



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

DATE: April 6, 2007

TO: District Administrators

THROUGH: George Sheldon, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary of Department Programs (Acting)

FROM: Patricia Badland, Director, Office of Family Safety

SUBJECT: Action Plan for Improving Protective Investigations

- 1. Establish mandatory qualifications for child protective investigative Second Party Reviewers. As indicated in the attachment that was sent last week, we are developing a process for qualifying and certifying child welfare professionals who will be eligible to serve as Second Party Reviewers.**

Interim Plan:

The Department has distributed a protocol for qualifying individuals who can serve as Second Party Reviewers. These individuals will be provisionally certified pending completion of mandatory training that will be developed by September 30, 2007. The Family Safety Program Office will develop an Access database containing information for qualified Second Party Reviewers. Demographic data, whether or not exceptions have been granted and documentation regarding completion of training courses to be developed for certification purposes will be monitored.

Long-Range Goal:

Through rule-making authority under Chapter 402 F.S., the Department will establish a certification process for child welfare professionals who conduct Second Party Reviews of the child protective investigative function. Training requirements that attach to certification of Second Party Reviewers will be established with the input of field staff that performs this function.

Time Frame:

District Administrators have been instructed to submit qualifications of staff who presently conduct Second Party Reviews and requests to approve any needed exception(s) by April 6, 2007. Effective April 30, 2007 this function must be conducted by approved reviewers.

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

2. Conduct a review of families who have experienced multiple referrals to the Hotline to determine whether the Department adequately addressed safety of children and needs of families.

Interim Plan:

The Family Safety Program Office and the Office of Quality Management will identify families that have been referred for multiple referrals for investigation. The Office of Quality Management will conduct an analysis of a sample size of cases to study:

- Community services referral practices
- Decision-making protocol at the supervisory level
- Outcomes for second party review process

Long-Range Goal:

The review will yield valuable support in identifying training needs and areas for improvement. Findings will be incorporated into various training curricula including but not limited to, second party and peer review effectiveness training. By raising awareness, performance will be improved as consideration of multiple referrals becomes the natural practice before terminating an investigation.

Time Frame:

Case analysis and survey of records will conclude by July, 2007

3. Implement the Alternative Response System demonstration project to enable protective investigators to extend their support to families who have frequent need for services.

Interim Plan:

The demonstration project is designed to provide a differential response to reports of child abuse and neglect by child protective investigators. The response decision is supported by a model of practice that emphasizes safety and risk determination. It supports child protective investigators in the identification of families who have multiple service needs without significant safety concerns in order to provide early engagement of families with our community-based care partners. This facilitates a family's participation in a comprehensive family assessment, determination of service needs and timely services planning and intervention.

Families will be followed closely by caseworkers to ensure that the underlying conditions and contributing factors that brought the family to the attention of the department are fully addressed and resolved. Community resources, including both formal and informal supports, are typically more fully utilized because the family is more vested in a plan in which they have had an opportunity for significant input.

Three demonstration sites have been selected, to include Bay, Duval and Seminole Counties. The demonstration sites include participation of both Department and Sheriff's Office child protective investigations and their corresponding community-based care partners.

Long-Range Goal:

Based on the demonstration project's evaluation results, the Department will develop a strategy for statewide implementation of the Alternative Response System. This may include a recommendation for the extension of the pilot timeframes and/or range.

Time Frame:

Pilot implementation will begin no later than July, 2007. The implementation schedule will be coordinated in consideration of the planned statewide deployment of Florida's Safe Families Network in May, 2007.

4. Require cross-training of protective investigators and supervisors by developing a process for peer review of front-line operations.

Interim Plan:

Each district administrator shall submit a proposal for local implementation of a protective investigator cross-training process by April 20, 2007. The term, cross-training, should be very broadly defined. Training may occur in a variety of settings and through a range of approaches. The Family Safety Program Office will provide funding to cover travel costs associated with this cross-training effort.

The proposal must include the following elements:

- Names/locations of exemplars or practitioners of excellence providing cross-training (may be within your area or external to your area)
- Objectives for the cross-training sessions/activities (include specific practices or issues that will be emphasized)
- Numbers of child protective investigators and supervisors involved in the cross-training effort in your area
- Period of time for conducting the initial cross-training effort (initial effort must conclude by July 1, 2007)
- Proposal for on-going cross-training for FY 07/08
- Estimate of travel costs to accomplish the cross-training to be concluded by July 1, 2007

The following may be considered in development of the proposal:

- Expertise within your area (both within and external to the Department/Sheriff's Office)

- Best performers across the state on particular measures
- Local quality assurance reviews and/or existing quality assurance tools
- Gaps or trends already identified as needing improvement
- Recently revised and implemented pre-service training (mine the new courses for "remedial" training material) (<http://cwta.fmhi.usf.edu/>)
- Use of your local inservice training funds
- Use of certified trainer resources and/or quality assurance staff resources to conduct training
- Array of delivery methods - shadowing, mentoring or teaming staff on field activities, mock field based performance assessments as used for certification, staff meetings, classroom training, conference call training, video teleconference training

Long-Range Goal:

The implementation of a routine cross-training process will ensure the most effective and efficient use of expertise at the local level. When experienced and accomplished child safety experts provide training at the local level, transfer of learning is more likely to occur due to the "walked in my shoes" view of the new or less accomplished investigators. Cross-training is intended to reinforce concepts from the pre-service training and assist investigators develop and refine their practice.

Time Frame:

The cross-training proposal is due April 20, 2007.

5. Develop regional training workshops on advanced interviewing and family-centered practice to improve decision-making for protective investigators.

Interim Plan:

The Department held the first series of regional trainings, Child Safety: Collaborative Decision-Making, designed to bring together child welfare professionals and legal staff in November and December 2006. The regional trainings provided information on enhancing the collaborative decision-making processes in the field of child welfare, domestic violence, and the legal arena in the areas of safety and case planning. The Office of Family Safety will review the training curriculum and evaluations from the regional trainings, as well as quality assurance monitoring reports to identify training specific to local needs.

Long-Range Goal:

The Office of Family Safety in partnership with General Counsel's Office, Domestic Violence, Mental Health and other stakeholders will hold two regional training events

in the fall and spring of each year. The trainings will address practice, policy, and areas in need of improvement based on quality assurance reports. The regional training events will enable the field staff to keep current with continuing education units at minimum cost to the local areas.

Time Frame:

Assessment will be completed in June 2007.

6. Provide a briefing on the learning objectives for the Dependency Summit scheduled for September of 2007.

Interim Plan:

We are currently developing the workshops and schedule of events for the 2007 Dependency Summit. The planning committee includes representatives from the Courts, Department, Community Based Care Agencies, Guardian Ad Litem, and other public and private sector entities involved in the dependency system. The theme is "Connecting People: Different Roles – Common Goal" which speaks to improving the system from the intake of an abuse allegation through the life of the case by understanding everyone's role and potential resources to create the best solutions for families. Many of the workshops and speakers will focus specifically on improvements and enhancements to the protective investigations process. A strong evaluation component will be included.

Long-Range Goal:

To convene annual Summits utilizing quality assurance reports, conference and workshop evaluations and other sources that will best inform the planning process.

Time Frame:

The Dependency Summit will be held on September 5 – 7, 2007 in Orlando, Florida.