

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Technical Assistance Site Report



Prepared for Puerto Rico Administration for Children and Families
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Regarding Site Visits of April 12, 13 and May 18,19, 2005

Situation and Technical Assistance Request

Due to email problems experienced by Puerto Rico's Department of the Family (ADFAN), several phone conversations were necessary to determine the nature of the technical assistance request. It was determined that, minimally, the agency desired assistance with a strategy contained in their Program Improvement Plan. This strategy was the development of a guide to help supervisors, post-investigation, assign a case in such a way that took into account its complexity and potential severity. The purpose of this guide or criteria would, it was felt, help evenly distribute workload among the ongoing services staff.

Site Visits

Terry Roe Lund from NRCCPS made a site visit to ADFAN on April 12 and 13. During this visit, the Assistant Administrator of Family Preservation Services as well as several Program Specialists from Family Preservation and Substitute Care provided background information on the CFSR findings, the status of the Program Improvement Plan and the rationale for the strategy of the supervisory guide.

In addition to the supervisory guide, the ADFAN workgroup identified technical assistance needs related to safety decision making. A safety assessment and planning model had been recently developed and approximately half of the staff (1000) had been trained. However, staff are not using the instrument and case practice doesn't appear to demonstrate that staff are using the concepts. Beyond the need for a revisiting of their safety model, designed for the investigation stage or when a new report is made, the workgroup identified the priority of developing standards for safety decision making throughout the case process.

Although the description of the lack of progress in their implementation of the safety instrument was clear, it was not clear if technical assistance would be beneficial. In order to understand the advisability of providing technical assistance for this newly identified purpose, it would be necessary to have the 100+ pages of safety model instructions translated from Spanish to English. More importantly, it would be imperative that this examination of why the model failed and what revisions would be needed would have the active support of top agency administration, since several program areas were affected.

The April 12 and 13 site visit remained focused primarily on the original technical assistance request. Group discussion regarding workload issues, general strengths and weaknesses of case practice and supervision led to some consensus around the structure for a supervisory guide to assigning cases.

It was agreed that NRCCPS could begin a rough draft of a supervisory guide and return to work with the group on how it could be refined and what tasks or steps would result in an implementation plan that fit with the PIP time frame.

Prior to the end of the April site visit, the current safety model and its instructions were provided for initial review. The assistant administrator stated she would seek direction from the Administrator regarding the support needed for any technical assistance connected with the safety model.

A second site visit was made May 18 and 19, and most of the same ADFAN workgroup participants were involved, along with NRCCPS staff Terry Roe Lund and Emily Hutchinson. A rough draft of a supervisory guide to judging case complexity and worker capacity was shared with the group and explained. Several additional resource handouts were also provided and discussed. These handouts related to: information collection standards, likelihood for success indicators, initial assessment protocol, and judging the sufficiency of safety plans

A workplan with tasks, time frames and participants was developed to chart the workgroup's path towards full implementation of a supervisory guide to case assignment.

At the conclusion of the site visit with the workgroup, a meeting was held between NRCCPS staff and the ADFAN administrator, Carmen Nazario and the Assistant Administrator, Rosa Fuentes. Ms. Nazario shared her thoughts about the weaknesses of the current safety decision making model. She committed to her participation in any subsequent TA visits with the necessary program administrators to review "what went wrong" with the current model and/or implementation efforts and to move forward with the revisions necessary to achieve effective implementation.

Next Steps

NRCCPS has secured translation services in order to review the lengthy safety model and its instructions developed by ADFAN. A site visit has been scheduled for June 28 and 29, with a small group of top program administrators, including Ms. Nazario. The purpose of this visit is to review the reasons for the failed effort to implement; provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the model; provide information on successful safety model implementation and explore the commitment to further work to revising the model and plan for implementation. Pending that commitment and Regional Office approval, no further technical assistance is planned.