

Frequently Asked Questions: The Systems Change Review Process

Q: What is a Systems Change Review?

A: A Systems Change Review is applied to a subset of cases referred to the DCF by the local child welfare agency under Act 78. Eligible cases involve a recent incident resulting in a death or near death with prior agency contact that is recent and/or extensive. The review includes collaboration between the local child welfare agency, tribes, community stakeholders, the DCF and other relevant parties. The collaboration is facilitated by DCF and includes a structured analysis of the system. Participants leave with a better understanding of how the various levels of our system influence Key Observations in the reviewed case. Further, the particular findings of each case will be situated in a broader context of all cases reviewed and subsequent recommendations will be made based on patterns and trends instead of one unique case.

Q: When does a Systems Change Review occur?

A: A Systems Change Review is a process that is applied to a subset of cases when the following criteria is met: (1) the local child welfare agency learns of a serious incident due to suspected maltreatment as defined in 48.981 (7) (cr): child death, serious injury, egregious incident has occurred, they submit a Serious Incident Notification to DCF, Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), and (2) the family that is subject of the Serious Incident Notification has a previous CPS history that is relevant based on the extent and recency of that history.

Q: Who is responsible for the Systems Change Review?

A: A Systems Change Review engages representatives from various roles within Wisconsin's child welfare system. The DCF, Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), Bureau of Safety and Well-Being (BSWB), assumes primary leadership for its application. Primary communications with local child welfare agency directors regarding the overall process will be initiated by staff at BSWB. Additionally, DCF contracts with external child welfare professionals, called Wisconsin Reviewers, who have expertise in Wisconsin's child welfare system. Most Wisconsin Reviewers are employed full-time by local child welfare agencies and are trained by DCF to complete components of the Systems Change Review process. Local child welfare agency professionals will receive communications from the Wisconsin Reviewer to schedule and coordinate the Human Factors Debriefing. Staff at the Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) also communicate with local child welfare agency professionals for the purpose of scheduling and coordinating the Mapping Sessions.

Q: What portions of the Systems Change Review include child welfare professionals from local CPS agencies?

A: Local child welfare agency professionals remain responsible for submitting the Serious Incident Notification to the DCF whenever the local child welfare agency decides a death or near death due to alleged maltreatment may qualify under 48.981 (7) (cr). Once a Serious Incident Notification is reviewed by DCF and qualified, the local child welfare agency professional completes the 90-Day Summary and submits it to DCF. When a Serious Incident Notification is qualified and eligible for a Systems Change Review, professionals from the local child welfare agency will be asked to participate at two specific points in the overall process: Human Factors Debriefing and Mapping.

The Human Factors Debriefing may include participation from the child welfare professional and supervisor for each case. Other child welfare professionals may also be invited to participate on a case-by-case basis when their expertise is needed on a specific case (e.g., medical professional). The Human Factors Debriefing includes a confidential and voluntary one-on-one meeting between the identified local child welfare agency

professional and a state contracted Wisconsin Reviewer. The goal of the Human Factors Debriefing is to understand how decisions are made in context.

In order to understand case-specific influences for each identified Key Observation, the Mapping Session includes participation from individuals who represent different roles within the child welfare system in Wisconsin. Examples of roles represented on the Mapping Team include: administration, management, direct practice CPS (Child Protective Services) professionals, DCF representatives, and community stakeholders. These individuals are nominated by their peers to participate on the regional Mapping Teams. It is possible that no one from the local child welfare agency will be on the Mapping Team that maps this specific case. The Mapping Session is facilitated by the Wisconsin Reviewer. If one of the Mapping Team Members had a direct role (e.g., supervisor or front-line professional) in the identified case, he or she will not participate in the mapping of that particular case.

Q: When I look at the flow chart, I see that local child welfare agencies are involved in the Human Factors Debriefing and the Mapping Session. What can I tell people about these two sessions?

A: The Human Factors Debriefing is one-on-one and includes a conversation between the Wisconsin Reviewer and the child welfare professional(s) directly connected to the case. Typically, child welfare professionals include the direct-practice worker and supervisor. Child welfare professionals selected to participate are notified by a Wisconsin Reviewer. Participation is completely voluntary, and child welfare professionals can decline for any reason. An indirect result of the session includes some therapeutic benefit, likely because the child welfare professionals are able to be heard and better understood through this process. The conversation is approached with sensitivity to the trauma experienced.

A Mapping Session occurs after the debriefing of the child welfare professionals and supervisors, and it is facilitated by a Wisconsin Reviewer. A team of different child welfare professionals, not directly connected to the case, and child welfare partners analyze systemic factors and their influences. Mapping Teams are comprised of dynamic individuals who can provide insight into components of the key findings and systems being reviewed. The Mapping Session will end with a visual representation of the systems and their influences, and results in the construction of the “Second Story.”

Q: What is the difference between the Human Factors Debriefing and the Mapping Session?

A: A Human Factors Debriefing is one on one session with child welfare professionals and is aimed at gathering additional information that cannot be found in the case file and participation includes child welfare professionals directly connected to the case. The Mapping Session includes participants not connected to the case and the aim is to analyze systemic influences on the case and determine areas for targeted change.

Q: Who participates in a Mapping Session?

A: There will always be a core team for each Mapping Session, and ad hoc members may join depending on case factors. Other Mapping Team Members may include child welfare professionals, supervisors and administrators, health care representatives, law enforcement and community members. The Mapping Team will never include the direct child welfare professional or supervisor of the case. There is an online orientation prior to each Mapping Session to help orient Mapping Team Members to the process.

Q: When do Mapping Sessions occur?

A: Mapping Sessions are scheduled for two-days each quarter and are held at the regional offices. Up to two cases can be mapped per day in each region, one in the morning and one in the afternoon with a lunch break. Mapping Team Participants must be available for each quarterly Mapping Session, which means a commitment of up to eight full days a year.

Q: What is the “Second Story?”

A: The Second Story tells of the incident and includes details typically not represented in the case file, including the child welfare professionals’ perspective. The Second Story reflects a deeper understanding of their experience with systemic influences and constraints on their case work.

Q: How do I find out what was learned as a result of the Systems Change Review?

A: Data, including systemic influences, from the Systems Change Review process will be aggregated on a regular basis and the information will be disseminated to local child welfare agencies. Additionally, considerations for systems-level changes will be advanced to the CQI Advisory committee.