

To: DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: 2015 Initial Assessment Case Record Review Report and Child Welfare Continuous
Quality Improvement System Update

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to introduce the 2015 Initial Assessment Case Record Review Report which describes the case record review process and provides results and recommendations related to the case review findings. This report is the second in a series of case record review reports on Wisconsin's child welfare casework practice based on record reviews of cases served in Access, Initial Assessment and Ongoing Services and will serve as a significant source of information in understanding our state's child welfare practice and system improvements that can be made to support better outcomes for children and families served in our state's child welfare system. The 2015 Access Case Record Review Report was released in November, 2015. A forthcoming report will provide results of a record review of a statewide sample of Ongoing Service cases served in 2015.

BACKGROUND

Wisconsin's Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) System is evolving to include multiple sources of data and information to understand system performance and to begin to develop and implement strategies for system improvement. This data and information will help state and local agencies drive decision-making and, ultimately, better outcomes for children and families. One source of data for our child welfare CQI system is case record reviews. The CQI case record review process uses new evaluation tools to assess case practice in Access, Initial Assessment and Ongoing Services.

In 2015, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) completed the first review of Initial Assessment practice based on CPS referrals received in calendar year 2014. The cases reviewed included a statewide representative sample of 271 randomly selected Initial Assessments approved between January 1, 2014 and March 15, 2014. Analysis of this case practice associated with this sample helps us begin to understand Initial Assessment performance statewide and to identify opportunities to enhance practice and improve future CQI efforts.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

The immediate goals of this review were to: (1) establish a statewide baseline for CPS Initial Assessment

practice as measured by current state standards; (2) identify practice areas needing improvement that warrant further analysis and may be candidates for improvement projects;(3) test the new case record review process; and (4) use the review findings to identify practices that result in positive outcomes for children and families

In testing the new case record review instrument and process, DCF found that some changes are needed to further improve data collection. The Initial Assessment case review instrument will be updated to correct for any potential bias in future case reviews. As you review the results in the report, please note limitations that may influence results. The review instrument used to support this case review process is included as an Appendix in the report.

The key findings related to statewide Initial Assessment practice are discussed further in the report, which can be found at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqireports> Further analyses related to Initial Assessment practice and outcomes will rely on additional sources of data and information.

Critical next steps related to the Initial Assessment case review process and to advancing the development of our state's Child Welfare CQI System include:

- Updates to the Initial Assessment case record review instrument and process to incorporate lessons learned.
- Providing information on how local child welfare agencies can access training, to be developed following updates to the review instrument noted above, on how to use the Initial Assessment case review tool for their own CQI efforts.
- Using results from this report along with information gathered from other data sources to inform decision-making regarding future improvement projects and to improve child welfare outcomes.
- Completion of similar case record reviews and related report on Ongoing Services to be issued in late 2016.

Thank you for your consideration of the results of this case review process as we improve our state's child welfare system and explore how we can use this information to better serve children and their families in our system. More information about the child welfare CQI process can be found at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqi>

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