.)
- *Supporting Effective Documentation: A Course for Supervisors.* In this online, on-demand course, participants learn why documentation matters in child welfare and explore areas of documentation that are consistently problematic. Case examples are used to allow participants to practice identifying and correcting specific documentation issues. Supervisors explore their role in supporting staff training and ongoing transfer of learning for effective documentation. (Corresponding PIP outcome: Goal 1, Strategy 1, Activity A.)
- *Supervisor Academy.* Three courses were developed specifically for the Supervisor Academy and are described in “Changes to North Carolina’s Training Plan,” found in Appendix B. (Corresponding PIP outcome: Goal 1, Strategy 3.)
- *“Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) Training Kits.* Four DIY kits were developed to support the rollout of the Modified Policy Manual. These kits provide supervisors with resources to lead short training sessions which highlight the policy changes. A list of the DIY kits is included in “Changes to North Carolina’s Training Plan,” found in Appendix B. (Corresponding PIP outcome: Goal 1, Strategy 1, Activity G.)

Local Support Team

Since the submission of the last APSR, the Local Support Team has provided the following.

Quarterly Consultation. In the past year, the Local Support Team’s Children’s Program Representatives (CPRs) provided quarterly consultation with each county regarding county data, technical assistance and training needs, and progress on PDPs created as part of program monitoring. Quarterly consultations between CPRs and counties will continue in the coming year.

Regional Meetings. In SFY 2017-2018, CPRs held 10 regional meetings to inform and train supervisors, county trainers, and other county leadership regarding the implementation of the modified policies and practices (PIP Goal 1, Strategy 1). CPRs will continue to facilitate regional meetings in the coming year; many will focus on specific items in the state’s CFSR Measurement Plan that continue to be deficient.

NC FAST Support. CPRs have supported NC FAST implementation (PIP Goal 5, Strategy 1) since November 2017. This has involved weekly visits to counties piloting NC FAST to support county staff in connecting policy and practice to the technology. These visits are also a chance to identify issues that will need to be addressed as the implementation of NC FAST occurs across the state in SFY 2018-2019, further strengthening North Carolina's Statewide Information System. North Carolina anticipates continuing this support in SFY 2018-2019, as NC FAST continues to rollout across the state.

Training Team

In SFY 2017-2018, the DSS Staff Development Team continued providing the extensive array of training described in detail in North Carolina's updated Training Plan (see Appendix B). Between July 1, 2017, and March 31, 2018, the system reached staff from all 100 counties and achieved 7,246 training completions. This includes the 533 child welfare staff who completed the pre-service course, *Child Welfare in North Carolina*, which will be offered 32 times this year.

Training provided this year also actively supported the state's CFSP, APSR, and PIP goals. Key examples of this include offerings of courses that are part of the Supervisory Academy (PIP Goal 1, Strategy 3) and the creation of the new online course *North Carolina's Assisted Guardianship Program* (PIP Goal 3, Strategy 3).

Anticipated Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Needs

In the coming year North Carolina will continue to partner with the Capacity-Building Center for States to help meet the state's child welfare technical assistance needs so that the goals of the CFSP, APSR, and PIP can successfully be achieved. This work will occur in the following areas:

1. Supervisor Academy (PIP goal 1, strategy 3). The Capacity-Building Center for States will continue to provide consultation related to the implementation, expansion, and evaluation of the Supervisor Academy, which currently consists of three courses: *Nuts and Bolts of Child Welfare Supervision*, *Using Data to Improve Practice and Performance*; and *Using Data to Improve Practice and Performance with Community Partners*.

2. Technical Assistance (PIP goal 1, strategy 4). DSS is engaging with the Capacity-Building Center for States to help it improve North Carolina's current technical assistance and implement a model that includes training, mentoring, and coaching. In SFY 2017-2018, the Capacity-Building Center for States assisted North Carolina in reviewing implementation supports, such as the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Kits created for supervisors to utilize in coaching their own staff on the modified policies and practices. This year the Capacity-Building Center for States will also train program monitors and CPRs to help counties with root cause analysis, developing sustainable strategies to address deficiencies, and implementation and change management. During the coming year, DSS and the Capacity-Building Center for States will assess the data collected concerning training, technical assistance, and OSRI outcomes and how those are impacted by training and TA. This will be utilized to make changes to training and technical assistance to further support the implementation of the modified policies and practices. Changes in training and technical assistance will also be targeted to improve outcomes in safety, permanence, and well-being.

3. Family Leadership Model (PIP goal 1, strategy 5). In the coming year the Capacity-Building Center for States will continue to provide consultation related to North Carolina's family engagement and leadership model. Known as the North Carolina Child Welfare Family Advisory Council, the model includes a state-level council to provide family partners opportunities to be full peers in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of services as required by federal legislation. Supported by the Capacity-Building Center for States, in SFY 2018-2019, DSS will continue piloting three (3) county-level family engagement committees. These committees, comprised of biological parents with current or past involvement in the child welfare system, are being implemented in Durham, Forsyth, and Richmond counties.

4. MEPA. DSS has recognized a gap around training, reviewing, and monitoring localized Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) plans. In the coming year, the Capacity-Building Center for States will provide DSS with resources and consultation to enhance the state's efforts related to MEPA. DSS will also receive assistance related to MEPA from the US DHHS Office of Civil Rights. For more on this, please refer to section V.1 (Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan) of this report.

Updates Related to Research, Evaluation, MIS, and QA Systems

The following child and family services-related management information systems, evaluation, and quality assurance systems have been implemented or updated since the submission of the 2018 APSR or will be implemented or updated in SFY 2018-2019.

Research and Evaluation

DSS is using several initiatives and partnerships to improve service and outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system.

- **Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)**: In SFY 2018-2019, in collaboration with several counties and private providers, a team from UNC led by Dr. Mark Testa will evaluate a program to train and license relative caregivers. This research is being done in concert with DSS's effort to increase the usage of GAP that began in January 2017 to increase exits to permanency in North Carolina.
- **NC-PALS**: Since submission of the APSR, DSS began participating in the Child Trends "Post-Adoption Life Study." The goal of this study is to better understand how children fare in adoptive placements after they have left the child welfare system. In the past year, DSS helped Child Trends identify children and their latest known address to solicit participation in the study. This study will continue in SFY 2018-2019.
- **Early Childhood Action Plan**: In SFY 2017-2018, in partnership with community groups, NCDHHS launched an initiative to better understand and publish how North Carolina's youngest children are faring in numerous domains, including the areas of maltreatment and foster care participation. This work will continue in the coming year under the auspices of the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council.
- **ECIDS**: Initially an effort to streamline researchers' and the public's access to data about early

childhood education, ECIDS (<https://www.ecids.nc.gov/ecids/>) has become an integrated data system that links numerous data systems from public child-serving agencies. The general public can access prefabricated reports, but ECIDS also provides an easier path for researchers to request de-identified data sets from participating agencies about the 0-5 population. The system has the potential to grow beyond the 0-5 population and serve as a building block for an even more comprehensive public integrated data system.

- MOA with the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI): In spring 2018, DSS entered into a memorandum of agreement with DPI to share data for the purposes of federal reporting and to inform programs to improve services for children in North Carolina. The short-term goal is to fulfill reporting requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act, but DSS will now be able to systematically access the education data for children in out-of-home care.
- Health Status Utilization: In SFY 2018-2019, working with Division of Medical Assistance (DMA), DSS will begin identifying which foster children have medical care and when they have received it.
- Management Assistance: In the coming year, DSS will continue to partner with UNC-CH's School of Social Work to provide data summaries of state- and county-level child welfare data to stakeholders and the public on the website Management Assistance (<http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>). In SFY 2018-2019, as reporting of NC FAST child welfare data becomes more precise, DSS will work with UNC to integrate NC FAST data into the tables hosted on the website Management Assistance.
- CW ASSIST: Developed in partnership with North Carolina's Department of Information Technology, Government Data Analytics Center, Child Welfare Accessing Sensitive Safety Information through Secure Technology (CW ASSIST) provides authorized personnel at county departments of social services access to data related to possible risk indicators while working with children and families. This web-based application consolidates data from several systems into a single view of a person or address. The application can be accessed in offices using desktop or laptop computers as well as on mobile devices, such as smart phones or tablets, while in the field. The results from CW ASSIST should be seen as "indicators" of risk and not be used for final decision-making. Any information within CW ASSIST needs to be used as an engagement tool with family members and other system stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement) to enable a stronger dialogue to support better decision making.

Management Information System

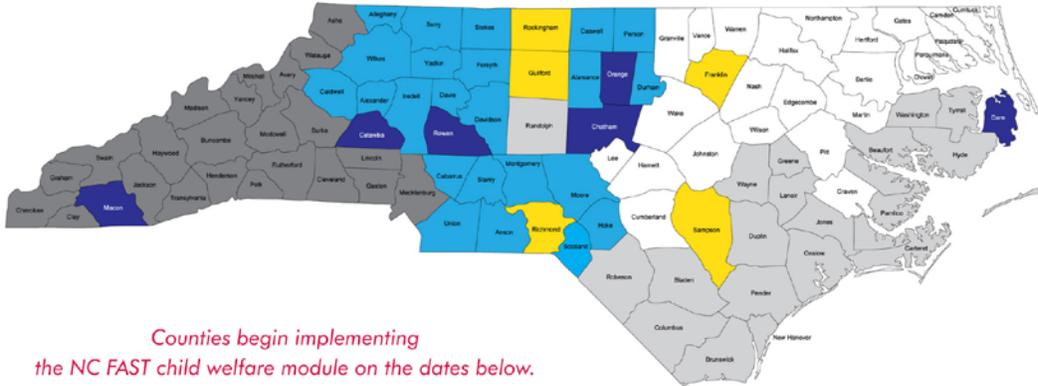
NC FAST P4 (Child Services) deployment began in July 2017. Ultimately, deployment of NC FAST will strengthen North Carolina's Statewide Information System (PIP Goal 5). In the past year, NC FAST P4 was deployed to pilot counties in two releases of system functionality. This enabled North Carolina to identify critical areas for improvement:

- P4 must be more centered around social work practice. The existing system required a rigid approach to child welfare practice and is not consistent with the fluid nature of family-focused work.

- P4 must better align with child welfare processes and practice. Lack of alignment between NCFAST and child welfare practice and policy leads to incorrect data entry, missed steps (e.g., eligibility information), and extra steps.
- P4 must improve case information availability and viewing. Pilot users have struggled with an inability to print documents and create required reports.

To avoid adversely affecting services to children and families, statewide implementation of NC FAST has been temporarily paused to address critical areas of the system that require modification

NC FAST Deployment Plan



Counties begin implementing the NC FAST child welfare module on the dates below.

Pilot Counties	Expanded Pilot	Group 2 Counties	Group 3 Counties	Group 4 Counties	Group 5 Counties
Feb. 26 start	March 26 start	Start date TBD	Start date TBD	Start date TBD	Start date TBD
Franklin	Catawba	Beaufort	Bertie	Alamance	Ashe
Guilford	Chatham	Bladen	Buncombe	Alexander	Avery
Richmond	Dare	Brunswick	Camden	Alleghany	Burke
Rockingham	Macon	Carteret	Chowan	Anson	Cherokee
Sampson	Orange	Columbus	Craven	Cabarrus	Clay
	Rowan	Duplin	Cumberland	Caldwell	Gaston
		Greene	Currituck	Caswell	Graham
		Hyde	Edgecombe	Davidson	Haywood
		Jones	Gates	Davie	Henderson
		Lenoir	Granville	Durham	Jackson
		New Hanover	Halifax	Forsyth	Lincoln
		Onslow	Harnett	Hoke	Madison
		Pamlico	Hertford	Iredell	McDowell
		Pender	Johnston	Montgomery	Mecklenburg
		Robeson	Lee	Moore	Mitchell
		Tyrrell	Martin	Person	Polk
		Washington	Nash	Randolph	Rutherford
		Wayne	Northampton	Scotland	Swain
			Pasquotank	Stanly	Transylvania
			Perquimans	Stokes	Watauga
			Pitt	Surry	Yancey
			Vance	Union	
			Wake	Wilkes	
			Warren	Yadkin	
			Wilson		

* Pilot counties began using all elements of NC FAST on this date

Quality Assurance System

Since submission of the 2018 APSR, North Carolina has continued to develop its child welfare quality assurance system. These developments are described below in section II.10

6. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes

As reported in previous APSRs, responsibility for providing child welfare services and protections to children from North Carolina's only federally-recognized tribe, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), has shifted from the state to the tribe. Over the last three years, NCDHHS and counties that border Tribal Trust lands have worked extremely hard to assist EBCI leadership with their planning of a health and human services agency on Tribal Trust lands. This led to EBCI Public Health and Human Services (PHHS) being able to provide all intake, child protection, foster care, licensing, adoption, CFCIP/LINKS, and other child welfare services to the population living on Tribal Trust lands. EBCI has also indicated to DSS that it is aware of and in the process of complying with the requirement to operate a case review system for tribal children. The EBCI has received approval from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for its Title IV-E application. Also, PHHS and DSS have developed a clear and concise protocol to ensure the timely and accurate delivery of North Carolina's Central Registry information, which PHHS needs to ensure a thorough and accurate assessment of tribal children who are the subject of a Child Protective Services report within the tribal boundary. DSS has regular conversations with Barbara Parker, Director of the EBCI's PHHS, regarding the APSR, CFSP, and other child welfare matters.

The state also regularly collaborates and coordinates with tribes through North Carolina's Commission of Indian Affairs, on which the state's Deputy Secretary for Human Services serves. The Commission meets quarterly. American Indian members are selected by tribal or community consent from Indian groups recognized by North Carolina. Names those serving on the Commission can be accessed here: <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/about-doa/divisions/commission-of-indian-affairs/commission-members>.

The Commission of Indian Affairs' Indian Child Welfare Committee also provides DSS regular opportunities to interact with the EBCI and state-recognized tribes regarding ICWA and other child welfare matters. The Deputy Director for Child Welfare for DSS is a member of and co-chairs the Committee with Marvel Welch, a member of the EBCI. The Indian Child Welfare Gathering held on April 5, 2018, is an illustration of the collaboration and information sharing engendered by the Commission. This event, which was attended by 72 individuals, focused on the theme "Getting Back to Basics" and featured presentations from the Indian Child Welfare Committee, North Carolina's Guardian ad Litem Program, and DSS. For more on this event, please refer to the Agenda for the 2018 Indian Child Welfare Gathering (Appendix C).

DRR Grant. In 2016, the Indian Child Welfare Committee received a small grant to assist with Indian children in foster care. The grant, which is focused on recruiting, training, and licensing American Indian foster families, aligns with North Carolina's focus on diligent recruitment of families for children in foster care (PIP Goal 4, Strategy 2). As of December 31, 2017:

- 1) Six (6) American Indian foster families are either licensed or in the process of being licensed due to committee involvement (4 Lumbee, 1 Coharie, 1 Waccamaw-Siuan);

- 2) The Committee helped facilitate an unlicensed kinship care placement within the Coharie tribe in partnership with a county child welfare agency;
- 3) Robeson County is the Committee's most active and engaged county child welfare partner. The Committee has reached out to all counties with tribal land ties, as well as to Cumberland, Mecklenburg, Guilford, and Wake counties (urban areas). Plans are also in place to reach out to Craven, Wayne, and Onslow (counties with ties to the military) in SFY 2018-2019.

Compliance with ICWA

North Carolina continues to monitor compliance with the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). North Carolina child welfare law and policy require workers to assess whether children provided child protective services have Native American heritage (regardless of membership in federally- or state-recognized tribes). When a parent/guardian indicates they believe their child identifies with a tribe, the worker completes a form with the family and then shares the information with the tribe. The form captures the child's identifying information and any family members that are/were tribe members. It also captures services the tribe may offer to prevent placement and/or move to expedite permanency, as well as potential foster care placements. Workers are expected to make active efforts throughout the life of the case to create and maintain a relationship with the family and tribe. Though it is understood that information can be disclosed to the tribe without the family's consent, it is family-centered practice that the worker seeks the family's consent to notify the tribe of all family meetings, court hearings, and any other proceedings involving the children.

In the past year, the DSS sponsored an Indian Child Welfare Symposium to ensure updated understanding and ongoing compliance with ICWA. Held on January 26, 2018, in Wilmington, this event provided training on the Indian Child Welfare Act. This training, for which 122 individuals registered and which was conducted by the National Indian Child Welfare Association, was held in partnership with the Administrative Office of the Courts. The next ICWA training will be held August 17, 2018, in Raleigh at the Administrative Office of the Courts Training Center.

Child welfare professionals in North Carolina also have multiple opportunities to learn about ICWA and how to comply with it through training provided to them by DSS. Child welfare staff learn about ICWA when they take *Child Welfare in North Carolina: Preservice*, which is required for all new social workers and supervisors before they have direct client contact. New staff learn about ICWA again when they take *Legal Aspects of Child Welfare in NC*, a two-day classroom course they must take in their first year. ICWA is also covered in courses providing job-specific training, such as *CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services*, *Placement in Child Welfare*, and *Adoptions*; as they have been in the past, these courses will be offered on an ongoing basis in SFY 2018-2019.

In SFY 2018-2019, in an effort to obtain more regular and substantive input from EBCI and state-recognized tribes, DSS will seek to make ICWA and other child welfare matters a routine discussion point during meetings of the state's Indian Child Welfare Committee. In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will also explore changing policy to require inquiring about American Indian heritage during CPS Assessments.

DSS continues to conduct program monitoring of county child welfare agencies. Items in the review include determining whether American Indian heritage was assessed, as well as, whether the tribe was contacted at the time of the decision to petition the court for the removal a child. Following are examples

of what program monitoring revealed about assessment of American Indian heritage in several child welfare service areas:

Native American Heritage: Program Monitoring Findings

	Cases Reviewed	Yes
CPS Assessments		
Was American Indian Heritage clearly assessed?	680	85%
If opened for CPS In-Home or Foster Care Services, was the tribe to which they are members notified?	19	21%
CPS In-Home		
Is there information in the In-Home record that shows American Indian Heritage was assessed (on FSA, narrative or face sheet)?	418	87%
Since opened for CPS In-Home Services, was the tribe to which they are members notified?	95	4%
Permanency Planning		
Is Native American heritage assessed?	534	91%
Was the tribe contacted at the time of the decision to petition?	77	17%

After each monitoring review, counties must develop a PDP in response to issues identified in the review through a change in practice or processes. This area will continue to be tracked. If there is a lack of progress in improving the outcomes, additional technical assistance and guidance is provided to improve the ICWA compliance. To date, DSS has not engaged in dialogue around this issue but this could become a part of future meetings.

7. Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants

Standard for Content and Frequency of Caseworker Visits

Since the submission of the 2015-2019 CFSP, DSS continues its effort to reduce the number of incidences of maltreatment in foster care and the number of placement disruptions through the use of the Monthly Caseworker Visit (MCV) Formula Grant. DSS and county child welfare agencies continue to use the Monthly Foster Care Record (documentation tool); since the submission of the CFSP there have been no changes in policy.

As it has since 2014, last year North Carolina's performance surpassed the national standard/ median for the following outcomes:

Outcome Measures	National Standard	NORTH CAROLINA PERFORMANCE			
		FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Absence of Maltreatment in Foster Care	99.68%	99.77%	99.83%	99.86%	99.94%
Nat'l Median					
Two or fewer placement settings for children in care less than 12 months	83.3%	86.07%	85.27%	86.29%	86.27%
Two or fewer placement settings for children in care 12 to 24 months	59.9%	68.48%	66.72%	67.76%	67.80%

Duncan, D.F., Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., Stewart, C.J., Vaughn, J.S., Guest, S., Rose, R.A., and Gwaltney, A.Y. (2018). *Management assistance for child welfare, work first, and food and nutrition services in North Carolina (v3.2)*. Retrieved 05-08-2018 from <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>.

FFY 2015-2019 USE OF MCV GRANT

Based on the data below and the information in the 2015-2019 CFSP, for 2017 DSS achieved compliance with MCV grant requirements. DSS provides ongoing monitoring and technical assistance to counties not meeting the target, to ensure performance standards are met.

FFY	MCV Measure	Target	Score	Met Target?
2015	Measure 1: Percentage of visits made on a monthly basis by caseworkers to children in foster care	95%	92%	No
	Measure 2: Percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child	75%	88%	Yes
2016	Measure 1: Percentage of visits made on a monthly basis by caseworkers to children in foster care	95%	95%	Yes
	Measure 2: Percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child	75%	89%	Yes
2017	Measure 1: Percentage of visits made on a monthly basis by caseworkers to children in foster care	95%	95%	Yes
	Measure 2: Percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child	75%	90%	Yes

Federal law requires at least 50% of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care during a fiscal year occur in the child's residence. In North Carolina in FFY 2016-2017, 90% of monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care occurred in the child's residence.

8. Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments

DSS uses Adoption Incentive Payments in combination with other funding sources to promote adoptions in North Carolina. DSS has not encountered any challenges in expending the funds in a timely manner.

The funds are used to support the following services:

- Recruitment: The process of finding, screening, and identifying prospective adoptive placement resources.
- Pre-adoption Training: Preparatory training for prospective adoptive families to provide knowledge and skills necessary for parenting children with special needs.
- Post Placement Support: Services provided by an adoption agency between the time a child is placed in the home of prospective adoptive parents and the time the child's adoption is finalized in court.
- Facilitation of Legal Procedures: Completion of legal work to finalize an adoption.

DSS has identified challenges around an increasing number of hard-to-place children lingering on the NC Kids Foster Care and Adoption Exchange for over a year without a permanent family being identified. In SFY 2017-2018, there were 100 children in this category. Of these children:

- 84% were classified as having a mental health diagnosis or significant emotional needs;
- 60% percent were classified as having moderate to severe mental health needs coupled with another diagnosis, such as IDD or severe behavioral challenges.

A proposal from the Adoption Promotion working group was to highlight these children, the “Waiting 100,” as truly hard to place children. This program aims to promote collaboration between public and private agencies and increase adoption finalizations of hard-to-place children by providing incentives to agencies who achieve permanence through adoption for children identified in this program. NCDHHS is exploring use of Federal Adoption Incentive Funds to incentivize county child welfare agencies for completing an adoption of an NC KIDS Waiting 100 child. Under consideration is providing agencies with \$1,000 if they complete the adoption individually and \$2,000 if they collaborate with a contracted private child-placing agency, or utilize an out-of-state family.

9. Child Welfare Demonstration Activities

Not applicable to North Carolina.

10. Quality Assurance

Round 3 of the CFSR identified North Carolina’s quality assurance (QA) system as an area needing improvement. In response, North Carolina developed the following goal to bring about the desired improvement: “Improve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being through the utilization of a statewide quality assurance system which will identify the strengths and needs of the service delivery system (Quality Assurance)” (PIP Goal 2). Throughout 2017 and 2018, North Carolina has been actively

pursuing this goal. As detailed in the 2018 APSR, last year the DSS OSRI Team added staff members and developed a new online course to help counties understand and reap the most benefit from the OSRI process.

Since July 2017, DSS has continued working to build up its QA system. In North Carolina, 213 randomly selected foster care and in-home services records are reviewed annually as part of the state's ongoing case review process. Of these, 113 come from the 10 counties that participated in the 2015 CFSR and 100 come from the other 90 counties.

In October 2017, another milestone was completed with the completion of the OSRI baseline. The case data from this review of 109 cases informs the benchmark that will be used to measure North Carolina's progress on OSRI items and outcomes through the end of the PIP.

In November 2017, based on guidance from the CB, DSS began employing quarterly sampling, which provides more recent data and leads to more interviews with case participants, reducing the need to rely on the oversample cases. Reviews in the first (November 2017 - January 2018) and second measurement quarters (February - April 2018) have also been conducted.

QA and Child Fatality Reviews

This year DSS adapted the OSRI for use when a child in an open In-Home Services or Foster Care case dies. These special reviews are referred to as "7-Day" case reviews because the policy calls for the case review to begin within 7 days of the child's death. This is an assessment of the agency's practice and policy compliance in the year before the child died. It is not an investigation into the child's death.

In a 7-Day Review, DSS representatives conduct a review on-site in the agency. Since it involves the death of a child, families are not interviewed, and interviews of social workers or supervisors occur only if needed. The CB's OMS training site is used to complete the OSRI tool. Data from 7-Day Reviews is kept separate from the state's OSRI data.

DSS shares 7-Day Review results with the county director of social services and are encouraged to discuss the results with the CPR. If further action is needed, a CPR works with the agency to remedy any deficits. Between November 2017 and April 2018, 16 reviews of this type have been completed. Based on this figure, DSS estimates completing 30 of these reviews each year.

Using QA/CQI Results to Update Goals, Objectives, and Interventions

Since July 2017, data from OSRI case reviews, program monitoring, program consults, as well as county-managed data, has been shared among DSS teams and is being used to inform decision making. For example, changes to North Carolina's child welfare policy manual have been made in part based on this data.

In addition, the data and themes found in the items of the OSRI are now compiled into an overarching "Quarterly OSRI Report." The intention of this report is to inform executive level personnel (county agency directors, legislators, state executive leadership) of performance indicators in the OSRI. The report further makes recommendations for improvement strategies towards the achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being.

Anticipated Needs for Training or Technical Assistance

As a part of North Carolina's PIP, the Children's Bureau is offering technical assistance by providing secondary oversight to a sample of 13 completed case reviews every quarter. By providing this secondary oversight, the CB assists the ongoing development of quality assurance in NC's case review process. The oversight is open to both state and county partners whose cases are selected for this review and extends an opportunity for both parties to assess the review process regularly, compare notes, and calibrate themselves to ensure consistency. North Carolina anticipates an ongoing need for this oversight and plans to incorporate this process following the close of North Carolina's PIP. ongoing guidance from CB related to its QA system.

Summary

North Carolina has made great strides in improving its QA system and the infrastructure needed to make data-driven decisions. The OSRI case review process in North Carolina will continue to undergo phases of development. These include refining the sampling process, anticipating staff development needs, and ongoing assurance regarding consistency between OSRI Reviewer interpretations and those of the CB.

Looking ahead to next year, DSS anticipates OSRI case review will be conducted using NC FAST. In preparation for this, all case reviewers and QA staff are being trained on the functionality of the NC FAST system and seeking guidance from participating counties that are piloting NC FAST.

North Carolina plans to continue utilizing the OSRI case review process past the closure of the PIP. There is ongoing development of interpreting and producing quality data into the system for application in the county social work practice. Additionally, the OSRI case review process is being adapted for use in assessing casework practice in open In-Home Services or Permanency Planning cases where a child fatality has occurred. Finally, instituting quality assurance practices in the forms of case review; interpreting and applying data; utilizing a developing case management system; and developing and providing technical assistance to understand what the data demonstrates, will propel North Carolina forward in the areas of safety, permanence, and well-being.

III. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Update

CAPTA State Plan Update

State Legislation

Since the submission of the 2015-2019 CFSP, there have been no substantive changes to any law or regulations that would impact eligibility for the CAPTA State Grant.

CAPTA Plan

Since the submission of the 2018 APSR, there have no significant changes to the previously approved CAPTA plan or how North Carolina utilizes funds to support the 14 program areas enumerated in section 106(a) of CAPTA.

Use of CAPTA State Grant

The activities highlighted in the 2018 APSR remain key strategies. A few new or revised strategies employed to ensure North Carolina addresses each program are outlined below:

CAPTA Program Area	FY 2018 Response
<p>1. The intake, assessment, screening and investigation of reports of abuse and neglect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2017, the CPS Intake Report (DSS-1402) was updated to reflect new policy regarding infants born and identified as “substance affected.” • <i>Child and Youth Sex Trafficking in our Community</i> is a new <i>Spotlight on Practice</i> kit (for supervisors to use with their staff) created to explain what sex trafficking is and how to recognize the signs. • <i>Interviewing Preschool Children: The RADAR Jr. Forensic Interview Model</i> is a new course that presents an adaptation of RADAR, the research-based, best practice model for interviewing children ages 3 to 5 about physical and sexual abuse. • In response to the PIP, 10 regional training events are scheduled to deliver training on the revised policy for CPS Intake and CPS Assessments. • In response to the PIP, <i>Intake in Child Welfare Services</i> and <i>CPS Assessments in Child Welfare Services</i> have been revised to incorporate revised policy to improve the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being. • A new <i>Spotlight on Practice</i> kit (for supervisors to use with their staff) was created to highlight the policy changes in CPS Assessments.
<p>2. (A) Creating and improving the use of multidisciplinary teams and interagency, intra-agency, interstate, and intrastate protocols to enhance investigations; (B) Improving legal preparation and representation, including— i. procedures for appealing and responding to appeals of substantiated reports of child abuse or neglect; and ii. provisions for the appointment of an individual appointed to represent a child in judicial proceedings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant changes since the last submission.
<p>3. Case Management, including on-going case monitoring and delivery of services and treatment provide to children and their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November 2017, a webinar was completed entitled “Talking with Young People in Foster Care about Adoption.” • In response to the PIP, 10 regional training events are scheduled to deliver training on the revised policy for CPS In-Home and Permanency Planning. • In response to the PIP, <i>CPS In-Home in Child Welfare Services</i> and <i>Permanency Planning in Child Welfare</i> have been revised to incorporate revised policy to improve the outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being. • Two new <i>Spotlight on Practice</i> kits (for supervisors to use with their staff) were created to highlight the policy changes in CPS In-Home and Permanency Planning.

<p>4. Enhancing the general child protective system by developing, improving and implementing risk and safety assessment tools and protocols</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty training events are being delivered across the state to train supervisors, program administrators and directors on revised policy for CPS Intake, CPS Assessments, CPS In-Home and Permanency Planning.
<p>5. Developing and updating systems of technology that support the program and track reports of child abuse and neglect from intake through final disposition and allow interstate and intrastate information exchange</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC is implementing NCFAST, which will track all reports of child abuse and neglect and cases throughout the child welfare continuum. • NC is in the process of implementing the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE), a national database system that will allow participating states to submit interstate compact requests electronically.
<p>6. Developing, strengthening and facilitating training including (a) training regarding research-based strategies to promote collaboration with families; (b) training regarding the legal duties of such individuals, and (c) personal safety training for case workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new <i>Spotlight on Practice</i> kit (for supervisors to use with their staff) was created that addresses this program area: the impact quality visitations have on permanency. • <i>Working Safe, Working Smart</i> is now accessible on ncswLearn.org as a self-paced online course for child welfare county professionals. The course has been viewed by 520 participants representing 65 agencies during the period of 7/1/17 to 3/31/18, the highest completion rate of any on-demand course.
<p>7. Improving the skills, qualifications, and availability of individuals providing services to children and families and the supervisors of such individuals, through the child protection system, including improvements in the recruitment and retention of caseworkers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In December 2017, a webinar was completed entitled “Using the Data Profile to Support Your Agency’s Diligent Recruitment Efforts.” • The Supervisor Academy has been implemented with the 10 OSRI counties. Four cohorts of supervisors are attending 3 courses created specifically to assure that supervisors have the knowledge, skills and values necessary to interpret and operationalize child welfare practice, policies and procedures. Courses incorporate revised policy. • DSS, in collaboration with NCACDSS and UNC-CH, continue to explore ways to connect county child welfare agencies with universities to increase child welfare internships and build workforce capacity. UNC has created 3 online courses that will become credit-bearing towards an MSW. UNC is also developing a Hybrid MSW program. This is a collaboration of 5 universities to create hybrid courses with a specialized focus on child welfare.
<p>8. Developing, facilitating the use of, and implementing research-based strategies and training protocols for individuals mandated to report child abuse and neglect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS has provided funding to Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC) to develop, update, and maintain the online, self-guided training <i>Recognizing and Responding to Suspicions of Child Maltreatment</i>, which is available to any NC citizen at no charge. In FY 2017, 9,945 individuals completed this training. The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education requires all child care providers take this course.
<p>9. Developing and facilitating research-based strategies for training individuals mandated to report child abuse or neglect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All training developed and facilitated by the DSS Staff Development team and its university partners continues to be researched-based and grounded in best practice.

<p>10. Developing and delivering information to improve public education relating to the role and responsibilities of the child protection system and the nature and basis for reporting suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect, including the use of differential response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS has provided funding to PCANC to develop, update, and maintain <i>Recognizing and Responding to Suspicions of Child Maltreatment</i>, an online course which explains every adult’s role in reporting. Other available trainings that focus on the prevention end of the child welfare continuum, include: <i>What is Prevention?</i>, <i>Protective Factors</i>, and <i>Adverse Childhood Effects</i>. • DSS posted the Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina <i>Recognizing and Responding to Suspicions of Child Maltreatment</i> course on FosteringNC.org for greater visibility and included it in the widely promoted new short course <i>Child Welfare Services: Overview, Key Terms, and Resources</i>.
<p>11. Developing and enhancing the capacity of community-based programs to integrate shared leadership strategies between parents and professionals to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect at the neighborhood level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS family support, respite, and community response program grantees are required to demonstrate how they will include opportunities for parents and other caregivers to contribute to program planning, governance, and administration. In 2017, programs engaged parent leadership through serving on advisory boards, parent support groups, mentoring new participants, training as program facilitators, and volunteering. • DSS monitors parent engagement through quarterly reports, monitoring phone calls, monitoring site visits and a peer review during the grant cycle. • DSS contracts with PCANC to facilitate an Prevention Network Leadership Team that includes parents and grandparents, which provides guidance on resources. Members receive training and technical assistance to support their role. • NC is developing and piloting three county level child welfare family engagement committees in Durham, Forsyth, and Richmond County departments of social services. • NC has developed a state level family advisory council that promotes the involvement of families at case practice, policy, and systems levels. Participants receive consistent training, TA, and support to successfully provide meaningful input. • Parent Partners serve as voting members of the Community Child Protection Team Advisory Council. • Parent Partners participated in the APSR Joint Planning meeting with the CB.
<p>12. Supporting and enhancing interagency collaboration between the child protection system and the juvenile justice system for improved delivery of services and treatment, including methods for continuity of treatment plan and services as children transition between systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS participates on the Juvenile Justice/Behavioral Health subcommittee sponsored by DMH/DD/SAS in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety. This group exists to improve the delivery of services for the juvenile justice population. Special attention is paid to children/youth who touch both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.
<p>13. Supporting and enhancing interagency collaboration among public health agencies, agencies in the child protective service system, and agencies carrying out</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS is partnering with the NC DPH and Duke Endowment to expand Triple P implementation from 46 counties to

<p>private community-based programs— A. to provide child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment services (including linkages with education systems) and the use of differential response; and B. to address the health needs, including mental health needs, of children identified as victims of child abuse or neglect, including supporting 21 prompt, comprehensive health and developmental evaluations for children who are the subject of substantiated child maltreatment reports</p>	<p>all 100 counties through newly developed regions, which will be housed in local public health departments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS is also engaged in building workforce development for practitioners through PCANC. • DSS is funding strategic planning and evaluation to inform the governance, resource allocation, and delivery support systems needed to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of Triple P in communities in order to impact population level child welfare outcomes.
<p>14. Developing and implementing procedures for collaboration among child protective services, domestic violence services, and other agencies in— investigations, interventions, and the delivery of services and treatment provided to children and families, including the use of differential response, where appropriate; and the provision of services that assist children exposed to domestic violence, and that also support the caregiving role of their non-abusing parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSS is partnering with the NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence to conduct trauma screening for children in domestic violence shelters and education of non-abusing parents on the impact of trauma. • DSS is collaborating with the North Carolina Child Treatment Program to provide evidence-based treatments, the majority of which have a strong caretaker component.

Citizen Review Panels

North Carolina complies with the requirement to maintain citizen review panels using Community Child Protection Teams (CCPT). North Carolina General Statute § 7B-1406 established a CCPT in each of North Carolina’s 100 counties. In addition, a state CCPT Advisory Board regularly meets to examine policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies to evaluate the extent to which state and county child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. For a copy of the annual report from the citizen review panels, see Appendix D, “2017 CCPT Final Report.” This annual report was provided to DSS on June 1, 2018; DSS will submit its written response to the state and local CCPTs no later than 6 months from that date, as outlined in Section 106(c)(6) of CAPTA.

DSS is pleased to provide an update on how it incorporated the 2017 recommendations from the CCPT Advisory Council. In 2017, there were three key recommendations. The table below outlines those recommendations and how DSS has incorporated them to make measurable progress to improve the child protection system.

2017 Recommendations	Update to System Improvements
<p>1. Strengthen the capacity of local CCPTs to work with social services in improving child welfare services.</p>	<p>DSS has hired a new CCPT consultant to help develop a new reference guide and to provide technical support to all 100 counties in NC. This TA may involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update CCPT Reference Guide • In-person and online training and technical assistance • Help identify resources, such as medical evaluations, domestic violence services, transportation • Educate communities and families about the Protective Factors • Support teams in completing annual survey <p>Local CCPTs have expressed interest in learning more about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CCPT responsibilities and processes ○ Case identification and review regarding child maltreatment fatalities and near fatalities ○ Child welfare policies and procedures ○ Interagency collaboration ○ Diversity on teams ○ Inclusion of family and youth partners on teams
<p>2. Establish the NC CCPT Advisory Board as the state body responsible for synthesizing local CCPT experiences and recommendations; identifying areas for further study and planning; and serving as an asset to DSS in improving child welfare services.</p>	<p>DSS sponsored a retreat of the Advisory Board, DSS staff, and county departments of social services staff members to support collaborative working relationships, engage in strategic planning, and encourage linkages between the NC Child Welfare Family Advisory Council and the NC CCPT Advisory Board. The retreat was facilitated by Citizen Review Panel expert, Dr. Blake Jones. During this retreat, the Advisory Board developed vision, mission, and values statements. The following four working subcommittees were established:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family Integration 2. CAPTA law vs. CCPT vs. Child Welfare Reform 3. Support for Local CCPTs 4. Board Structure <p>The NC CCPT Advisory Board is responsible for developing and disseminating the annual survey for local CCPTs to assess team functioning and activities, as well as, to solicit recommendations for improvements. Based on the completed responses of 81 out of 100 CCPTs (including first time participation from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), the Board wrote a report that analyzed results and synthesized 2017 survey recommendations to DSS. DSS will compose a written response to this report by December 2018.</p>

2017 Recommendations	Update to System Improvements
<p>3. Engage in planning on the long-term structure and processes for Citizen Review Panels in the state.</p>	<p>CCPT Advisory Board is developing bylaws to formalize its structure and role to ensure stronger engagement and effectiveness that helps bridge a gap between the state and the local communities. The membership of the state board will reflect the composition of the local CCPT membership. It will also integrate four family and youth partners, who have had direct experience with the child welfare system as biological parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, kinship care providers, and/or youth recipients of foster care services, as voting members.</p> <p>DSS contracted with North Carolina State University Center for Family and Community Engagement to conduct research, interviews, focus groups, and site visits on other states' Citizen Review Panel models to determine potential best practices for North Carolina. In particular, the CRP models in Alaska and Ohio were reviewed.</p>

Updates on Efforts Related to Human Trafficking

North Carolina is continuing to implement the requirements of P.L. 114-22 (Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act) and P.L. 113-183 (Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act) as they pertain to operating a statewide program relating to child abuse and neglect that includes (1) provisions and procedures regarding identifying and assessing all reports involving known or suspected child sex trafficking victims and (2) provisions and procedures for training CPS workers about identifying, assessing, and providing comprehensive services to children who are sex trafficking victims, including efforts to coordinate with state law enforcement, juvenile justice, and social services agencies such as runaway and homeless youth shelters. North Carolina's efforts to address trafficking among the child welfare population, from the submission of the last APSR to present, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Participated in a study required of NCDHHS by State Session Law 2017-151 to examine the feasibility of training health care providers, emergency medical providers, and relevant first responders in human trafficking identification and response, and preventative tools and methods. Other state agencies participating in this study included the DMH/DD/SAS, and the Division of Health Service Regulation, Office of Emergency Medical Services. The results of this study were reported to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Human Trafficking Commission, and the Governor in February 2018.
- Strengthened child welfare policies on the intake and screening of child protective services reports to help workers more accurately identify suspected cases of human trafficking during the CPS reporting process. These policy updates are due to be published soon and are discussed in the "Planned activities for 2018-19" below. In addition, these policy changes correspond with updates to NC FAST to ensure the process for capturing an intake report in the system matches the form used by counties not yet using NC FAST for child welfare;

- Continued partnership with and participation in Project NO REST activities. An update about Project NO REST activities can be found in the *Project NO REST* section below.

Planned activities for SFY 2018-2019 include, but are not limited to:

- Publish updated child welfare intake policies to more accurately identify suspected cases of human trafficking during the CPS reporting process;
- Publish updated child welfare policies and practice guidance including assessing and providing services to children and youth who have been trafficked;
- Develop an online, high-level overview course for child welfare staff defining human trafficking and explaining how to identify children and youth who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked;
- Develop two additional intensive online courses for child welfare staff, in partnership with Project NO REST, to help staff identify, assess, and provide comprehensive services for children who are victims of human trafficking;
- Continue participation in the Southeast Region Human Trafficking Task Force Leaders Group. This group is led by the ACF Atlanta Regional Office and includes representation from all states in ACF Region 4 from child welfare agencies, nonprofits, court personnel, and other stakeholders. This group meets regularly to coordinate and share knowledge on issues related to human trafficking including data collection and evaluation, partnering with state courts, child welfare system response to the trafficking of children, and connecting with the Office on Trafficking in Persons.
- Continue partnership with and participation in Project NO REST activities;
- Participation in the Project NO REST conference scheduled for Fall 2018.

DSS recognizes that human trafficking is a complex problem that requires a multi-disciplinary response at the local, state, and national level. To achieve a robust, statewide, multi-disciplinary response to and prevention of the trafficking of children, DSS needs to conduct strategic, long-term, and outcome-focused planning. These efforts must include the connection of prevention service array network with statewide efforts to raise awareness and increase identification of children and youth who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked.

As discussed in North Carolina's 2019 CBCAP application (see Appendix A), leveraging the foundational work of Project NO REST and community-based agencies working in child maltreatment prevention, DSS identifies a need for a long-term, outcome-focused plan for the prevention of and response to the trafficking of children that will:

- Increase awareness of human trafficking among community-based agencies engaged in child maltreatment prevention work and strengthen their ability to identify children and youth who are being trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked;
- Increase these agencies' understanding of child welfare policies and procedures related to intake, screening, and assessment of child abuse, neglect, and dependency reports – including reports of human trafficking;

- Strengthen identification and dissemination of cross-training opportunities for child welfare, community-based child maltreatment prevention, and law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders that are integral to the prevention of and response to the abuse, neglect, and trafficking of children;
- Develop and implement a plan for the collection, analysis, and effective use of data regarding human trafficking; and,
- Develop an implementation guide, resources, and tools communities can use to develop local plans to prevent and respond to child trafficking and child maltreatment.

Project NO REST

DSS is partnering with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) to identify and address necessary system improvements for protection and service provision to children and youth who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked. UNC's Project NO REST (North Carolina Organizing and Responding to the Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children) is a collaborative effort funded by ACF to increase awareness of human trafficking affecting children and youth involved in the child welfare system in North Carolina. Other key partners on the project include county social services agencies, child advocacy centers, attorneys, and experts from the fields of education, mental health, sexual assault, law enforcement, and prevention agencies. North Carolina-based runaway and homeless youth federal grantees and various nonprofit anti-human trafficking agencies which focus on victim services and advocacy are also involved. The goal of Project NO REST is to build awareness of human trafficking affecting children and youth involved in the child welfare system in North Carolina, reduce the number trafficked, and improve outcomes for those who are trafficked.

During SFY 2017-2018, major activities and accomplishments include but were not limited to:

- **Pilot Sites:** The pilot sites began operation in calendar year 2017. Five communities representing 17 counties and the EBCI were selected to serve as pilot for implementing anti-human trafficking efforts through community collaborations.
 - Between October and December 2017, pilot sites reported providing services to 93 victims and survivors of human trafficking. Of those, 41 were new.
 - Between January and March 2018, the pilot sites provided services to 142 survivors, including 123 individuals served for the first time.
- **Public Awareness Campaign:** The outreach campaign developed by Capital Broadcasting Company (CBC) through a subcontract with UNC continues. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, North Carolina moved from 10th in the nation for number of reported human trafficking cases in 2016 to 8th in the nation in 2017.
 - Calls to the hotline have increased overall by 157%
 - Calls to the hotline from survivors have increased 239%
 - Calls to the hotline from the community have increased 180%

- Presentations and Dissemination: Many presentations were made during SFY 2017-2018, including but not limited to the following:
 - October 2017 – Project NO REST team members made a presentation to the NC School Social Workers Association Annual Meeting, which focused on how students may be lured into human trafficking and next steps when schools suspect students may be involved in trafficking.
 - November 2017 – Project NO REST team members participated in the first of three symposia presented by the NC Human Trafficking Commission. The presentations ranged from developing community-based response to human trafficking to ethically telling the stories of survivors to issues related to labor trafficking.
 - January 2018 – Project NO REST Principal Investigator and a team member who is faculty at the UNC School of Government met with Wake County manager, two county commissioners, and the Wake County Sheriff on human trafficking in Wake County. Project team members offered suggestions about working with adjoining counties to develop a response to trafficking.
- Training: February 7–8, 2018, Project NO REST sponsored a training conducted by the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC). The training was open to the pilot sites and other individuals from around the country. Nearly 120 individuals attended. The course, *Developing a Community Response to High Risk Victims of Child Sex Trafficking*, was led by two detectives from the Dallas, Texas police department.
- Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice: Project NO REST team members met with the NC Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice about implementing a screening tool adapted for use by Project NO REST pilot sites. The tool was initially developed by Florida juvenile justice and child welfare agencies. Because of these discussions, Project NO REST developed and delivered a training curriculum to pilot sites and juvenile justice employees on the use of the screening tool. The screening tool will likely be implemented by juvenile justice staff at youth development centers (YDCs) in 2018.

During SFY 2018-2019, the Project anticipates:

- Conducting focus groups and interviews in pilot sites to assess their progress on implementing their strategic plans to create a coordinated response to trafficking, any unanticipated challenges, and how to overcome them;
- Continued provision of trafficking training and technical assistance to pilot sites;
- Continued monitoring of pilot sites;
- Contact and develop relationships with agencies who have expressed interest in using the Project NO REST Human Trafficking Screening Tool, and conduct secondary analysis of their screening data pending IRB approval;
- Continuing an analysis of existing data sources, development of additional data sources to address gaps, and report of findings to stakeholders and others.

- Disseminating ongoing project information, including project milestones, to the Children’s Bureau, as well as project stakeholders and others.

DSS will continue partnering with UNC-CH to identify and address necessary system improvements for protection and service provision to children and youth, including child welfare-involved children and youth, who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked.

Update on Services to Substance-Exposed Newborns

Since the submission of the 2018 APSR addendum, there have been no significant changes to North Carolina’s plan to support and address the needs of infants born and identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (see section 106(b)(2)(B)(ii) - (iii) of CAPTA, as amended by the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act [CARA])

Supports for POSC Implementation

NCDHHS formed, in collaboration with external partners, the North Carolina Plan of Safe Care Interagency Collaborative (POSCIC) with the mission of creating a state-specific policy agenda and action plan to address and implement the provisions of CAPTA amended by CARA. Additionally, POSCIC is working to strengthen collaboration across systems to address the complex needs of infants affected by substance use and their families. POSCIC is comprised of representatives from the DSS, DPH, DMH/DD/SAS, UNC-CH School of Social Work, NC Hospital Association, NC Commission on Indian Affairs, DMA/Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC), the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS), and the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare.

Throughout the implementation of North Carolina’s response to the CAPTA amendments, the members of POSCIC have been working collaboratively to provide technical assistance and support to stakeholders impacted by the legislation. This coordination has been key in identifying and addressing issues throughout implementation. POSCIC delivers monthly statewide conference calls led by DPH to inform health care providers of the policy, answer questions regarding the delivery of services, and to receive feedback regarding implementation. Additionally, POSCIC meets monthly to review the data collected by DSS and CC4C and to provide stakeholders an opportunity to share concerns and successes. Because of its coordinated consultation with stakeholders, POSCIC has made the following efforts to provide technical assistance and outreach to support implementation:

- Multiple presentations throughout the state for stakeholders within the medical, substance use disorder treatment field and child welfare communities
- Targeted consultations with individual agencies
- Publication of FAQ’s for the prenatal healthcare providers and patients
- Development of a POSCIC website
- Development of a POSCIC email

Monitoring POSC

DSS has developed a survey system to elicit and collect the amended annual data report requirements from county child welfare agencies. This is conducted monthly; county child welfare agencies are also

prompted to share any qualitative data or anecdotal information regarding their experiences with implementation. Eventually, NC FAST will collect this data automatically.

POSCIC meets monthly to review the data collected on the population served, to determine gaps and needs, and to develop a plan of intervention and support as needed. This data is also compared to the number of Plans of Safe Care received by CC4C and the percentage of families that accept services. Monthly POSCIC meetings are also an opportunity for data discrepancies to be identified and addressed and for stakeholder voices to be heard regarding the delivery of services to this population.

Technical Assistance Needs Related to Substance-Affected Newborns

North Carolina was one of 10 states selected to participate in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 2017 Policy Academy, "Improving Outcomes for Pregnant and Postpartum Women with Opioid Use Disorders and their Infants, Families and Caregivers." North Carolina used this opportunity to form the collaborative that eventually developed the coordinated policy response to CAPTA provisions.

Upon the successful implementation of the policy, North Carolina was invited to apply for SAMHSA's "In-Depth Technical Assistance (IDTA) Continuation for Policy Academy States: Responses for Pregnant and Parenting Women, Their Infants with Prenatal Substance Exposure and Their Families." Through the work with its IDTA Change Leader, North Carolina has identified the following goals to better support stakeholders throughout the state in the implementation of these provisions:

- Create coordinated and consistent communication with key staff at the delivering hospitals;
- Support the hospitals in effective and consistent implementation of the policy;
- Support regional partnerships focused on implementation of the policy to include key stakeholders so they may work towards best outcomes for women and families.

North Carolina's CAPTA Administrator

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IV. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

Agency Administering CFCIP

DSS continues to administer the CFCIP and the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV). The DSS program under which these are administered is called NC LINKS.

DSS provides oversight and monitoring to the 100 county departments of social services that provide CFCIP/LINKS direct services and services to youth across the state. The process for determining eligibility for benefits and services as described in North Carolina's CFSP is unchanged.

Accomplishments/Updates

Transportation Really Is Possible (TRIP) – NC's Driver's License Pilot Project

A significant change since the last APSR submission has been the implementation of a Driver's License Pilot Project. This pilot program, "Transportation Really Is Possible" (TRIP), was established by the Family and Child Protection and Accountability Act (HB 630 / S.L. 2017-41) to help youth in substitute care obtain driver's licenses and learner's permits. This law appropriated \$75,000 in each state fiscal year of the two-year pilot. Since the last APSR submission North Carolina has:

- Developed TRIP program criteria, including eligibility of young people and costs eligible for reimbursement under the program;
- Developed methods and materials to promote the project and inform eligible youth and caregivers, such as:
 - Program flyers to be distributed to county departments of social services agencies and other stakeholders; and,
 - Regular outreach to county departments of social services agencies, the NC Guardian ad Litem program, Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo), and other stakeholders.
- Begun implementation of the program for the first of two years, including submission of a required report to the NC General Assembly; and,
- Developed mechanisms to track access to the program, including number of youth who have sought the support of the program, the number of youth who successfully obtain their driver's license or learner's permit through the program, and the number of youth who receive support through the program for vehicle insurance and other driving-related expenses.

TRIP activities planned for the upcoming year (SFY 2018-2019) include:

- Desk Monitoring: DSS will monitor, monthly, reimbursement requests from county agencies for the expenditure of funds related to the support of youth and young adults in foster care toward driving-related expenses eligible under the TRIP program. This monitoring will ensure funds are being used appropriately.
- Communication: DSS will communicate program information to child welfare workers and stakeholders in the following ways:
 - DSS will include TRIP program and funding information on monthly web conferences conducted for county LINKS staff and other partner agencies.
 - DSS will include TRIP program and funding information on monthly web conferences conducted for directors of county child welfare agencies.
 - DSS will provide TRIP program and funding information monthly to the following stakeholders:

- SaySo
 - NC Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program
 - County Child Welfare Program Managers and Budget Officers
 - NC Department of Public Instruction and Local Education Agencies
- Outreach and Collaboration: DSS will identify methods to reach out and collaborate with young people and foster parents to reduce financial and non-financial barriers to youth obtaining driver's licenses, learner's permits, and insurance.

Foster Care 18 to 21 Updates

North Carolina Session Law 2015-2014 required DSS to develop and plan to extend foster care services to youth aging out of foster care at age 18. "Foster Care 18 to 21" was implemented on January 1, 2017, and allows youth the option to continue receiving services, including monthly foster care maintenance payments to support placement, until they reach age 21. Foster Care 18 to 21 reimburses for room and board at the same rate as the foster care room and board rates in accordance with NC General Statute. The federal law guiding this program is the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351); which provides states the option to continue providing Title IV-E reimbursable foster care assistance payments to youth up to age 21.

Contractual Agreement for Residential Services (CARS)

The DSS and county child welfare agencies continue to honor CARS executed prior to January 1, 2017, until those agreements are terminated (i.e., either the young adult reaches age 21 or requests termination of CARS). Young adults requesting services on and after January 1, 2017, will enter the Foster Care 18 to 21 program through a Voluntary Placement Agreement. Currently, there are 21 young adults with a CARS.

Implementation of Foster Care 18 to 21

Foster Care 18 to 21 has been successfully implemented across the state. This program has significantly increased the number of youth who have chosen to remain in foster care and engage in LINKS services. In the first year of implementation, there were 542 young adults actively participating in the program. As of April 30, 2018, there were 607 young adults with a VPA participating in Foster Care 18 to 21. Of those, 348 are enrolled in secondary education, 82 are enrolled in post-secondary or vocational education, 131 are employed at least 80 hours a month, 32 are participating in a training program or activity designed to remove barriers to employment, and 14 have a medical disability that prevents them from meeting the educational and employment criteria.

In February 2018, DSS partnered with Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo) to develop a brochure to share with young adults aging out of foster care, as well as those who are considering the program. The brochure debuted at SaySo Saturday in March 2018 and has been distributed to county child welfare agencies to use in promoting the program.

DSS provides ongoing technical assistance to county child welfare agencies, private child-placing agencies, and other stakeholders regarding policy and legislative efforts. This is done through

one-on-one consultations via phone, as well as through email and in-person presentations. In January 2018, DSS held an informational session about Foster Care 18 to 21 in Onslow County. County child welfare agency staff and private child-placing agency staff participated in the event. In April 2018, DSS staff presented on Foster Care 18 to 21 as well as other services offered to youth in foster care at the NC Employment and Training Association 2018 Conference.

Foster Care 18 to 21 activities planned for the upcoming year (SFY 2018-2019) include:

- A focus group of county child welfare staff, private child-placing agency staff, young adults, and family partners to review implementation, discuss lessons learned, identify barriers, and develop strategies to improve and modify the program, as needed;
- Speakers from DSS staff will continue to share information about the program at various forums and events across the state, including the 2018 NC WORKS Partnership Conference;
- DSS staff will partner with the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (NC DAAS) to explore Foster Care 18 to 21 as an alternative to adult guardianship, and how to blend both foster care and adult services for young adults who have disabilities and need additional support.

Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) Updates

North Carolina Session Law 2015-241 allows DSS to provide financial support to children deemed to be (1) in a permanent family setting, (2) eligible for legal guardianship, and (3) otherwise unlikely to obtain permanence. The Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) reimburses for room and board at the same rate as the foster care room and board rates established by NC General Statute. The federal legislation which forms the legal basis for GAP is the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351). This law provided that, at the option of states, kinship guardianship assistance payments may be provided on behalf of children to relatives who have assumed legal guardianship of children.

Implementation of GAP

GAP was implemented across the state on January 1, 2017. In the first year of implementation, only 19 youth exited foster care to guardianship with the guardian receiving assistance through GAP. As of May 30, 2018, there are 23 youth receiving guardianship assistance, including extended guardianship assistance. Although this number has more than doubled in the last five months, it is still very low compared to the number of youth ages 14-17 in foster care (as of May 30, 2018, there are 2,187 youth ages 14-17 in foster care in North Carolina).

Guardianship Assistance Program activities planned for the upcoming year:

Due to low participation in GAP, DSS is partnering with University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work, Children's Home Society of North Carolina, and Methodist Home for Children to begin identifying barriers that relatives, fictive kin, and youth face in achieving permanence through guardianship, as well as, exploring strategies to increase the number of youth and families receiving guardianship assistance. Four county child welfare agencies are participating in this initiative--Catawba, Craven, Forsyth, and Orange. The scope of work includes:

- Exploring the use of a foster parent training program tailored specifically for relatives who are caring for their kin. Overall, less than 10% of relative caretakers become licensed in North

Carolina.

- Identifying barriers relatives face when becoming licensed, such as the need for child care, transportation, case management and financial assistance, and develop strategies to eliminate them;
- Developing educational materials about GAP for relatives, foster parents, youth, child welfare staff, guardians ad litem, and community partners;
- Using data to inform the work around this program, and provide technical assistance to counties;
- Education and supporting counties through their diligent recruitment and retention efforts regarding strategies and goals as it relates to GAP and licensing relatives, as well as educating foster families about GAP;
- Piloting a training program across the state; “Caring for Our Own,” an approved training curriculum through DSS, will be offered to relative caregivers in 3 pilot counties. Outcomes of the training will then be used to inform statewide implementation of the new training process for relatives and fictive kin.

Supporting Transitioning Youth Updates

The NCGA 2015 Appropriations (Session Law 2015-241) included funds for a “Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund” to support a demonstration project with services by Youth Villages to:

- Improve outcomes for youth ages 17-21 years who transition from foster care through implementation to 16 outcome-based Transitional Living Services;
- Identify cost-savings in social services and juvenile and adult correction services associated with the provision of Transitional Living Services to youth aging out of foster care; and,
- Take necessary steps to establish an evidence-based transitional living program available to all youth aging out of foster care. As part of this, the Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund supports the following strategies:
 - *Transitional Living Services.* These services are to be provided through a program using Youth Villages’ outcome-based transitional living model, “YVLifeSet.” Outcomes on more than 7,000 participants have been tracked since the program’s inception. The program has been evaluated through an independent randomized controlled trial. Results indicate that, in comparison to the control population, this model had positive impacts on a variety of areas including housing stability, earnings, economic hardship, mental health, and intimate partner violence.
 - *Public-Private Partnership.* This is a commitment by private-sector funding partners to match 100% of the funds appropriated to the Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund for the 2015-17 fiscal biennium for the purposes of providing YVLifeSet transitional living services using to youth aging out of foster care.
 - *Impact Measurement and Evaluation.* This is funded through private partners to provide independent measurement and evaluation of the impact the YVLifeSet Model has on the

youth served, the foster care system, and other programs and services provided by NC which are used by former foster care youth.

- *Advancement of Evidence-Based Process.* This is the implementation and ongoing evaluation of YVLifeSet for the purposes of establishing the first evidence-based transitional living program in the nation. To establish the evidence-based program, additional randomized controlled trials may be conducted to advance the model.

In 2017, funding for the Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund was renewed (NCGA Appropriations, Session Law 2017-57), an additional \$500,000 was appropriated in each year of the fiscal biennium, and the private sector match percentage was reduced to 50%.

Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund Data, Data July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

Following are data on youth served through YVLifeSet in North Carolina from July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017, compared to all other states where Youth Villages provides YVLifeSet.

Total Youth Served, FY 2017	
Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
2,717	427

Gender of Youth Served, FY 2017		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
Male	41%	4%
Female	59%	56%

Age of Youth Served, 2017		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
17 years old or younger	53%	54%
18 years old	28%	27%
19 years old	10%	11%
20 years old	5%	6%
21 years old or older	4%	2%

Race of Youth Served, FY 2017		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
African American	34%	42%
Caucasian	49%	43%
Hispanic	5%	5%
Other	12%	10%

Percent in school, graduated, GED, or working at Discharge or End of Period, FY 2017*	
Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
88%	90%

**represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2017*

Percent with “no police contact” at time of Discharge or End of Period, FY 2017*	
Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
88%	92%

**represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2017*

Time to Discharge, FY 2017		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina DSS
At least 60 days	1,628	238
Less than 60 days	212	15
Total Discharged	1,840	253

**represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2017*

Percent Discharged Successfully, FY 2017		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
Successful Discharge – living independently or with family at time of discharge	84%	84%

**only includes youth served at last 60 days, represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2017*

Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund Data, July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018

Following are data on youth served through YVLifeSet for North Carolina from July 1, 2017– April 30, 2018 compared to all other states where Youth Villages, Inc. provides YVLifeSet.

Total Youth Served with YVLifeSet • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018	
Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
2,530	381

Gender of Youth Served with YVLifeSet • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018		
Gender	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
Male	39.3%	41.7%
Female	59.7%	57.8%
Transgender (presents as male)	0.7%	0.5%
Transgender (presents as female)	0.3%	0.0%

Age of Youth Served with YVLifeSet • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018		
Age Group	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
17 years old or younger	51.9%	44.3%
18 years old	26.1%	28.2%
19 years old	11.5%	14.2%
20 years old	6.5%	9.6%
21 years old or older	4.0%	3.7%

Race of Youth Served with YVLifeSet • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018		
Race	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
African American	36.3%	40.0%
Caucasian	49.7%	47.0%
Hispanic	6.2%	4.3%
Other	7.8%	8.7%

Percent in school, graduated, GED, or working at Discharge or End of Period • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018	
Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
86.7%	86.5%

**represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2018*

Percent with “no police contact” at time of Discharge or End of Period • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018	
Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
88.1%	92.6%

**represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2018*

Time to Discharge • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina DSS
At least 60 days	1,056	216
Less than 60 days	113	13
Total Discharged	1,169	229

**represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2018*

Percent Discharged Successfully • July 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018		
	Youth Villages (All Other States)	North Carolina
Successful Discharge – living independently or with family at time of discharge	88.5%	90.0%

**only includes youth served at last 60 days, represents discharge information for youth served during FY 2018*

As part of broader efforts to build the evidence base of effective programs, policies, and practices in child welfare, a team of researchers at the Urban Institute, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and Child Trends, has been contracted by ACF to:

- Identify child welfare interventions that have demonstrated some evidence of effectiveness through summative evaluation, and
- Conduct rigorous impact evaluations to raise the level of evidence.

In partnership with ACF, the project team identified the YVLifeSet program in North Carolina as one of several interventions to consider for rigorous evaluation. In SFY 2017-2018 Youth Villages approached DSS about the opportunity to participate in a randomized control trial (RCT) of the YVLifeSet program in North Carolina. Considerations for the State’s participation in an RCT include, but are not limited to, an understanding of whether the potential sample size of North Carolina youth eligible for or receiving YVLifeSet services is large enough, and whether young people under age 18 could be included in the study and, if so, state laws governing consent of a minor to participate in such a study.

In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will explore these questions and considerations with Youth Villages, Chapin Hall, the Urban Institute, and Child Trends. If an RCT of the NC YVLifeSet program is conducted, DSS, Youth Villages, and the study team will develop and implement any necessary data-sharing agreements and other measures to identify and recruit a study population and to measure study outcomes for treatment and control group youths.

Supporting and Affirming LGBTQ+ Children and Youth in Foster Care Updates

Another significant update since the last APSR submission is DSS's emerging work to develop and enhance child welfare policies, protocols, and guidance across the continuum of child welfare services to support and affirm LGBTQ+ children and youth in foster care. These efforts include enhancements to child welfare policy to provide protocol and guidance on the following:

- Non-Discrimination;
- Confidentiality;
- Freedom of Expression;
- Medical and Mental Healthcare;
- School and Community;
- Training of Staff in Public Child Welfare Agencies, Private Child-Placing Agencies, and Contractors of Public Child Welfare Agencies;
- Dissemination of Policy to Youth;
- Procedures for Youth to Report Policy Violations; and,
- Respectful Behavior and Language.

DSS's partners in this effort include stakeholders, such as staff in areas of child welfare policy, staff development, and program monitoring, county departments of social services staff, as well as Equality NC, and SaySo. Equality NC is an organization dedicated to securing equal rights and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer North Carolinians. SaySo, as noted in section 4. *Update on Service Description, C. CFCIP and ETV, A. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (NC LINKS)*, is an organization whose mission is to work to improve the substitute care system. These stakeholders are key to ensuring that the final policies and protocols are both practical in their capacity to be implemented, and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth involved in the child welfare system.

In addition, the Division is working to enhance key functional areas of child welfare policy, such as Intake, In-Home Services, Permanency Planning, and Foster Home Licensing to provide thorough protocols and guidance to support and protect not only LGBTQ-identified youth in foster care, but LGBTQ-identified families and foster parents that interact with the child welfare system.

The Division anticipates release of these policies in October 2018.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

Since the last APSR submission, DSS has conducted the following activities to improve NYTD data collection and engagement of key NYTD stakeholders:

- Provided regular updates regarding NYTD data collection on monthly calls with county foster care and LINKS staff and community stakeholders. Updates have addressed various data points, including:
 - Number of survey-eligible youth per county and statewide

- Number of youth who have completed the survey per county and statewide
 - Percentage of eligible youth who have completed the survey per county and statewide
- Regularly disseminated updates on NYTD data collection to counties through the LINKS email listserv
- Disseminated the article “NYTD and the Success of Transitioning Youth” to North Carolina county child welfare agencies as part of the May 2018 issue of *Children’s Services Practice Notes* (www.practicenotes.org)
- Issued a letter to county directors of social services on January 12, 2018, regarding NYTD data collection that included information about:
 - Required NYTD data collection and reporting activities;
 - Timelines for NYTD data collection and submission; and,
 - Implementation of new methods to disseminate lists of survey-eligible youth and young adults to counties. This new methodology involves the upload of county lists to NC FAST Help (https://NC_FASThelp.nc.gov). This method allows counties to quickly access information they need to begin outreach efforts to survey-eligible youth and young adults.

North Carolina’s NYTD review has not yet been scheduled.

Planned NYTD-related activities for 2019 include:

- Review other states’ processes for the collection of NYTD data and implement relevant strategies in North Carolina;
- Work with NC FAST to identify and develop enhancements for improved NYTD data collection;
- Develop and disseminate to county child welfare agencies written materials detailing the NYTD data collection and review processes, including informational materials targeted toward youth in foster care;
- Work with county child welfare agencies, SaySo, and other stakeholders that work with young people in foster care to develop and implement mechanisms to engage young people in NYTD data collection and analysis;
- Schedule NYTD review with Federal partners;
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to county child welfare agencies to ensure ongoing and accurate NYTD survey and served population data collection and reporting; and,
- Begin preparing for the NYTD review (schedule of preparation activities, including engagement of young people in review preparation and other review processes, will depend on the agreed-upon NYTD review dates/schedule).

Collaboration with Youth and Other Programs

Training to Support the 2015-2019 CFSP

During SFY 2017-2018 DSS has contracted with Independent Living Resources, Inc. (ILR) to deliver one three-day “Helping Youth Reach Self-Sufficiency” training for foster parents. This training was held October 20-22, 2017, and 36 foster parents attended. Foster parents who attend this training gain valuable knowledge about the LINKS program and skills to facilitate activities for local foster parent groups in helping youth reach self-sufficiency.

In addition, DSS has worked in partnership with the Center for Family and Community Engagement at NC State University, ILR, and the Family and Children’s Resource Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to continue to grow training and resources available to foster parents online through www.fosteringnc.org. Please see section V.4 (Training Plan) of this report for additional details.

Strong Able Youth Speaking Out (SaySo)

In prior APSR submissions, DSS has reported on the contract with ILR, Inc. and SaySo, a youth-led advocacy organization, to engage key stakeholders. ILR, which employs foster care alumni, and SaySo provide advocacy for foster youth and incorporate the youth voice from around the state by engaging youth at county child welfare agencies, community events, statewide meetings, and conferences.

In addition to DSS’s contracted work with ILR and SaySo, SaySo alumni have participated in the following meetings, events, and activities:

July 2017 – October 2017

- Guardian ad Litem Conference
- Adoption Conference
- Daniel Memorial - National Independent Living Conference
- Child Welfare Family Advisory Model Meetings
- Foster Parent Diligent Recruitment Meetings
- Fostering Perspectives Advisory Board Meetings
- North American Council of Adoptable Children Conference
- Community Child Protection Team Meetings
- Fostering Health NC – Youth in Transition Sub-Committee Meetings
- Youth and Emerging Young Adults Community of Practice Sub-Committee Meetings

October 2017 – January 2018

- Foster Youth in Action Conference
- Guardian ad Litem Conference
- Social Services Institute
- Spoke at Campbell Law School
- “Helping Youth Reach Self-Sufficiency” (co-led this training for foster parents)
- Spoke at UNC School of Social Work
- Participated in UNC Mock Court Day
- Community Child Protection Team Meetings
- Fostering Health NC – Youth in Transition Sub-Committee Meetings
- Youth and Emerging Young Adults Community of Practice Sub-Committee Meetings

January 2018 – April 2018

- NC Child – Medicaid Campaign
- Survivor Group Facilitators
- Community Child Protection Team Meetings
- Fostering Health NC – Youth in Transition Sub-Committee Meetings

- Youth and Emerging Young Adults Community of Practice Sub-Committee Meetings

Johnson C. Smith University

Johnson C. Smith University's "Phasing Up to New Possibilities" program is designed to support youth aging out of foster care and improve outcomes for this population. Johnson C. Smith University has developed a partnership with Elon Homes and Schools for Children's Foster Care Village. The Foster Care Village is a transitional residential foster care program for young men participating in the Foster Care 18 to 21 program. Residents of the Foster Care Village can attend college courses, vocational classes, and apprenticeship opportunities through Johnson C. Smith University. They also receive continued support, encouragement, guidance, financial assistance, and security through the Phasing Up program. DSS continues to support this partnership and to encourage other agencies around the state to develop a similar model.

DSS, in partnership with Johnson C. Smith University, sponsored an event in September 2017 entitled "Supporting Foster Youth Pursuing Post-Secondary Educational Opportunities," with the goal of developing a stronger collaboration between state and local agencies, including vocational rehabilitation and workforce development, as well as private child-placing agencies, residential facilities, and education communities to meet the complex needs of foster youth. The event hosted approximately 75 university professionals, state and local agency professionals, and former foster youth.

The outcomes of the event included:

- Explored opportunities for youth regarding education and provided exposure to colleges and universities to increase graduation rates and post-secondary education enrollment;
- Identified effective multi-strategy approaches to engage youth in post-secondary education opportunities;
- Introduced colleges and universities as "thinking partners" and as an advisory team for county child welfare agencies and private child-placing agencies;
- Strengthened collaboration among colleges and universities, state agencies, and child welfare agencies to serve youth in foster care; and,
- Identified steps to build best practices around post-secondary education recruitment and retention of foster youth.

DSS plans to continue this collaboration with Johnson C. Smith University throughout the upcoming year by coordinating quarterly meetings.

Coordination of Services with Other Federal and State Programs for Foster Youth

NCETA 2018 Conference

In partnership with Chatham County Department of Social Services, in April 2018 DSS hosted a workshop at the North Carolina Education and Training Association 2018 Conference entitled "There is No Box." The purpose of the workshop was to explore ways the education and training community, workforce professionals, and child welfare professionals can partner to best meet the needs of foster youth. The workshop highlighted ways to empower youth transitioning out of the foster care system to identify natural and long-term supports and create strategies, driven by the young adult, to promote self-sufficiency and autonomy.

Collaboration with Youth and Other Programs Planned activities for 2019:

- *NC WORKS Partnership 2018 Conference.* In October 2018, DSS will host a workshop at the NCWorks Partnership 2018 Conference. The theme of the workshop is “Partnering for Success: Together Serving Youth in Foster Care.” This workshop will explore challenges foster youth face when moving towards independence and explore ways DSS and the NC Division of Workforce Solutions can partner together to help youth overcome barriers and achieve positive outcomes. The goal of the workshop is to develop creative strategies to partner and blend services to promote self-sufficiency among foster youth.
- *Partnership with NC Division of Aging and Adult Services.* DSS has developed a partnership with NC DAAS to explore ways to best serve and support young adults with disabilities through North Carolina’s extended foster care program, Foster Care 18 to 21, who also receive adult services. These efforts will continue in the coming year. DSS and DAAS will develop a working group of county departments of social services child welfare and adult services staff, youth, and other state agencies including NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The group will explore how to blend services to best meet the needs of young adults with disabilities who are exiting foster care at age 18.
- *Rethinking Guardianship.* DSS, in partnership with UNC-CH School of Social Work, NC Council on Developmental Disabilities, and DAAS, developed the collaborative effort, “Rethinking Guardianship: Building a Case for Less Restrictive Alternatives.” This initiative is committed to creating long-term changes and heightened performance in North Carolina’s adult guardianship system, as well as promoting less restrictive alternatives to guardianship, including participation in Foster Care 18 to 21 for young adults with disabilities exiting foster care at age 18. In SFY 2017-2018, the working group collaborated to develop educational materials, which include information on Foster Care 18 to 21. The group is also conducting a study to better understand (1) the process for considering adult guardianship and/or Foster Care 18 to 21, or other means of decision-making, (2) short-term and long-term goals for decision-making related to foster youth, (3) experiences with the adult guardianship system for foster youth, and how it can be improved, and (4) the use of less restrictive alternatives to full adult guardianship, including limited guardianship and supported decision-making. DSS will continue this partnership in the coming year to help support youth with disabilities who are approaching their 18th birthday.
- *SaySo.* DSS will continue to work closely with SaySo to engage young people currently or formerly in foster care to participate in NYTD activities, such as NYTD data collection and analysis, as well as other activities related child welfare system improvements.
- *Project NO REST.* DSS will continue to participate in Project NO REST, particularly activities designed to promote a safe transition to independence by reducing the risk that youth and young adults in the child welfare system will be victims of human trafficking, and activities that strongly link the work and goals of Project NO REST to the work of the LINKS program.

In May 2018, Project NO REST, in partnership with the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NC CASA), and Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS), hosted a training in Charlotte, NC on the GEMS Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Community Intervention Project. This opportunity is open to NC CASA members, Project NO REST pilot sites and partner agencies, and other community agencies and service providers that work with youth who have

been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked. Those who attended this training gained foundational knowledge of commercial sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking of youth.

In September 2018, Project NO REST will host a training opportunity for up to 40 individuals on the My Life, My Choice curriculum. This training will be provided in a “train the facilitator” format. Training attendees will be trained to facilitate the My Life, My Choice exploitation prevention curriculum.

DSS will connect attendees of the GEMS and My Life, My Choice trainings with LINKS programs in county child welfare agencies to deliver training and education on the prevention of sexual exploitation and trafficking to LINKS program staff and youth in foster care.

Other CFCIP Planned Activities for 2019 include:

- Continue to contract with Youth Villages, Inc. to implement the Foster Care Transitional Living Initiative Fund by providing YVLifeSet services across the state to youth ages 17-21 transitioning from foster care.
- Develop and implement new county and state LINKS (CFCIP) annual planning tools to support the delivery of services to eligible youth, provision of needed training for the child welfare workforce and foster parents to support youth transitioning from foster care, and collection and analysis of data to determine program strengths and areas of need.
- Review current LINKS programming and policy to determine needed updates in response to the Families First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123).

Consultation with Tribes

As described above (II.6, Consultation and Coordination with Tribes), as of October 1, 2015, the EBCI, a federally-recognized Indian tribe under federal law, now provides child welfare services to the population living on Tribal Trust lands.

Education and Training Vouchers

Since 2003, DSS has contracted with the Orphan Foundation of America, DBA Foster Care to Success (FC2S), to administer the North Carolina Education and Training Voucher Program (NC ETV). NC ETV makes available vouchers for youth who were in care at age 17 and youth who were adopted out of care or placed in a relative guardianship on or after their 16th birthday to attend appropriately accredited postsecondary institutions of higher learning or access vocational training. FC2S continues to have the expertise and commitment to address the needs of program participants throughout the state and effectively administer the NC ETV Program.

The table below provides the total (unduplicated) number of ETV awards for the 2016-2017 school year and the 2017-2018 school year (as of April 1, 2018), as well as the number of youth who were new voucher recipients each year.

	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
Final Number: 2016-17 School Year (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017)	309	158
2017-18 School Year* (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018)	272	118

*as of April 1, 2018

The table below provides the number of credit hours attempted and earned across Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters between July 2016 and June 2017.

Credit Hours Attempted and Earned, July 2016 – June 2017								
	Attempted Credits	Earned Credits	Withdrawn Credits	Failed Credits	Remedial Credits Attempted	Remedial Credits Passed	Tech Hours Attempted	Tech Hours Passed
Fall	2,897	2,342	219	336	93	60	1,500	587.5
Summer	318	277	27	14	2	1	0	0
Spring	1,977	1,742	104	131	23	17	0	0

The following successes were reported by FC2S during the 2016-17 school year:

- Students were sent care packages in the October, February, and April;
- 67% of students who submitted grades and attended at least two semesters of the academic year progressed satisfactorily;
- 92% of students who completed the end-of-year survey reported that ETV funding reduced the amount of money borrowed;
- 83% of students who responded to the end-of-year survey reported being “highly satisfied” with the NC ETV program; and,
- 33% of students who responded to the end-of-year survey reported being “satisfied” with the NC ETV program.

DSS does not anticipate changes in the coming year to the way in which the NC ETV Program is administered. Presently, DSS is in the process of renewing its contract with FC2S for SFY 2018-2019 to continue administering the ETV program.

ETV planned activities for 2019 include developing and implementing revisions to ETV programming and policy to align with the expansion of ETV eligibility for young adults until age 26 pursuant to the Families First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-123).

V. Targeted Plans Update

1. Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

North Carolina has 100 public child-placing agencies (county child welfare agencies), 78 private child-placing agencies, and 97 residential facilities. As of May 2018, North Carolina had 6,926 licensed foster homes. Of these, 2,733 (39%) were supervised by public child-placing agencies and 4,193 (61%) were supervised by private child-placing agencies. In addition, there are 174 residential, group, or institutional settings. As of April 30, 2018, 41% of the publicly licensed homes and 59% of the privately licensed homes were being used for children in foster care. (Private child-placing agencies also serve children not in county child welfare agency custody.)

The primary progress made this year was the implementation of a new statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention (DRR) plan, which was developed following round 3 of the CFSR (PIP Goal 4.2). That plan

can be found in Appendix E.

DSS worked closely with stakeholders and the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment to write a new statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention (DRR) plan. The DRR plan was issued on June 15, 2017, and implemented in SFY 2017-2018. The plan provides goals for statewide achievement, and consistency in messaging and provision of services. The plan also allows for county-level planning. County child welfare agencies used SFY 2017-2018 to write their own localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plans, which will be implemented next year (SFY 2018-2019).

The statewide DRR plan promotes collaboration among community stakeholders and the use of data to identify needs and inform recruitment and retention planning. There are four statewide goals that county child welfare agencies must address by listing strategies, activities, and potential outcomes: (1) Recruit and maintain a sufficient pool of ethnically and racially diverse families who can provide ongoing safety for and meet the needs of children served by the foster care program, (2) State, counties, and private child-placing agencies have the capacity and ability to use data to inform and monitor diligent recruitment and retention efforts throughout North Carolina, (3) Excellent customer service provided to prospective, current, and former foster, adoptive, and kinship families, and (4) Excellent customer service provided to internal and external community partners/stakeholders.

To enhance county child welfare agencies' implementation of the plan, DSS developed planning and implementation tools to promote consistency and offer support. These supplemental resources are used to track data, provide best practice outcomes, and provide ongoing support to localized efforts. The tools include:

- *County/Agency Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan Template*, which assists county child welfare agencies in writing their own localized Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.
- *Diligent Recruitment and Retention Resource Guide*, which includes information on customer service, data-driven recruitment, MEPA, recruiting specific populations, training for resource parents, and youth engagement.
- *Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile*, which is a tool that captures each county's child characteristics as well as family characteristics. This data will inform planning around diligent recruitment and retention. County child welfare agencies as well as private child-placing agencies are required to submit completed data profiles to DSS on August 1st of each year for the previous fiscal year, with the first submission due on August 1, 2019.

Technical assistance and resources were provided by DSS during SFY 2017-2018, as county child welfare agencies began planning and developing localized diligent recruitment and retention plans. From July 1, 2017, to May 30, 2018, DSS provided technical assistance around DRR 433 times to 92 counties.

County child welfare agencies submitted localized DRR plans to DSS in two phases during SFY 2017-2018. The first phase of plans was received February 1, 2018, and the second phase was received May 1, 2017. DSS reviewed each county child welfare agency's plan and provided feedback and technical assistance as needed.

Additional Updates

This year, as in the past, the DSS NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network served as a statewide recruitment entity. NC Kids is a first point of contact for individuals interested in becoming resource parents; it is also a supportive service to county child welfare agencies. The following update on the state's progress and accomplishments is broken down into two sections: (1) direct recruitment by DSS, and (2) supportive services DSS provided to public and private agencies related to recruitment of resource families.

Direct Recruitment

NC Kids provides targeted child specific recruitment of adoptive homes through online photo listings (www.adoptnckids.org; www.adoptuskids.org). NC Kids conducts preliminary reviews of an approved adoptive family's Preplacement Assessment for initial matching before final matching determination is made by the county child welfare agency.

North Carolina's Permanency Innovation Initiative is an effort launched in 2013 by the NC General Assembly. Under this state-sponsored initiative a private child-placing agency, Children's Home Society of North Carolina (CHS), provides services to improve permanency outcomes for children living in foster care, to improve engagement with biological relatives, and to reduce costs associated with maintaining children in foster care. Since the onset of this initiative, CHS has achieved steady increases in positive outcomes for children and families, specifically in their Child Specific Recruitment program. As a result, the NC General Assembly appropriated additional funds to expand those services in SFY 2017-2018. Between July 1, 2017, and March 30, 2018, CHS has achieved positive outcomes for children and families with the following services.

Intensive Permanency Services (Family Finding and Child Specific Recruitment). These services can include either Family Finding or Child Specific Recruitment. *Family Finding* is a six-step model offering methods and strategies to locate and engage family members of children living in out-of-home care, with a focus on achieving legal and relational permanence. *Child-Specific Adoption Recruitment* is an approach to finding adoptive families for children that involves developing an individualized plan for each child based on the child's background and needs. The goal is to identify specific parents who meet the specific needs of each child awaiting a permanent family. Since July 1, 2017:

- 343 children have been served by CHS Intensive Permanency Services
- 57% of these children were matched with a family
- 43% of these children were placed with a family
- 33% of these children achieved permanency with a family
- 98% of children and case workers involved in Intensive Permanency Services report satisfaction with the services

Permanency-Related Training. Since July 1, 2017, child welfare agencies and partners have received a total of 165 hours of permanency-related training and coaching/consultation from CHS as part of the Permanency Innovation Initiative. This includes 65 training sessions with 290 staff from 9 NC county

child welfare agencies and 628 staff from various partner agencies including private agencies, schools, GALs, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives, and infant and toddler programs.

Dissemination of information on how to become a foster or adoptive parent or about specific children legally free for adoption continues with the NC Kids website, hotline, and general email address. Since the submission of the APSR, NC Kids has been tracking calls, emails, and inquiries made by community members about becoming a resource parent. This tracking is done through a survey (when the inquiry is by email) or by a consultant during initial phone calls. Between July 1, 2017, and April 30, 2018, NC Kids responded to over 1,000 inquiries about becoming a foster or adoptive family.

Fostering Perspectives (www.fosteringperspectives.org), is a free newsletter produced by DSS in partnership with the UNC School of Social Work. The newsletter goes out twice a year, and the intended audience is foster, adoptive, kinship, and therapeutic families, as well as child welfare professionals in North Carolina. Each print issue reaches about 10,000 people, most of them in North Carolina. Information about new issues of *Fostering Perspective* is also sent to the approximately 5,400 people who subscribe to the newsletter listserv. Each issue furthers diligent recruitment efforts by regularly featuring waiting children and offering information that supports the educational needs of existing foster families. The themes of the issues this year were, “Promoting the Resilience of Young People in Foster Care” (Vol. 22, No. 1) and “Resource Families Can Help with Recruitment, Retention” (Volume 22, No. 2). In addition, every issue features profiles and photos of young people in foster care who are free for adoption.

Regular Outreach, Education, and Community Recruitment Events. NC Kids also engages in regular outreach, education, and community recruitment events. For example, throughout SFY 2017-2018, NC Kids staff provided information, outreach, recruitment materials, and support to county child welfare and private child-placing agencies. Outreach activities also involve partnering with and educating county child welfare agencies regarding the requirements of and resources available through NC Kids. In SFY 2017-2018 these activities included things such as distributing mailers and written materials, presenting through webinars, and providing resources for informational booths at events. NC Kids staff participated in a total of 9 outreach, education, and community recruitment events in SFY 2017-2018.

Supportive Services Related to Diligent Recruitment

Since the submission of the CFSP, DSS has engaged in the following regarding statewide diligent recruitment and retention efforts:

- *FosteringNC.org*, a learning site for North Carolina’s foster and adoptive families and kinship caregivers, launched on March 1, 2017. This site features on-demand courses, webinars, videos, resources, and answers to questions frequently asked by resource parents. DSS, in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill, NC State University, and Independent Living Resources, maintains and updates the site with additional resources and trainings on a regular basis. Between July 1, 2017, and May 21, 2018, *fosteringNC.org* was accessed 5,329 times. For more information on *FosteringNC.org*, please see Appendix B (Changes to North Carolina’s Training Plan).
- *Foster Care 18 to 21*. As outlined in last year’s APSR, North Carolina began implementing an extended foster care program called Foster Care 18-21 on Jan. 1, 2017. This law that made Foster Care 18-21 possible (S.L. 2015-241) also makes adoption assistance payments available

until age 21 for youth adopted at age 16 or 17. As of March 31, 2018, there were 98 youth between the ages of 18 and 21 whose families are receiving extended adoption assistance payments. The support for young adults available through the Foster Care 18 to 21 program will enhance the state's capacity to recruit and retain families for children and youth in need of foster and adoptive homes. Currently, North Carolina has 3,413 family foster homes and 70 residential facilities licensed to serve youth up to age 21.

- *Continued Implementation of Trauma-Informed Partnering for Safety – Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (TIPS-MAPP) statewide.* This allows for better preparation of foster and adoptive parents. In TIPS-MAPP, special attention is given to addressing issues of fidelity to the training model, which will improve the assessment and selection of resource parents.
- *MAPP Materials in Spanish.* DSS continues to communicate with Children's Alliance of Kansas, the owner of MAPP, regarding the translation of additional MAPP and *Deciding Together* training materials into Spanish. Children's Alliance of Kansas reports that progress is being made in this area.
- *Online Orientation for Prospective Foster Parents.* DSS, in partnership the University of North Carolina School of Social Work, continues to offer an online, on-demand, self-paced orientation for prospective foster parents. DSS has asked public and private child-placing agencies to make completion of this online orientation mandatory for all foster parents. This orientation is located on the homepage of North Carolina's learning portal for child welfare professionals, ncswLearn.org, and can also be accessed via fosteringNC.org. Since its deployment on Aug. 1, 2013, the orientation has been uniquely accessed 24,160 times and its certificate of completion has been uniquely accessed 13,904 times.
- *Treat Them Like Gold and Latino Recruitment and Retention Guide.* DSS's recruitment guide, "Treat Them Like Gold," is a diligent recruitment guide that provides suggested practices, resources, and general guidance on how to effectively recruit and retain foster and adoptive families in NC. A companion guide that specifically focuses on recruitment and partnering with Spanish speaking foster and adoptive families is available. Both these publications are available via the DSS website (<https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/publications/>).
- *Foster Home Licensing.* DSS serves as the state's licensing authority for the licensure of all North Carolina's foster homes. Public and private child-placing agencies recommend foster homes for licensure. All foster home license actions are put through a rigorous quality assurance review before being approved or denied. DSS provides technical assistance and training to county child welfare and private child-placing agencies regarding the training and licensure process for foster families.
- *Webinar: Efficiently Licensing High Quality Foster Parents.* DSS, in partnership with UNC School of Social Work, developed a 90-minute webinar that describes what DSS is doing to enhance the foster home licensing process and to support supervising agencies. It also shares effective strategies agencies are using to speed up licensing of families while maintaining an emphasis on quality and mutual assessment. Handouts and a recording of the webinar are available at <http://fcrp.unc.edu/webinars.asp>. For more on webinars, see Appendix B (Changes to North Carolina's Training Plan).

- *Webinar: Unveiling North Carolina's New Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan.* DSS, in partnership with UNC School of Social Work, developed a 90-minute webinar that describes North Carolina's new diligent recruitment and retention plan, making it clear what the next steps will be at the state and local level and what the concrete implications and requirements are for public and private agencies. Webinar handouts and recording of the webinar are available at <http://fcrp.unc.edu/webinars.asp>. For more on webinars, see Appendix B (Changes to North Carolina's Training Plan).
- *Webinar: Talking with Young People in Foster Care about Adoption.* In November 2017, DSS in partnership with UNC School of Social Work, developed a 90-minute webinar that describes next steps when young people in foster care tell us they do not want to be adopted. The webinar also profiles effective child-focused adoption preparation activities in use in NC today, and teaches concrete strategies for what to say, and what to try when young people say "no" to adoption. Webinar handouts and a recording of the webinar are available at <http://fcrp.unc.edu/webinars.asp>. For more on webinars, see Appendix B (Changes to North Carolina's Training Plan).
- *Webinar: Using the Data Profile to Support Your Agency's Diligent Recruitment Efforts.* In December 2017, DSS in partnership with UNC School of Social Work, developed a 90-minute webinar that explores the Diligent Recruitment and Retention Data Profile – Program Planning Tool, which is part of North Carolina's new Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, and provides practice examples for agencies of all sizes on obtaining and using data to inform recruitment and retention of resource families. Information, resources, and strategies outlined in the webinar directly support efforts to achieve timely permanence and other outcomes we seek for children and families served by the foster care program. Webinar handouts and a recording of the webinar are available at <http://fcrp.unc.edu/webinars.asp>. For more on webinars, see Appendix B (Changes to North Carolina's Training Plan).
- *Quarterly Peer-to-Peer Diligent Recruitment and Retention Calls.* While developing the statewide Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan, DSS recognized a need for regular, ongoing communication and collaboration between county child welfare and private child-placing agencies on the topic of diligent recruitment and retention. DSS initiated standing quarterly calls regarding diligent recruitment and retention in SFY 2017-2018. The first call was held in October 2017 with the theme "Getting the Most of What You've Got." On this call, agencies discussed concrete recruitment strategies to maximize time, energy, and resources. In January 2018, a call about "Using Creative Partnerships to Enhance Recruitment Efforts" was held in which agencies discussed effective recruitment strategies grounded in creative community and agency partnerships. During the April 2018 call, "Reaching Outside the Box," agencies discussed creative ways to: (1) achieve effective out-of-state placements, (2) have difficult conversations with teens who do not want to be adopted and/or do not want to move, and (3) consider families who initially would not be considered as a right fit for a child.
- *State-Funded Supplement for Children Exposed to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).* NC provides supplemental board payments for children in foster care and supplemental adoption assistance payments for children who have been adopted that were diagnosed as having been prenatally exposed to HIV or who have developed symptoms of HIV/AIDS in foster care.

Supplemental payments for HIV positive children may be made to foster/adoptive parents, group homes, or child caring institutions licensed by DSS. Reimbursement rates range between \$800-\$1,600 per month based on the age of the child and the status of the disease. Since July 1, 2017, \$156,000 has been expended to provide 15 children an HIV adoption assistance subsidy and \$16,800 has been expended for 2 children in foster care. As of April 2018, total expenditures were \$175,000, of which \$62,532 were federal and \$112,668 were state appropriations.

- *Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund (SCAIF)*. The NC Appropriations Act annually authorizes Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding for a Special Children Adoption Incentive Fund. The SSBG funding is then combined with local and state matching funds to make adoption a possibility for children with special health care needs who would otherwise remain in the foster care system because of the financial loss to foster/adoptive parents. By the end of SFY 2017-2018, an average of 203 families of adopted children will have been provided SCAIF monthly payments totaling approximately \$1,850,400.

Enhancing MEPA Performance

DSS has identified a need for additional training, reviewing, and monitoring localized Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) plans. In previous years, DSS had a MEPA consultant position. However, the position was vacated and has since been eliminated. In SFY 2017-2018, as well as previous years, counties had localized MEPA plans in place in which DSS would review during program monitoring visits. With the implementation of the new statewide DRR plan in SFY 2018-2019, county child welfare agencies will submit their local MEPA plans with their annual diligent recruitment and retention plans to DSS for review to ensure the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is adequately reflected. DSS continues to research and utilize available resources regarding MEPA. The Capacity Building Center for States is assisting in providing DSS with resources to enhance North Carolina's understanding of MEPA. DSS will also continue to monitor localized MEPA plans and provide technical assistance as needed. In the coming year, a new MEPA plan template will be developed in partnership with US DHHS Office of Civil Rights, and will be implemented across the state. In addition, DSS is partnering with US DHHS Office of Civil Rights to provide MEPA presentations at three regional county departments of social services Director meetings. These presentations will be held in August 2018. Workshop sessions will also be conducted at the 2018 Social Services Institute in October 2018.

During SFY 2018-2019, DSS will continuously deliver state-level diligent recruitment and retention activities in addition to providing ongoing technical assistance, resources, and support to specific diligent recruitment and retention efforts of county child welfare agencies and private child-placing agencies. DSS will also ensure MEPA compliance. Support from DSS will be provided on an individual, regional, and statewide basis. In the coming year, DSS will continue to host quarterly peer-to-peer calls to promote ongoing communication and collaboration around diligent recruitment and retention.

2. Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan

DSS has partnered with the NC Pediatric Society to provide infrastructure for its health oversight and coordination efforts. Through the program Fostering Health NC (FHNC), administered by the NC Pediatric Society, DSS and its partners address systemic issues, develop policies, and embed feedback loops to help

ensure providers receive what they need to develop the best treatment plan to address the physical, behavioral, and oral health needs for each child. This provides a formal mechanism to consult with pediatricians, pharmacists, psychologists, and other experts in health care to strengthen the provision of health services to the child welfare population.

Some highlights of the last year include:

- Additional progress has been made on the oversight and monitoring of psychotropic medication. DSS conducted analysis of the metabolic monitoring of children in foster care compared to the general Medicaid pediatric population.
- Additional training and guidance is being developed regarding the appropriate monitoring of medication.
- A subcommittee on mental health convened as part of FHNC to review data specific to psychotropic medication.
- Collaboration occurred between DSS and the Department of Insurance's Safe Kids Program, which has 46 programs covering 71 counties. Activities of this program include promoting *Operation Medicine Drop*, which removes unused medications to create a safer environment.
- Collaboration occurred between DSS and the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force Harmful Substances Initiative, which addresses the impact of harmful substances (drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other toxins) on the well-being of children.
- Collaboration occurred between DSS and the DMH/DD/SAS *Lock Your Meds* Campaign to combat prescription drug misuse and abuse. Focus areas of this effort include the counting and properly storing medications; disposing of medications properly; and spreading the word in local communities.

DSS is currently revising its Health Oversight and Coordination Plan to reflect the new forms, current processes for accessing information, and additional strategies to ensure children in foster care are not diagnosed inappropriately with mental illness and other disorders which may lead to inappropriate non-foster family home placements. NCDHHS is exploring all possible mechanisms to hold the medical, behavioral health, and social service systems jointly accountable to achieving positive health outcomes for child welfare-involved families. DSS will submit a revised plan with the 2020-25 Child and Family Services Plan.

3. Disaster Plan

In SFY 2017-2018, the following incidents occurred: Tropical Storm Harvey (August 28, 2017), Hurricane Irma (September 5, 2017), and Hurricane Maria (September 25, 2017). Although North Carolina was not greatly affected by these incidents, it activated its Emergency Operation Center for each one in accordance to Standard Operating Procedures.

North Carolina updated its Disaster Plan in July 2017; the updated plan can be found in Appendix F. North Carolina is also working to develop a Disaster Plan specific to child welfare and will provide it upon its completion.

4. Training Plan

Please refer to see Appendix B, “Changes to North Carolina's Training Plan.”

VI. Statistical and Supporting Information

1. CAPTA Annual State Data Report Items

Information on Child Protective Service Workforce

There has been no change to the state-mandated educational, qualification, and training requirements for child protective service professionals. This includes requirements for entry and advancement in the profession, as well as requirements for advancement to supervisory positions.

Child welfare staff are managed by each of the 100 counties through standards set by the NC Office of Human Resources or through the county with a substantially equivalent human resource system. Due to the lack of a single database for child welfare staff in North Carolina, comprehensive demographic information on the workforce is unavailable. After coming improvements to ncswLearn.org are complete and full implementation of NC FAST, North Carolina will be able to report complete demographic information about our state’s child welfare protective services workforce.

DSS does collect information annually on specific areas by way of an annual survey completed by county staff December-February of each year for the prior calendar year. This information includes:

- The total number of child welfare social worker full time equivalent positions (FTEs)
- The total number of child welfare social work supervisor FTEs
- Academic degrees of social worker staff
- Academic degrees of social work supervisors and program managers
- Total number of FTEs hired during the year
- Reasons for vacancies in social worker, supervisor, and program manager FTEs

County child welfare agencies are organized in differing ways, which makes it difficult to clearly establish how many FTEs are assigned to different program areas. This is further complicated by the fact that, when there are vacancies, it is not unusual to temporarily reassign staff to ensure services are provided to families.

Following is an update about North Carolina’s child welfare workforce based on the latest Child Welfare Staffing Survey, which ended January 31, 2018.

Education. The table below depicts the current educational profile of North Carolina’s child welfare workforce.

EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF NC’S CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE, JAN. 1, 2018

Title	Total	Bachelor (Social Work)	Bachelor (Other)	Masters (Social Work)	Masters (Other)	Higher
Social Worker	3,081	770	1,134	467	338	6
Social Work Supervisor	600	117	250	113	85	1

Program Manager	96	17	37	19	14	1
Program Administrator	40	5	11	18	6	0

Qualifications. As in years past, qualifications of child welfare staff vary across counties. The latest Child Welfare Staffing Survey indicates county child welfare agencies hired 905 workers in 2017. Of these, 300 (33%) were fully qualified to assume a caseload immediately upon hiring. Large- and medium-sized counties tend to have the most fully qualified employees; these counties offer more compensation and have more resources available to support staff development.

Training. In the latest Child Welfare Staffing Survey, counties reported it takes an average of 8.99 weeks to fully prepare a new child welfare worker to carry a caseload.

In collaboration with UNC-Chapel Hill, a website (<https://www.ncswlearn.org/>) for registering and tracking training for county child welfare staff is used to collect training information. Information on all the training requirements for child welfare staff can be found here: <https://www.ncswlearn.org/help/pdf/childrenguidelines.pdf>. DSS has reviewed training compliance in all 100 counties through Program Monitoring. Because the Program Monitoring team highlighted training requirements with counties, there has been an increased demand to attend training. During SFY 2017-2018, DSS began expanding training availability by changing the training model from two trainers to one trainer in some of the higher-demand courses to address this issue. DSS is currently exploring options with counties to develop a partnership with county trainers and state trainers to increase the number of pre-service training offerings.

Caseloads. Current NC child welfare policy provides guidance on expected caseload sizes:

- CPS Intake shall be no greater than one worker per 100 CPS referrals a month
- CPS Assessments shall be no greater than 10 families at any time per worker
- CPS In-Home Services shall be no greater than 10 families at any time per worker

Compliance with workload standards is evaluated in two ways. The first is through a quarterly county child welfare agency self-report on workloads and staffing patterns. The second is through the semi-annual program evaluations conducted in collaboration with counties. Information provided in the agency self-report is used as a source of data for the program evaluations. This data, however, is not fully vetted and verified.

County child welfare agencies maintain a monthly Child Welfare Workforce Data Workbook; counties submit this data to DSS quarterly. For the December 31, 2017, submission, the average caseload sizes in NC were as shown in the table below. As a reminder, it is not unusual for staff to manage cases that cross over into other child welfare service areas.

AVERAGE CASELOAD SIZES

Title	Cases per available staff	Cases per FTEs budgeted
Intake	70.5	64.8
Assessments	11.76	9.65
In Home	8.8	7.8

Supervision. NC child welfare policy provides guidance on expected supervisor/worker ratios. Supervisor/worker ratios shall not exceed an average of one FTE supervisory position to five FTE social work positions. The following information about supervision ratios comes from the December 31, 2017, Child Welfare Workforce Data Workbook.

SUPERVISION RATIOS

	Available Staff	Budgeted Staff
Budgeted Supervisors	4.0	4.64
Available Supervisors	4.33	4.9

More accurate caseload and supervisory ratio data will be available as NC implements NC FAST.

Juvenile Justice Transfers

Based on data retrieved from North Carolina’s Child Placement and Payment System, between July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017, 48 children under placement authority spent time in the state’s juvenile justice placements, coded as Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. However, 274 children under placement authority were coded as having spent time in a Jail, Lock-up, or Detention Facility. In most cases, the beginning of these placements did not mark the end of the child’s child welfare episode.

2. Sources of Data on Child Maltreatment Deaths

Starting in SFY 2017-2018, North Carolina matched data from the state Vital Records Office for all children 20 years or younger with county child welfare agency data to ensure all fatalities that had CPS involvement within a year of the fatality have been identified. When the provision of involuntary child welfare services or temporary substitute care has occurred and a child dies, DSS staff members conduct an initial record review within seven business days of the fatality. Intensive reviews occur when the child or family have had contact with the county child welfare agency within 12 months prior to the death and there is suspicion maltreatment contributed to the fatality. The child fatality review team uses data from medical examiners’ offices and law enforcement agencies when determining whether to do an intensive review. North Carolina matches data from its child fatality intake forms with information from the state Vital Records Office, as well as the initial and intensive child fatality reviews, to report maltreatment fatalities to NCANDS. In SFY 2018-2019, DSS will continue using these strategies to measure child maltreatment deaths.

3. Education and Training Vouchers

For information related to North Carolina's Education and Training Vouchers Program, including the unduplicated number of youth who received ETV awards, please refer to the "Education and Training Voucher Program" subsection of section IV.

4. Inter-Country Adoptions

In SFY 2017-2018, no children adopted from other countries entered foster care in North Carolina as a result of the disruption of a placement for adoption or the dissolution of an adoption.

5. Monthly Caseworker Visit Data

States are required to collect and report data on monthly caseworker visits with children in foster care. Data for FY 2017 is to be reported separate from the 2019 APSR and will be due for submission to CB by December 17, 2018. For preliminary data on this topic, please refer to section II.7 (Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants).

VII. Financial Information

1. Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1

Non-Federal funds expended for child care, foster care maintenance payments and adoption assistance payments in FY 2005 was \$1,590,655.

The amount of non-Federal funds North Carolina expended for foster care maintenance payments and applied as match for the title IV-B, subpart 1 program in FY 2005 was \$0

2. Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2

States are required to spend a significant portion of their title IV-B, subpart 2 PSSF grant for each of the four service categories of PSSF: family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited reunification, and adoption promotion and support services.

For each service category that does not approximate 20 percent of the grant total, the State must provide a rationale for the disproportion.

Time-Limited Family Reunification Services

Time-Limited Family Reunification Services are estimated to meet the be 20% expenditure equaling \$2,004,846 of the IV-B 2 total \$10,024,232 for FFY 2018.

As with all four service categories, North Carolina will submit a request to amend the CFS-101 should a change in service needs warrant an adjustment to allocations.

Appendices

A. Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Application

B. Changes to North Carolina’s Training Plan

C. Agenda for 2018 Indian Child Welfare Gathering

D. 2017 CCPT Final Report

E. North Carolina Diligent Recruitment and Retention Plan

F. Disaster Plan

Attachments

1. CFS-101, Part I, II, III