

Monthly Caseworker Visit Data and State Plan Requirements

- **How the state will use the additional funds under IV-B subpart 2 to support monthly caseworker visits with children who are in foster care.**

The division is still looking at various options to utilize the available IV-B subpart 2 funding. We recognize the quality of front line staff, worker turnover, high caseloads, overwhelming administrative burdens, lack of supervisory support and the minimal level of knowledge and experience of staff are some of the challenges of public child welfare staff recruitment and retention that can affect children's safety and permanency. As a result, staff may have less time to establish relationships with children, conduct frequent and meaningful visits to assess children's safety and make thoughtful and well-supported decisions regarding safe and stable placements.

Systemic improvements, such as accreditation and the enhancement of supervisory training and supports are intended to lessen worker stress by improving the working environment. Accreditation has facilitated high-quality service delivery because it requires reasonable caseloads and reduces the number of staff supervisor must oversee. Supervisory training that focuses on leadership skills and clinical practices will help in improving communication and decision making. To build on these successes, we are considering the following:

- To avoid hiring decisions that could later result in turnover or poor performance, the CD is paying attention to hiring employees with prerequisite knowledge, skills and abilities. The division is considering developing a web-based screening tool or video and hiring competencies to assess the education, written and verbal abilities, ethics, judgment and cultural sensitivity of potential applicants. It will also inform these applicants about the contexts surrounding work in child welfare before they apply and accept employment.
- The division is aware that transitioning cases to remaining staff takes time and can result in delays or permanency decisions. CD administration is exploring the prospect of contracting for Pro Re Nata (PRN) social workers and other supports, such as transportation assistants. This idea may be more feasible in the metro sites. The "as needed" social workers would fill in during the transitional periods, when one worker has left a position and before another is hired and ready to assume case management responsibilities, to relieve overburdening existing staff.
- Participation in ongoing training for staff can sometimes be a challenge. Some staff have indicated the trainings they attended did not meet their needs, they did not have time to participate due to caseloads demands or other work priorities hindered their attendance. In an effort to better meet the training and developmental needs of staff, a survey will be designed to query service delivery needs or interests and provide courses to address such necessities.
- Web-based instructions or interactive online learning have become a favored training option in higher education. It is delivered via the computer using the Internet, making it possible for instant updating, distribution, and sharing of information. CD is working with UMC to develop interactive on-line learning

opportunities, beginning with the Visitation PowerPoint training currently on the division's Intranet. There has been discussion to transfer this existing content and others to an online format and make trainings more accessible. Interactive online learning experiences could be made available to all staff and possibly to foster parents and other service providers or partners in the future.

- **The procedures developed to track and report caseworker visit data.**

The current data system utilized by CD does not allow for the tracking of caseworker visits. We are currently in the development phase for case management in FACES. Once case management is on-line, it will track dates of visits and where they took place. Until such time and in order to meet the requirement to report caseworker visit data, the division will provide a manual count through a case review process beginning July 1, 2007. CD will sample the Legal Status 1 (LS 1) population or children in the care and custody of the division. The review will also include children case managed by the PBC and the Specialized Case Management contracts. The sample size of 15, 253 children is based on a year's of population beginning June 1, 2006 and ending May 31, 2007. The reviews will include children in LS 1 status on October 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007. The sample size of 375 is calculated as follows:

Population	15253	N
Tolerable Error	0.05	e
Confidence	0.95	CI
Z value for CI	1.96	Z
Required Sample	375	n

We wish to examine if age would affect how workers visit with children and will randomly stratify based on the age groups: 0-5, 6-12 and 13+

$$n = \frac{Np(1-p)}{(N-1)\sigma^2 + p(1-p)}$$

where $Z\sigma = e, \therefore \sigma = \frac{e}{Z}$

n_{\max} (most conservative) requires $p = .5$

This formula calculates a conservative sample size based on the population size N, the confidence interval Z value (1.96 for a 95% CI) and the tolerable width (error) of the CI. A tolerable error of .05 and a CI of 95% means we will accept that whatever the true proportion, a 95% CI extends no further than .05 on each side of the sample proportion.

- **The state standards for content and frequency of caseworker visits which assure children are visited on a monthly basis.**

CD current policy requires workers to meet face to face with children in foster care the next business day following placement when possible and a minimum of two visits per month, no less than seven calendar days apart. The visit the next business day and at least one visit per month thereafter must occur in the placement setting.

Caseworkers must continually assess the children, through visits in the placement setting, for the child's:

- Safety in the placement;
- Reaction to separation from his/her family;
- Perception/understanding of the problem and what they would like to see happen; and,
- Adjustment to the placement.

The caseworker utilizes the CD-82 *Checklist for Worker/Child Visits* during visits with the child in the placement setting to address, as appropriate, the following issues:

- Child's perception of family needs;
- Child's feelings of guilt or blame;
- Child's loss and grief issues;
- Child's perception of familial and individual strengths;
- Child's desire for future placement;
- Child's adjustment to current placement and school setting;
- Child's participation in and feelings toward treatment and educational services offered;
- How child's perception may differ from actual events;
- Child's feelings of safety in the placement home; and
- Case goal and progress toward this goal.

The CD requests that all children placed through the ICPC in another state, receive contact according to Missouri standards, if possible, but at a minimum of once per month in the placement setting. It is also the expectation of our staff to have contact with children placed through ICPC in Missouri to be seen according to policy for Missouri children, which is twice per month with at least one visit in the placement setting each month.