

# **NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

## **Technical Assistance Site Report**



Prepared for Oregon Children, Adults and Families  
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## Technical Assistance Request

Oregon is pursuing a continuing effort to enhance all aspects of their safety intervention system. Technical assistance regarding that objective actually began years ago and included specific consultation and evaluation last year concerned with the effectiveness of their safety intervention system. Oregon is now seeking TA concerned with the building and enhancing the broader safety intervention system including safety throughout the life of the case in procedure, training and quality assurance. Technical assistance has been requested to support the production of policy, procedures and methods revisions to achieve system enhancements. The goal of this year's effort is to increase consistency and improved quality of safety intervention statewide and improved quality assurance of safety intervention and child welfare services generally to ensure conformity with state and federal statute, regulation and policy. This represents a continuing effort to meet CFSR standards and S1 and S2 outcomes in addition to other related outcomes (referenced in previous work and the PIP.)

### Site Visit

The initial site visit occurred November 29, 2005. Emily Hutchinson and Wayne Holder represented the NRCCPS. An all day meeting occurred with the child welfare management team responsible for continued efforts to build and enhance various improvements in the safety intervention system. The primary purposes of the meeting were to 1) review the current status of development efforts; 2) identify specific objectives and tasks for technical assistance (in so far as possible); and 3) transfer NRC TA leadership to Emily Hutchinson.

#### *Overview*

In summary the meeting included discussion concerned with:

- A review of where things stand
- An elaboration and discussion of the request
- General expectations
- Some specific planning regarding tasks
- Initial schedules
- Prospective products

The safety intervention system evaluation that was conducted in the winter of 2005 has been followed by a rigorous effort to address various aspects of the safety intervention system that appeared in need of revision or improvement. Additionally considerable progress by staff has been achieved regarding very specific issues that appeared to need remedy.

- Staff continues to work on statutory related issues concerned with worker authority to remove, the threat of harm definition and legal custody for children in their own homes.
- After researching the current statutes regarding family decision making meetings, it has been decided that there is no need for a legislative change. However, work continues regarding best use of family decision making meetings with particular emphasis on integration of safety decision making and management.
- Perhaps most notably staff have been successful in acquiring badly needed legal resources to be applied during safety intervention. Notably DHS will be receiving 20 paralegal positions, 20 clerical positions and two supervisory positions. The Legislature also approved DOJ receiving five assistant attorney general (AAG) positions, two paralegal positions and three legal secretary positions. A criterion for allocating AAG time in dependency cases was also approved by the legislature.
- Related more specifically to this year's NRC TA staff have invested considerable effort and time into development of procedures which guide safety intervention.
- Staff are working with Portland State University regarding revamping CORE and additional training concerned with safety intervention. Specific expectations and plans are forming along with anticipated milestones for production.
- Regarding human resources and workload management, subcommittees on supervisors, staff configuration, workload and roles have been meeting regularly, addressing the workload issues identified in the system evaluation.
- Continuing efforts are occurring regarding communication with and involvement of stakeholders concerned with the safety intervention system evaluation and the department's action plan.
- Regarding quality assurance DHS will establish a system of compiling, reviewing, summarizing and distributing quantitative performance measures and will establish a feedback process, systems change process and an ongoing monitoring plan.

Without question it was demonstrated during this onsite meeting and through the discussion that considerable progress is being made across a wide range of fronts necessary to improve safety intervention.

#### *Technical Assistance Focus*

A large part of the onsite visit was concerned with refining and elaborating on the technical assistance needed from NRCCPS. The focus of TA will be to support the production of procedures which guide staff to implement child welfare in general but safety intervention in particular. NRCCPS will provide expertise concerned with state of the art knowledge and skill concerned with safety intervention and will collaborate with DHS staff to assure that procedures reflects best concepts and best practices. NRCCPS has already begun providing some review of procedures currently being drafted. This

discussion identified some emerging interests in the effort to continue improving procedure including:

- Need to streamline to what is required
- Move content to training curriculum and resource file
- Add timelines in CPS procedure
- Continue effort to reduce/manage/guide discretionary judgment
- Develop criteria to judge each procedure
- Reconcile inconsistencies – specific areas needing specific TA to sort out/access specific technical assistance on specific practice; best practice; something substantial
- Test out safety management procedures; fit with concepts; include roles of various functions like adoption;
- Assure procedure is definitive replacing all previous guidance
- Make sure procedure meets “rule of law” standard
- Design of on line access

The discussion revisited the critical importance that determining who DHS – child welfare seeks to serve has on designing and implementing an effective practice and decision making approach. While the discussion did not result in any definitive determination it was fully recognized as an issue that requires continuing attention. Participants were unanimous in acknowledging that the question of the intrusive, involuntary nature of CPS has considerable meaning related to who must be served; toward what ends; and in particular regarding identifying when CPS is done with a case.

The group agreed that technical assistance will be most suitable if it occurs in two ways: a) a fast track of support and involvement to complete current procedure drafts by January 2006; and b) participation in the development and production of procedures regulating ongoing child welfare services with specific attention to change based responsibilities related to safety issues and to ongoing safety management. The second area of work will be organized by more specific planning and scheduling after the first area of work is completed.

## Next Steps

- NRCCPS will complete the logic model and initial work plan; will seek approval from DHS; and will provide these documents to all involved parties
- NRCCPS will provide the work group concerned with drafting procedure overview guidance concerned with a safety driven practice model in the form of a working paper and/or power point presentation.
- DHS will provide written drafts of procedures to NRCCPS as they become available for review and inclusion in upcoming collaboration.
- NRCCPS will collaborate with the procedure writing workgroup to identify criteria that will bring order, consistency and rigor to the procedures.

- Onsite technical assistance will occur the second week of January 2006. Emily Hutchinson will work with procedure writers to proceed toward finalizing procedures. This will include a) specific feedback and clarification concerning drafts and b) consultation about best practice and decision making for inclusion in developing drafts.
- NRCCPS and DHS will continue planning for how best to proceed with TA related to building safety intervention across the process with specific attention to treatment and management of safety issues during ongoing CPS. This will include revisions and additions to the work plan and scheduling.