

County: Allegheny

Lead: Richard Gold

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly Meetings on site

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Children re-entering care after discharges to home
- Older children, adolescents, entering care many older youth first placements are congregate care
- Children remaining in care for extended length of time awaiting permanence

Case Reviews / Process: Case reviews focus on target areas of children in care over six months, children with the goal of adoption, children who enter and exit care during the preceding month, children in care for truancy, and children in care who have mental retardation.

Successes / Highlights: Case reviews have identified systemic issues that contribute to placements and delays in permanence. Some examples:

- Training Need Identified
 - Domestic Violence Training for staff and/or pursuing the addition of Domestic Violence Counselors to agency staff complement.
 - Physical Abuse Etiology and Shaken Baby Syndrome
 - Expanding the training for Case Aid staff who supervise visitations
 - FSP development – writing goals and objectives that are specific, observable and measurable
- Policy and Practice Areas for further review
 - Cases in where decisions are made to remove a “target” child and other children remain in the home
 - Seeking our kinship resources on both sides of the family, emphasis on expanding role of paternal family in cases
 - Review of Court Decisions on a management level

Challenges: Moving the county forward in the process from identification of systemic factors to action oriented steps to address issues and engaging available resources for assistance.

County: Bucks

Lead: Cathy Utz/Raheemah Shamsid-Deen Hampton

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Number of children entering placement due to parental substance addiction
- High number of youth entering placement (ages 13-17) because of child behavioral problems
- Number of children who remain in care beyond 12 months

Case Reviews / Process:

- Implementation/Case Review Team Kick Off Meeting is on June 30, 2009
- Meeting will focus on the purpose and scope of the work to be accomplished, and ensuring proper stakeholders are at the table.
- One case will be reviewed to develop the review structure and process.

Successes / Highlights:

- The county has numerous case review processes in place that will be used to bolster this work.
- The county has multiple integrated workgroups that will be used to form the implementation and case review team.
- JPO and CYS have a natural collaborative working relationship.

Challenges:

- The county children and youth and juvenile justice systems are working together on issues to focus on systemic change and building community resources.
- The county has numerous initiatives and programs in place that are functioning independently and the county is working diligently to connect the overlap and interplay of the various initiatives.

County: Clarion

Lead: Jennifer Friedman

Meeting or conference call schedule: monthly check ins via call or email with lead, regional office and county – quarterly reviews

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of youths in out of home care because of D & A issues of the youth – currently the delinquent youth numbers are very high because of heroin epidemic that is hitting the county.
- High number of youths in out of home care because of D & A issues of the parents
- The high number of 13-17 youths that re-enter care due to a relapse of D & A or MH issue within 12 months.

Case Reviews / Process:

The process in Clarion is different than in other counties because the county is very small and even though the number of placements has increased they are very familiar with all of their out of home placements.

The county developed a process where they will review the out of home placements on a quarterly basis to determine what resources are needed to help the youth in placements and whether our previous attempts to identify resources were successful or assisted the county.

Successes / Highlights:

- State police connected with the county children and youth and JPO to arrange training and education on drug and gang activity.
- CWTP connected with county children and youth and JPO to arrange training and education on case management techniques and assistance in dealing with heroin addiction.
- County children and youth and JPO and other county offices have begun an integrated drug taskforce to manage the growing heroin epidemic with all county resources and partners.

Challenges:

- A key factor for the problem drivers in Clarion County is that currently the county only has out-patient treatment to address their D & A needs.
- The onslaught of the heroin epidemic, which hit the county and the beginning of the fiscal year last year, has stretched the existing county D & A resources to capacity – and in many cases has led to increased placements for youth in the county.
- The county is also experiencing escalated gang activity – which it was not initially equipped to handle.

County: Clinton

Lead: Ellen Whitesell/Gabi Williams

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of youth ages 13-17 entering placement due to behavior problems, and children ages 0-5 entering placement due to parental drug and alcohol abuse.
- High number of children in congregate care.
- High re-entry into care within 12 months.
- High number of children who move from one place to another.

Case Reviews / Process:

- County Children and Youth has expanded its case review process by adding guardians ad litem, service providers and possible a judge as members of the review team. Cases of all children who enter placement are reviewed to ensure that the placement is appropriate and necessary. This structure is being used for the NGA case reviews, in which common themes and potential areas for attention will be identified. NGA team members will participate in case reviews.
- Future case review meetings are being scheduled.

Successes / Highlights:

- The county has the infrastructure in place to support system change.
- Three month court reviews are being held in the county.
- County Children and Youth is using Family Group Decision Making as a tool to prevent placement, for both front end and back end.
- County Children and Youth contracted with Multi-Systemic Therapy provider, and is adding second therapist for SFY 2009-10. They are also exploring the use of Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care.
- Youth Advisory Board is meeting monthly, and has invited youth from nearby counties to participate.
- County Children and Youth is funding Parent Partner program and one family counselor through Needs based Plan and Budget.
- County Children and Youth engaged the Court regarding NGA work.
- County Children and Youth is submitting letter of interest for Phase 2 of the Permanency Practice Initiative and Accurint is up and running.
- County Children and Youth posted Legal Services Initiative position and will be interviewing soon.
- Clinton County Children and Youth is working on new computer system with Lycoming County Children and Youth.
- County Children and Youth is working with CWTP and NGA team members on a logic model for all of its new and enhanced practices.
- In Summer 2009, County Children and Youth will train schools regarding truancy and aftercare.

Challenges:

- Aftercare Collaboration Team is on hold, as supervisor left.
- County needs in-home drug and alcohol treatment services.

County: Dauphin

Lead: Stephanie Maldonado

Meeting or conference call schedule:

- Every month - in person meetings the first Tuesday of every month from 8:30am - 10:30 am (except June's meeting which is scheduled for June 18th)

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Children and Youth has a significant vacancy rate for professional staff (25%) which leads to higher caseloads carried by inexperienced staff and significantly impacts the Agency's ability to assure for child safety.
- As of 1-30-09, Dauphin County has 346 dependents in out of home care, and 223 delinquents in out of home care.
- High number of children re-entering care within 12 months of reunification.
- High number of children entering care who did not achieve reunification within 12 months.

Case Reviews / Process:

- Agency's internal review team currently meeting 1x per week to review cases of older youth (10+) who have been in care for longest periods of time. Dauphin County is planning to improve the process to include cross-systems partners to internal case review team (including: MH/MR, JPO, Education, providers, etc.) when applicable. NGA team members are currently scheduling times to participate in case reviews to provide feedback,
- Dauphin County also conducts Shelter Reviews - conducted on every child in shelter care 1x per week. Team includes: CYS, JPO, Shelter staff
- Dauphin County also conducts triage meetings. Triage meetings are held 2x per wk w/CYS to look at why a child may be potentially coming in to care and any alternatives to placement.

Successes and Highlights

- Regarding staff capacity - All casework positions will be filled as of June 1st
- Dauphin County is working on a Workforce Development Project through support of the University of Pittsburgh CWTP to evaluate agency functioning and workforce retention. Completed organizational readiness surveys and focus groups with staff, CWTP met with senior staff to identify trends and held a practice forum to identify training needs for the agency.
- Dauphin County reorganized their in-house orientation program for new staff to include two parts - a 20 day orientation for new staff, and an in-house orientation during which new workers meet with other agency sections to learn about what they do and to get bigger picture of the agency. They are also matching staff to the best fit position (asking staff to identify their top 3 choices of position assignments and try to place worker in one of those spots if possible) The restructuring was completed and started approximately 4 months ago and they are receiving positive feedback regarding the orientation and matching from staff.
- Implementation of the new Safety Assessment Management Process - in progress since February 2009 and will have all staff trained by June 2009.

Challenges:

- The agency is going through a great deal of changes and at times, the initiatives and programs can be overwhelming to staff and it is critical that case workers and supervisors have an understanding of how all the pieces fit together and help to meet the safety, permanency and well being outcomes for children, youth and families.

County: Erie

Lead: Richard Gold

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly Meetings on site

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Elevated number of children entering and re-entering care due to child behavior problems, particularly in adolescent age range.
- Assessments at the intake level lead to placements more frequently than a recommendation of home and community service provision.
- Drug and alcohol usage of the parents

Case Reviews / Process: Case reviews focus on target areas of children in care over six months, children with the goal of adoption, children who enter and exit care during the preceding month, children in care for truancy, and children in care who have mental retardation.

Successes / Highlights: Case reviews have identified systemic issues that contribute to placements and delays in permanence. Some examples:

- Policy and Practice Areas for further review
 - Seeking our kinship resources on both sides of the family, emphasis on expanding role of paternal family in cases
 - Review of Court Decisions on a management level
 - Use of drug testing and results of drug testing of parents in dictating case decisions
 - Court calendar/scheduling of hearings six months from goal changes or terminations
 - Visitation Practices

Challenges: Moving the county forward in the process from identification of systemic factors. Staff turnover and engagement of front line supervisors in effectuating change will present as challenging.

County: Lancaster

Lead: Stephanie Maldonado

Meeting or conference call schedule:

- Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month from 1pm - 2:30pm. We will be meeting face-to-face every other month in Lancaster County (starting with the June 10th meeting) and then every other month meeting is held via conference call.

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- A low rate of timely reunification
- Lengths of time that children are in placement
- High rate of truancy
- High number of youth entering placement (ages 13-17) because of behavioral/mental health issues

Case Reviews / Process:

- As of 1/1/09 the Agency restructured their internal Placement Review Committee (PRC) to enhance continuity of decisions and practice initiative direction. This committee consists of all four department directors. The committee meets weekly to review all emergency placements, requests for placements, kinship care approvals, case planning, release of custody etc. MH/MR, JPO, resource parents, kin, etc, are pulled in to the PRC meetings as needed. Lancaster County also plans to invite CASAs to participate once they are up and running. Suggested to county that NGA team participate/observe case review process to provide feedback.

Successes / Highlights:

- Lancaster County will be implementing Family Group Decision making to include CYA and JPO cases (10-15 cases in 1st year) in August/September.
- Lancaster County received a national grant and can interview executive director for CASA in July and will have 1st round of volunteers by the fall. Working on community education of this and education with staff on how CASA will work, what they will do, etc.
- Lancaster County is continuing its use of the "Connections" program (the 3-5-7 model). Currently runs 3 times a year – 10 week group for 13-18 year olds and will be adding summer group for the first time this summer.

Challenges:

- Lancaster County has funding barriers and gaps in services for ongoing treatment of parental drug and alcohol addiction/abuse.
- The need to make connections between all the different initiatives and programs to the bigger picture of improved outcomes for staff at the caseworker and supervisor levels and bring the agency on board with everything that is happening and how they fit into it all.

County: Lawrence

Lead: Cathy Utz/Roseann Perry

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of youth entering care because of their own behavioral health issues
- High number of children entering care because of parental substance abuse
- High number of children entering care because of truancy or remaining in care because of lack of transition in educational placements upon discharge from placement

Case Reviews / Process:

- First case review meeting was held on June 1, 2009.
- County selected three cases that were reflective of the problem drivers and they felt were challenging.
- Next case review meeting is July 14, 2009.
- County will select one case from each of the following areas:
 - Adoption;
 - Truancy;
 - In care over a year;
 - County selection.

Successes / Highlights:

- Lawrence County has embraced the process and has convened a large collaborative team. This is extremely significant in that this county's children's systems were very fragmented prior to the beginning of this initiative.

Challenges:

- Lawrence County has a limited number of staff resources. Cultural change will be steady and directed by the administrator to avoid overburdening the existing staff.
- The behavioral health system has attended the monthly meeting and has been an active participant; however it appears that the county will struggle to cultivate the necessary resources and to meet child and family needs.
- Struggles continue with the education system.

County: Lehigh

Lead: Cathy Utz/Ed Coleman

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of children age 0-5 entering placement, and due to general neglect
- High number of children in care for an extended period prior to discharge

Case Reviews / Process:

- Currently, both children and youth and juvenile probation have case review process in place. All children who enter placement are reviewed to ensure that the placement is appropriate and necessary. This structure is being used for the NGA case reviews.
- Case review meeting to be held on June 15, 2009

Successes / Highlights:

- Lehigh County Children and Youth and Juvenile Probation have a good working relationship. Recently, a new JPO Chief was appointed who is committed to systemic change.
- The county has the infrastructure in place to support system change.
- The Local Children's Roundtable will serve as the implementation team. – Next meeting July 15, 2009.

Challenges:

- Using an existing county case review process and taking it to the next level so that reviews are geared to common themes and systemic change as opposed to only reviewing cases individually.

County: Luzerne

Lead: Richard Gold

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly meetings on site

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of kids entering care due to parental drug abuse
- High number of kids remaining in care longer than 12 months
- Not moving toward term / SPLC in a timely manner

Case Reviews / Process: Reviews are done once a month, on site. Cases reviewed include:

- Kids with a goal of adoption
- New placements from the previous month
- Cases in placement more than 12 months
- Kinship placement more than 6 months

Successes / Highlights:

- A cohesive team is being developed through the NGA process across workers, supervisors and managers
- Buy in and appreciativeness of the team approach and NGA work

Challenges:

- Lack of communication with the courts
- Implementing FGDM

County: McKean

Lead: Ellen Whitesell/Roseann Perry

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of youth ages 13-17 entering placement due to truancy and behavior problems
- High number of children under age 10 in care due to parental D&A use
- High number of children in care due to inadequate housing
- Median length of stay for children in foster care is 10.4 months; for residential care, 14 months.
- Community views CYA as the "do it all" agency.
- County needs inpatient and in-home D&A and MH services, including co-occurring D&A and MH, for young parents.

Case Reviews / Process:

- Currently, County Children and Youth is conducting case reviews in conjunction with local MH, MR and D&A offices. Cases of all children who enter placement are reviewed to ensure that the placement is appropriate and necessary. This structure is being expanded upon for the NGA case reviews, in which common themes and potential areas for attention will be identified. NGA team members will participate in reviews.
- Onsite case review meetings to be held on July 22, August 19, September 16, October 21, November 18 and December 16, 2009.

Successes / Highlights:

- County Children and Youth is reviewing all case files to ensure that children placed via voluntary placement agreement (VPA), and children placed in high-end placements, were placed appropriately. Currently, all VPA's are no longer automatically approved; they undergo management review prior to approval.
- All staff has been trained in safety assessment.
- Multi-Systemic Therapy is up and running.
- Children and youth hired an Intensive Placement Prevention Caseworker.
- JPO initiated aftercare program.
- Children and Youth held local NGA kickoff meeting with all child-serving agencies in April 2009.
- County Children and Youth and Juvenile Probation have a good working relationship.
- County Children and Youth planning community outreach, to educate community about what the agency does.

Challenges:

- No local team identified to support and oversee NGA work

County: Montgomery

Lead: Jennifer Friedman

Meeting or conference call schedule: every other month meeting schedule

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Children experience multiple placement settings (more than 2) on a frequent basis.
- High number of youth entering placement (ages 13-17) because of child behavioral problems.
- Adolescent youth reenter care at a higher rate than desired due to child behavior or parental inability to cope

Case Reviews / Process:

The county already has an existing integrated case review process which they are folding in the NGA work. The county views the NGA as another "tool" in their practice change and they are of the philosophy that they do not want to teach staff about initiatives so all of their work in the NGA must be part of the overall strategic plan for the county.

The case review schedule that is already in place is a monthly schedule.

Successes / Highlights:

- The MH director in the county has really partnered with the C & Y administrator on this project, more so than ever before.
- The NGA policies and practices have been integrated into county practices so that staff are moving ahead with the NGA plan as it is part of the practice change in the county- not necessarily an initiative that is being driven by the Commonwealth. Therefore there has been little staff resistance.

Challenges:

- Need to continue development of comprehensive service array of evidence-based in-home services, including FGDM, to meet the needs of adolescents and their families.
- Review available data from perspective of disproportionality in child welfare service planning, including placements and permanency and determine how it is affecting the placements of the county.

County: Northampton

Lead: Jennifer Friedman

Meeting or conference call schedule: every other month meeting schedule

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High # of youth entering placement (ages 12-17) because of child behavior problems (child behavior #1 problem, parents' inability to cope #2 problem)
- High number of children who are reunified but re-enter within 12 mos. (majority of children who re-enter are ages 12-17)
- High number of children remaining in care beyond 12 months. (strategies revolve around school collaboration and MH/MR and D&A services)

Case Reviews / Process:

Every 6 to 8 weeks, on site and on phone; going to choose a driver each time they meet and then focus on that issue.

Successes / Highlights:

- The county began its NGA review process by reviewing over one hundred cases of older youths who were in placement to identify or triage the cases into three categories – those that should not be in placement or can be moved from placement safely and quickly; those that need placement because of severity of issues; and the middle ground- where most of the efforts are needed.
- The county reviewed the data collected from the 100+ review of cases to determine what issues they could quickly address to avoid the need for the placement
- The county children and youth “exec team” was thrilled with the April NGA day and came back with many ideas from the other counties. They are planning on replicating the Montco integrated case review system, beginning in the fall.

Challenges:

- The children and youth administrator is working with the executive staff to integrate the policy and practice changes as part of the agency’s everyday culture of best practice as opposed to another “project” or “initiative.”
- Still need to better coordinate with the sister departments in the county- it can be a silo system. The C & Y administrator is hoping that the integrated case review will help.

County: Philadelphia

Lead: Richard Gold

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly meetings on site

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Difficulty drilling down on specifics, all kids
- Permanency
- Re-entry

Case Reviews / Process: Reviews are done once a month, on site. Cases reviewed include:

- Kids with a goal of adoption
- New placements from the previous month
- Cases in placement more than 12 months
- Kinship placement more than 6 months

Successes / Highlights:

- Implementing structured decision making in the hotline
- Implementing model safety assessment
- Implementing alternative service system to triage cases that do not need to come to placement, etc

Challenges:

- Being creative or looking outside the box
- Sense of urgency in helping kids
- Moving kids to permanency
- Acceptance of placement

County: Schuylkill

Lead: Ellen Whitesell/Ed Coleman

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- High number of youth ages 13-17 entering placement due to truancy and behavior problems
- High number of children under age 5 in care due to parental drug and alcohol (D&A) use
- Low Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) rate, due in part to inadequate service array to support and strengthen families

Case Reviews / Process:

- Children and youth initiated placement case review process, of all children who are in care. This structure is being used for the NGA case reviews, in which common themes and potential areas for attention will be identified. Starting June 22, 2009, NGA team members will begin to participate in these reviews via monthly onsite meetings.
- Children and youth initiated committee to review all cases prior to court hearings.

Successes / Highlights:

- County Children and Youth talked to Judge regarding NGA, and regarding reconvening Local Children's Round Table.
- Judge will be joining NGA team (on a rotating basis).
- County Children and Youth is working on upgrading supervisor compensation.
- County Children and Youth issued Request for Proposal (RFP) for FGDM, and 16 providers attended the RFP meeting. Schuylkill County Children and Youth contacted Luzerne County Children and Youth prior to the start of their RFP process.
- Children and Youth is scheduled to start the Legal Services Initiative (LSI) program, and is working with the LSI coordinator from SWAN to set this up.
- Children and Youth staff were trained in use of Accurant.
- County Children and Youth and Juvenile Probation have a good working relationship. The county has the infrastructure in place to support system change.
- County Children and Youth plans to place additional staff in elementary schools, for truancy prevention.
- New D&A provider, Gaudenzia, plans to open in the county on July 1.

Challenges:

- County Children and Youth struggles with caseworker vacancies.
- Regional office is sharing information regarding how Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties increased their vacancies, and decreased the number of staff on-call hours.
- NGA team needs to engage and work with the Court, regarding implementing changes needed, to improve low Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) rate.
- NGA team needs to help to explore and identify truancy prevention programs.

County: York

Lead: Richard Gold

Meeting or conference call schedule: Monthly meetings on site

3-5 Top Problem Drivers:

- Placements due to Parent / child conflict and truancy
- High number of kids age 13-17 entering care because of behavioral problems
- High number of children reunified but reenter care within 12 months
- High number of children in congregate care

Case Reviews / Process: Reviews are done once a month, on site. Cases reviewed include:

- Kids with a goal of adoption
- New placements from the previous month
- Cases in placement more than 12 months
- Kinship placement more than 6 months

Successes / Highlights:

- Acceptance, enthusiasm, buy in to the NGA process
- Using NGA process as the focus for other planning processes (i.e. Integrated Children's Services)
- Established lessons learned from case reviews that will guide their work moving forward and change the culture of the agency (i.e. "No placements without a Child Placement Advisory Committee meeting or interagency team meeting, unless an emergency," "Payment for housing should occur instead of placing for housing," "Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement is to be used as a last resort," etc.

Challenges:

- Breakdown between leadership and supervisors and workers
- Implementing FGDM as a rule and not an exception
- Using Family Finding at the beginning and during the
- Union issues
- Sense of urgency