

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Technical Assistance Site Report



Prepared for Maine Bureau of Children and Family Services
By Wayne Holder, NRCCPS
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Family Friendly, Engagement and Alternative Response

Technical Assistance

On behalf of the Maine Bureau of Children and Family Services, Karen Westburg, a private consultant, requested technical assistance related to enhancing the level of engagement with and involvement of families in the assessment and planning process. Additionally the technical assistance was to be directed at establishing findings that differentiate between types and severity of child abuse and neglect and offer the opportunity to provide service without the life long stigma of “substantiation.”

Site Visit

A site visit occurred December 6, 2004 in Lewiston, Maine. Karen Westburg facilitated a meeting of the Substantiation/Assessment Policy Work Group. Wayne Holder represented the NRCCPS.

The group accepted the charge to modify the system to develop:

- Different set of criteria for who is on the registry
- A means that increases collaboration with families in the assessment process; to be more engaging
- An approach that allows work with families without labeling
- A concise, consistent, easier way to interpret assessment; decisions and seek to make judgments that are clear and self evident
- Create guidance to give meaning to staff; add to definition and understanding that can be useful to everyone

The group decided that they did not wish to expand their approach but to revise and streamline it. Additionally the group did not want to expand the scope of who the department served.

The work group considered program initiatives in other states that had relevance to their work. NRCCPS provided observations on the assessment policy and spoke the implications of implementing an alternative response model. Discussion occurred concerning substantiation and it was decided that only people who can be judged to be dangerous to children should be on the central registry.

The group decided that their current practice model could be reformed with greater emphasis on child safety as the driving force. Additionally the group recognized the need to bring precision and clarity to the safety concepts that they currently had identified in policy. The group decided that an alternative response model was not necessarily needed in Maine and that objectives related to “engagement” and “family friendliness” could be achieved through a refinement of the current practice approach.

The work group must produce a document that provides a description or outline of a recommended practice model that emphasizes engaging families and effectively addresses the issues of substantiation concerned with who should be included on central data systems. That product is to be completed by January 14. It was agreed that NRCCPS

would provide a “rough draft” model description by reorganizing and revising aspects of the assessment policy. That draft could be used by work group members to improve and roll into the document that will become the official work group recommendation.

Next Steps

- NRCCPS sent the policy “rough draft” December 10.
- During December and early January the work group will produce the recommended revised practice model.
- The work group meets 12/14, 12/29, 1/6 and 1/10.
- NRCCPS’ presence may be requested for either the 6th or 10th.
- Beyond the issuance of the recommended practice model there are no further NRC technical assistance requested.