

## ***Case Type Standardization Project: Proposed Case Types and Functionality***

### **Issue:**

eWiSACWIS currently has available multiple case types such as CPS Family, Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (JJ). Currently, the Case Type value is the most readily available data element to distinguish what services case are receiving. The Case Type value retains historical data on the effective dates of various Case Type designations over time.

To date, there has been limited guidance from DCFS regarding the program implications of the Case Type values and how the Case Type should be maintained over the life of the case. The Case Type values should be used and maintained over the life of the case based on the services being provided to families.

Child welfare agency staff have indicated there is significant variation across and within counties regarding how specific Case Type values are used and maintained over time. The result is significant inconsistency statewide in this critical data element.

### **Background:**

The Case Type value in eWiSACWIS is relevant for three major reasons as follows:

1. Reporting – Case Type impacts state and local ability to count cases and evaluate caseload activity within a county, to analyze performance and service trends across counties, and to accurately measure state performance on federal outcome measures and performance improvement areas.
2. Program Practice– Case Type impacts state and local ability to support implementation of program policy requirements and practice guidelines that are associated with certain types of cases at different points in the case process. This impacts State and county ability to understand and manage workload issues and selection of cases for State and Federal reviews.
3. Fiscal – Case Type impacts the ability of the State and counties to evaluate child welfare expenditures and consider changes in funding processes. Case Type values and the accuracy and reliability of this data would be critical to implement the WCHSA recommendation for the Visions model of case rate funding. Case Type values could also be important for claiming Title IV-E and Medicaid Targeted Case Management revenue and ensuring compliance with Federal fiscal requirements.

### **Discussion Points:**

- In some counties, including BMCW, worker assignment types are used to track groups of cases. It is not feasible, however, to use worker assignment type as a basis for distinguishing the type of case on a statewide basis.
- For Case Type values to be meaningful, the number of values should be kept relatively small and should reflect significant numbers of cases. Specialized Case Type values should be limited to groups of cases that need to be broken out separately for program management,

data reporting, or fiscal reporting reasons. Some of the existing Case Type values with small numbers of cases could be consolidated into other values, such as Child Welfare cases.

- Both counties and DCFS need the ability to identify when program policy requirements and practice guidelines apply to specific types of cases. The program policy requirements and practice guidelines vary depending on the circumstances of the case and the position in the case flow process. The current Case Type values and inconsistent use of values make it difficult to measure the flow of cases through the CPS case process. A particular challenge with the current values is being able to identify what families are receiving ongoing services versus the initial investigation/assessment phase of the case. Currently the CPS Family value applies to the life of the case, with no way to distinguish when cases begin receiving ongoing services.
- Case work within the CPS case process can be used to determine whether cases are in the initial assessment or ongoing services phases. Thus system edits or other functionality could be built into the system to prompt cases in the Case Type value based on the work being done. Similar functionality could be incorporated for other types of cases.
- Since there can be only one Case Type value at a time, there will be situations where there will be overlap in the actual services. For example, a CPS Family receiving ongoing services that has another CPS report will be simultaneously in ongoing services and initial assessment, so the Case Type alone may not reflect the full range of services being provided. Counties have indicated the need for “combination” Case Type values where a child in the family is receiving JJ services.
- While functionality can be added to drive selection of Case Type values in some situations, other situations will require the Case Type value to be manually selected and maintained by the user. For example, for families who are receiving CPS services as a CPS Family case and have a child become adjudicated delinquent, the Case Type value must be manually changed to the staff to CPS Family & JJ Case Type.
- An alternative to the current Case Type approach would be to have fewer Case Types, but allow for the selection of “Program Components” within any type of case. Examples of program components would be assessment/evaluation, ongoing service, benefit payment, or monitoring/follow up. Cases could have multiple components active at a time and transitions between components, such as initial assessment and ongoing service, would not require a change in the Case Type. However, some of the program components would have to be maintained manually and having to select both a Case Type and Program Component would increase complexity for users.

**Recommendations:**

Given the limitations of the current Case Type reference values and functionality, the following recommendations are proposed. These recommendations are focused on limiting the number of Case Type values to those necessary to meet data reporting, program management and fiscal needs and enhancing the application to better support accurate Case Type values.

1. The DCFS should develop a Case Type guide with clear definitions for the values and provide training and technical assistance to promote accurate use of Case Type values. The current Case List Summary Report (SM04a02) can serve as a tool in reviewing current Case Type values and counts with the BMCW and county agency staff.
2. The current reference values for Case Type should be modified to eliminate unnecessary values and redefine or add other values to better capture Case Type information. See the attached list for proposed Case Type list and definitions. This effort will improve the reliability of the Case Type information and support the addition of functionality to have the application prompt Case Type changes for users.
3. A conversion effort will be necessary to move cases from reference values being eliminated to new values and to change cases currently using values that are not appropriate. Some of the conversion effort could be automated.
4. Based on the modified list of values, the following enhancements to the eWiSACWIS application are recommended, in order of their priority, to support the accuracy of Case Type data:
  - Add functionality at the conclusion of Access Report approval to drive Case Type values based on the type of Service Intake screen in (Child Welfare, JJ, Voluntary Kinship Care, etc.) or by PS Report screen in (CPS Family-Initial Assessment, CPS Family/JJ-Initial Assessment or CPS-Licensed/Certified Provider)
  - Add functionality at the conclusion of an Assessment approval to drive Case Type values based on the Investigation Disposition selected for the family as follows:
    - For cases that will be opened for ongoing services, the values that will be made available for selection will be CPS Family-Ongoing or CPS Family/JJ-Ongoing, or;
    - For cases that will be open for other agency services, the value that can be selected will be Child Welfare.
5. Add prompt functionality to the conclusion of a Case Progress Evaluation where there are no identified child safety concerns and no child in the case is in placement to ensure that the current Case Type value remains accurate.
6. Based on the a change of a Pre-Adoptive Child case legal status to “Return of Physical Custody to the County” and/or a placement service ending reason of “Transfer to [County]”, add functionality to drive the Case Type value to Sustaining Care.

By: Division of Children and Family Services