

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Technical Assistance Report



Prepared for Mississippi Division of Human Services
By Anna Stone, NRCCPS
On-site date: September 26, 2007

Please indicate which responses were employed in this T/TA:

- Technical Assistance
- Training
- Phone Consultation
- Referral to another NRC
- Referral to Other Organization
- Review of Policy and Materials
- Publications Provided
- Secondary Research
- Other

Situation and Technical Assistance Request

Mississippi DHS continues to request TA around issues arising from the hurricanes of 2005. This visit was a continuation of the plan to eliminate the backlog of investigations, maintain currency once achieved, make effective use of PRN staff in the Gulf Coast Counties and plan for continued staffing at adequate levels.

Site Visit

Kay Altese, Regional Director and Brenda Coe, Regional Social Work Supervisor met with Anna Stone, NRCCPS on the morning of September 26th. This was followed with a meeting with all the supervisors for the region that afternoon.

The morning discussion included several areas concerning management and leadership. Kay continues to work with staff regarding her expectations. She reported recent comments from the judge in Harrison County indicating appreciation for the efforts in that county. Kay also mentioned recent efforts in Jackson County with the judge there and her staff working closely to reevaluate the permanency plans for all children in care.

Brenda has assisted in many ways, including providing support to workers in all three counties. Kay and Brenda are consistent in their approach and expectations. There have been some assignment changes with a couple of supervisors being reassigned to different counties. In addition there have been supervisor positions added in Jackson and Harrison. While still not fully staffed, these additions/changes have had positive results. Space is becoming a major issue as more staff are expected to be hired but everyone is so relieved to have the additional positions they have managed to make space available.

Brenda has continued to compile data for use as a management tool. Supervisors are beginning to use this information in managing their staff. They were pleased to report that all investigations for 2006 have been completed and the number dating to the early months of 2007 have been dramatically reduced. Currency within 30 days is still the goal and they hope to be current within 90 days in the next few weeks.

There remains serious concern that the strides made will disappear if staff are not hired. The continuation of the PRN contract for another year has helped abate stress in this area. In addition state office's timely response to recommendations for new hires has been helpful and greatly appreciated. They will continue efforts to recruit and hire appropriate staff.

On September 26, 2007 Anna, Kay and Brenda also met with all the supervisors in Region VII. Brenda reviewed data for the three counties. Timeliness of investigations was discussed and a renewed commitment made to continue efforts focusing on 2007 investigations. Dormant cases were also discussed with special attention to the practice implications if families had not been seen for three months. This is another area on which supervisors will focus.

Much of the afternoon was spent discussing supervision style, sharing management approaches with emphasis on regular conferences with individual workers and the use of data as a management tool. It was suggested that more attention might be directed to drilling down the data to see if there are trends in why investigations are not completed within the policy timeframes. This information may lead to specific strategies within units or the region as a whole.

Next Steps

Kay will talk with Karla Steckler regarding plans T/TA for the next year.