

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Technical Assistance Site Report



Prepared for Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

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Date of onsite technical assistance summarized in this report:
March 7, 2006

Technical Assistance Request

Rhode Island's request for technical assistance was influenced by many concurrent issues they were experiencing. A conference call in January of 2006, with several Rhode Island Department staff, Federal Regional Office staff, and representatives from the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS) and the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning (NRCFCPPP), finalized the initial plan for onsite technical assistance (TA).

The official TA request followed this conference call and outlined the following need:

“To assist the Department with identifying appropriate timeline criteria that would determine the need for administering a new safety assessment in a case, and avoid unnecessary duplication in the development of policy. And to assist in the development of new regulatory policies for licensing.”

Although the request form did not reflect the scope or depth of the issues Rhode Island was facing, the conference call had provided substantive information. Basically, concurrent workgroups in the Department had developed case processes and decision making tools for post-investigation staff (both child welfare and juvenile justice). These processes and tools involved safety decision making and assessing families for the purpose of informing the case plan. The Department was finding even one of these changes daunting to staff and felt the need to make sure the implementation of both requirements would not be duplicative nor overwhelm staff.

Site Visit

The technical assistance site visit occurred on March 7, 2006. Participating in the site visit were Terry Roe Lund from the NRCCPS and many staff from different program areas within the Department, including the Deputy Director for the initial part of the meeting.

Since the conference call, the Department has felt an increasing sense of urgency to remedy problems in implementation of their family assessment process and instrument.

The morning was spent outlining the case process, identifying gaps in standards (e.g., information collection) and the flow for safety decision making post investigation (quite limited). There was general agreement that with respect to both safety and family assessment, the Department has been concentrating more on the forms themselves rather than creating and implementing processes

that are supported by policy, procedure, supervisory expertise, and quality assurance measures.

Nonetheless, the meeting's participants felt that while there may be long-term strategies that will help them achieve their goals, a short-term "fix" was necessary for the very overwhelmed staff who had recently been introduced to the requirement of the very long family assessment form.

The afternoon was spent identifying a long term strategy as one objective, but with the majority of the time spent on identifying a short term strategy to address the family assessment problem.

Brainstorming all kinds of alternatives, including issuing an immediate moratorium to the family assessment, a balanced approach was selected. Meeting participants went through the family assessment instrument page by page, agreeing to temporarily delete some requirements, shorten and/or clarify others, and leave others intact.

Next Steps

No further TA dates by NRCCPS will be delivered. Soon after the site visit, the Department decided that the initial long term strategy that has the greatest sense of urgency is their family assessment process. A new TA request has been made and approved by the Federal Regional Office for the NRCFCPPP to become involved.

Although it is unlikely that the Department will have the capacity to invest in more TA this fiscal year related to safety decision making, NRCCPS will be available should the need and desire arise. However, since TA from this resource center is suspended, a workplan and logic model were not developed.