

County Improvement Plan (CIP) Guide and Template

The preliminary findings from the Quality Service Review (QSR) are presented and provided to the county, QSR reviewers and any additional stakeholders the county invites to attend the Exit Conference at the conclusion of the on-site QSR. Following the Exit Conference, the QSR Local and State Site Leads work collaboratively on a second-level of quality assurance of the preliminary findings.

The county will receive a QSR Final Report approximately four weeks from when the Local and State Site Lead team submits the final QSR findings for analysis. The final results are then presented by the Local and State Site Lead team at the county's Next Steps Meeting.

The Next Steps Meeting is the kickoff to the development of the County Improvement Plan (CIP), which will outline the priorities the county chooses to focus on to improve specific outcomes as a result of a comprehensive review of their practice which includes the QSR findings and may also include a review of additional data such as the county data packages provided by the state, quantitative measures produced by the county, as well as the results of other qualitative data.

Following the Next Steps Meeting, the county works collaboratively to develop their CIP. The county must submit their CIP to the appropriate Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Regional Office Director and QSR Site Leads no later than 60 calendar days from the date of the Next Steps Meeting. The OCYF Regional Office will review the county's CIP in conjunction with the QSR State Site Leads. Following the review of the CIP, the OCYF RO will accept the plan within 10 calendar days of receipt. The acknowledgment to the county of acceptance of the CIP marks the effective start date of the CIP.

Once the CIP is accepted, the following documents will be posted to the Department of Public Welfare's website:

- County's QSR Final Report
- CIP

The attached CIP template has been designed to assist the organization in thinking about how to plan and implement improvements.

County Improvement Plan

County Name: Lackawanna

Date of Plan: July 23, 2013

Initial

X Update

Section I. Sponsor Team

The members of Lackawanna County Department of Human Services/Office of Youth and Family Services' (YFS) Administrative Team form the core Sponsor Team: William Browning, Executive Director; Kerry Browning, Court and Community Services Director; Adrian Maillet, Fiscal Officer; Kathy Snyder, Fiscal Administrative Officer II; Nancy Johnson, Casework Manager; Jason Kavulich, Casework Manager; and Amanda Helring, Quality Assurance Manager. The agency's name changed to YFS in January 2013 to reflect our work with the whole family and the county Department of Human Services' goal of countywide integration of human services.

Section II. Background and Development of the Desired Future State including Priority Outcomes

(Provide a detailed narrative about the process that was implemented during the development of the CIP. Who was involved? What data was reviewed? How did you analyze your data? How were the outcomes determined and prioritized? List and describe the overarching outcomes that were identified. NOTE: Outcomes can be limited to approximately two to four priority areas.)

YFS' third County Improvement Plan (CIP) was developed primarily by the Sponsor Team and includes documentation of the completion of outcomes identified in our initial CIP. In order to identify our priority outcomes, we reviewed (1) our Licensing Inspection Summaries (LIS) from the past several years including the most recent dated May 2013; (2) the reports from our three annual Quality Service Reviews (QSRs) (2011-2013) which included information from reviewer scoring and case summaries, YFS' data package which included Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data, and four focus groups one each of caseworkers, supervisors, educators, and frontline service providers participating in the Human Services Integration Project; (3) agency practice and our concentrated efforts over the past eight years to improve practice and outcomes for families; (4) agency policies and procedures; and (5) other agency initiatives, such as the PA Child Welfare Demonstration Project (CWDP) and the Systems of Care. Some of the action steps were already in process prior to our first CIP based on previously-identified needs.

Since 2005, the agency has focused on fundamental processes and initiatives, such as (a) engagement of families, (b) supervision as a major driving force of compliance, connection to the work, family progress, employee performance, employee professional

growth and development, and positive family outcomes, and (c) thorough assessment as the linchpin of sound decision-making. While some staff continue to struggle with this shift in practice, many staff have embraced the new way of doing business. We consider these initiatives as the laying the groundwork for many of the enterprises we are moving forward with. Our internal Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process has identified that while significant changes in practice and outputs/outcomes occurred in the early years of these efforts, we have recently encountered a plateau effect which we have begun to address in a variety of ways. While we believe that the plateau effect impacts our outcomes, we acknowledge that this type of effect is not uncommon during the change process, especially in a fundamental practice shift like we have initiated.

YFS is currently involved in several extensive projects/initiatives, the major one most relevant to our CQI process being the CWDP. Moving forward, we will meld our CIP with our plan for the CWDP so as to streamline and target our efforts in a way that is efficient, makes sense for us, and will reduce the number of diverse efforts on which we expend time and resources. While the CWDP is an immense endeavor, we are fortunate that it closely parallels the direction the agency as established in 2005. Indeed, the timing of the CWDP makes it an exceptional opportunity for the agency as it affords us the resources to implement some of our established plans sooner rather than later. As the CWDP mirrors our core efforts, it is in essence the next stop on the path we have already plotted. Our staff have been energized by the CWDP, particularly the implementation of the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) and the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)/ The underlying tenets of these tools are both simple and brilliant because they require an assessment of families' and children's needs that greatly differs from a traditional child welfare approach.

Priority Outcomes:

Outcome # 1: To consistently deliver Independent Living (IL) services to youth between the ages of 16 and 21 in substitute care through YFS with special focus on youth transitioning out of care and on informal IL assessment and service delivery beginning for children aged 15.5 years and in substitute care. **COMPLETED**

Outcome # 2: To build on the strengths which enable us to partner with other child- and family-serving systems to form teams around children and families to improve the functioning and communication of these teams. **COMPLETED**

Outcome # 3: To engage fathers in the assessment and planning process for their children at all levels of and points in the family's involvement with YFS.

Outcome # 4: To deeply and accurately assess and identify the needs of mothers, fathers, and children related to their functioning and well-being.

Findings for Priority Outcomes:

Outcome # 1: This outcome has been completed.

IL work has been integrated into protective services caseworkers' habits which allows for earlier identification of and planning for youth's IL needs. While the agency still maintains one dedicated IL worker, a recent change of staff in that position has promoted a fresh perspective of ways that we can serve IL youth. This IL worker continues to work with youth who are nearing transitions.

YFS has developed a concurrent planning unit to work mostly with adolescents in placement in order to ensure that (1) these youth are in the least restrictive placement to meet their needs, (2) the youth have the services of the appropriate treatment, duration, and intensity in order to successfully meet their physical, mental/emotional, behavioral, social, educational, and IL needs, (3) the youth form lasting connections and re-form family connections as safe, and (4) the youth are able to achieve the most desirable permanency option which best meet their needs. This unit supports our IL work and will exist short-term in order to address the needs of adolescents who have lingered in foster care for extended periods of time. The unit will implement trauma-informed practice in order to be able to understand the basis for these youth's difficulties and in order to find the best permanent resource for them. Because of the composition of the unit's clients, a majority of youth with IL needs are concentrated in this unit which should enhance the cohesion between the IL worker and ongoing workers in the unit. We expect that implementation of the CANS will bring a new perspective to the assessment of these youth's needs and the planning for these youth.

In our most recent QSR, we achieved ratings of acceptable in 100% of applicable cases for the Pathway to Independence indicator.

Outcome # 2: This outcome has been completed.

The agency developed a process for communicating with our education partners once a determination has been made that the children require protective services. This process has facilitated discussion between YFS staff and the education system. Additionally, a monthly meeting is scheduled and either YFS staff or an educator can request that a particular issue is discussed if they believe that a general problem or a case-specific breakdown in communication is occurring. While there has been some use of this outlet, our assessment is that neither YFS staff nor educators feel that many

issues require this level of attention now that there is a structure for notification and regular communication by e-mail.

When we initially chose this outcome, we focused on our partnership with educators because our assessment was that this particular relationship needed the most effort in order to be successful. Additionally, targeting one relationship was attainable whereas targeting teaming in general was not. While we believe that case documentation and outputs as well as positive feedback from both YFS staff and educators confirm our achievement in this area, we believe that this achievement will not necessarily be reflected in the teaming indicators (formation and functioning) as there are numerous other partners typically involved in a team. While some of the action steps were specific to this outcome, many others can and have been generalized for use with increasing teaming between the agency and other child- and family-serving systems. For example, surveying providers and partners to determine what they expect and what they need from us helps us to identify not only needs but also areas for education and growth. A primary focus of the first phase of the project of integrating county human services is teaming between child welfare and mental/behavioral health so we expect that our teaming ratings will continue to rise as teaming is integrated into practice simply as the way that we do business.

Outcome # 3: We prioritized this outcome by including it in our initial CIP not only because we realized that many opportunities for growth and improvement exist, but also because we believe that true engagement of families makes a difference in the relationship between the agency and the family, in the caseworker's and supervisor's outputs, in the families' opportunities for progress, and in achieving outcomes and sustaining lasting change. Engagement is so critical to work with families that it underpins literally every interaction. This belief meant that our CQI work had to begin at the most basic yet essential element of our process.

While we have been working since 2005 to use the interactional helping skills to engage families and external team members, we realized very early that engagement of "present" family members improved, but that family members who were not the focus of the case were often overlooked even at times they should have been a focus. Because at least 75% of the families we serve are headed by a single mother, most often the father is overlooked even if he is having some contact with his child.

Failure to engage all of the parents negatively impacts permanency, stability, maintenance of family connections, assessment of the parent, planning for the parents, the provision of services, etc., as well as violates the parent's legal rights. Exclusion of one parent automatically reduces the child's possibilities, connections, and resources by half.

One of our greatest challenges has been helping caseworkers and supervisors to understand why it is important for fathers to be engaged throughout the life of the case and not only when the child is placed. Staff have extensively been trained and mentored on engaging fathers. This training, modeling, and mentoring has worked to (1) address staff's personal beliefs about fathers, (2) educate staff on father's rights and the research about how fathers involvement with the children impacts children's lives, and (3) emphasize from the director down that there can be no quibbling about our responsibility to fathers when we are in the course of making significant decisions that will forever change a family's life. However, reviews of referrals and cases and administrative staffing of cases (including cases being presented at the time that the caseworker has determined that the children cannot be maintained safely in the home even with a safety plan) show that caseworkers and supervisors consistently do not gather information about the father or attempt to contact him. This pattern persists even though such efforts might avoid a placement and despite staff being regularly questioned at all staffings about their effort to identify, locate, and engage the father. One of the QSR cases from 2013 perfectly highlights this phenomenon: the father of some of the children visits the home daily but the caseworker had not obtained any information about him, discussed the case with him, or included him on the Plan despite the case being open for an extended period. This man had a great investment in the family and indeed was considered by the other children to be their father even though he was not their biological father. This father's contributions and resources were disregarded even though involving him may have meant that the family could exit the agency's services more quickly, develop a more comprehensive plan for sustaining lasting progress, or stabilize.

Our QSR ratings regarding engagement efforts of fathers have consistently decreased over the past three years. What remains despite the training, transfer of learning, modeling, mentoring, and monitoring (through the QSR process and other internal mechanisms) is the belief that actively pursuing a parent who is arbitrarily deemed by the caseworker and supervisor not to be the subject of the case is "extra" work rather than the core of the work. Many staff believe that sending the father a letter every three months before court is sufficient to meet their obligation, but this is not engagement and it rarely produces the result of the father spontaneously contacting the agency because as we know, fathers must be engaged in a dynamically different way than mothers, especially if they have not been caregivers for their children. Lack of engagement of fathers even on placement cases is reflected in our current licensing inspection as well.

We fervently believe that QSR ratings on engagement of fathers are tied to many other ratings, such as assessment/understanding, planning, role and voice, etc. This is borne out by the fact that our ratings in these areas move in concert with each other which also supports our assertion that engagement is the linchpin of everything that we do.

Engagement is also heavily tied to our outcomes in the CWDP. In fact, a significant piece of the theory of change for the project is that better engagement leads to better information gathering, i.e., better assessment. Expanding our engagement process is part of our first-year intervention and the vehicle for this is the implementation of Family Team Conferencing (FTC) on placement cases. The implementation of the FAST on all intake and ongoing cases is also expected to support our engagement as the FAST is an observation-based tool which is to be completed collaboratively with the family and team members. The FAST is much less threatening than typical assessments in that its purpose is identifying and communicating about *what* is occurring without initially focusing on *why* the situation is occurring. Discussion of the FAST and the CANS, which will be completed for all placements, will be an integral part of the FTCs.

Strategies to address the arbitrary decisions that fathers are not relevant to the case are being addressed in a four-prong approach: (1) the improvement team focusing on some concrete quick wins to jump start engagement of fathers, (2) continued modeling and mentoring which will primarily occur through Team Meetings and Family Team Conferences, (3) updating case review checklists to include specific tasks regarding fathers, and (4) transfer of learning around the QSR and the Enhancing Critical Thinking supervisors toolkit for implementation of the toolkit as the primary structure for supervision. While the process for FTCs is normally that the caseworker coordinates and conducts the conferences a skilled consultant will coordinate these conferences and model the skills for supervisors and caseworkers for the first 6-12 months. This will allow us to conduct trainings and transfer of learning activities to support our engagement and critical thinking efforts before staff are trained in FTC in the spring of 2014.

Outcome # 4: Concerted effort toward improving the assessment skills of caseworkers and supervisors has been one of our top priorities over the past few years as part of strengthening our foundation for moving forward to more advanced work with families. Our needs in this area extend to all points along the continuum of service from intake through adoption or case closure. Our focus has been on both informal and formal assessment, e.g., even caseworkers and supervisors providing ongoing protective services need to continually assess the situation and the family's progress at each contact- the work of assessment is not limited to the intake phase. Skillful engagement and supervision will support the work of assessment as visits transform into planned interviews aimed at gathering all of the information to make an assessment or plan and continually moving the case forward. The two planes of assessment are that (1) caseworkers need to gather information to the appropriate breadth and depth and (2) caseworkers need to be able to synthesize the information into a formal assessment, recommendation, and plan. Thorough and accurate assessment is the logical next step between engagement and information-gathering and developing the plan.

Thorough and accurate assessment is the difference between making decisions based on superficial factors which may be unrelated to the family's functioning and delving deep enough to be able to identify and remedy the root cause. Detailed assessment information will result in plans that are based on measurable, observable behaviors and remedying root causes will create opportunities for sustaining change.

The five primary assessment tools completed by frontline caseworkers will be the safety assessment, risk assessment, FAST, CANS and Ages & Stages/Ages & Stages:S-E. The FAST has replaced our current family assessment process. The FAST assesses how the family functions as a whole while the CANS assesses how each caregiver and child function in relation to each other. The CANS will be completed for children who are at risk of removal from their homes or who score above a certain threshold on individual indicators on the FAST. One of the most helpful features of the FAST and CANS is that these tools do not give a "total" score-instead the rating on each item indicates the level of action needed in that domain. This allows caseworkers and supervisors to instantly know the intensity or immediacy of action required. Our ratings on the assessment indicators have steadily been declining over the past three years and we believe this is tied inherently to not only needs in the area of assessment itself, but also to needs in engagement. We expect that more thorough, accurate assessment will support improvement in practice performance indicators, such as planning, as well as youth and family status indicators, such as functioning.

Section III. Plan Strategies and Action Steps to be Implemented and Monitored

(The purpose of the plan is to remind leadership and work team(s) of commitments made, track accountability, and monitor progress. There are essentially three types of continuous improvement planning – quick wins, which can start being identified and implemented as gaps are being identified, mid-term improvement planning, and longer term improvement planning.)

Outcome # 1: To consistently deliver Independent Living (IL) services to youth between the ages of 16 and 21 in substitute care through YFS with special focus on youth transitioning out of care and on informal IL assessment and service delivery beginning for children aged 15.5 years and in substitute care.

STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS
1. Educate protective services caseworkers and supervisors on the IL process and requirements and the need for IL to be addressed consistently for youth in care ages 15.5 to 21 years old even if the youth does not receive formal IL services.	1. Train protective services caseworkers and supervisors about the IL process.	1. Protective services caseworkers and supervisors understand the IL process and the importance of ongoing preparation of a youth for adulthood.	Training report. Survey of staff to assess their understanding of the process and the need for their participation in the IL process.	Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors	By 11/18/2011	Updated policies and procedures, staff training	Completed August 2012. Training had been initiated in 2011 but needed to be revamped in order to meet the needs of the staff. Follow-up monitoring is needed.
	2. Reinforce the importance of consistent IL practice to ensure youth's needs are properly addressed.	2. Discussion at supervisor and group meetings. Conduct ongoing transfer of learning sessions.	Supervisor and group meeting notes, training report.	Improvement Team, Administrative Team, Protective Services Supervisors	By 02/10/2012	Updated policies and procedures	Completed August 2012.

	3. Ensure that youths' IL needs are addressed consistently even at times that they do not need formal IL services.	3. Caseworkers are consistently discussing youths' educational and life goals to determine if they are taking the correct steps to achieve their goals.	Documentation of ongoing communication with the youth, the resource parents, and the school counselor about the child's goals and needs. Review of a sample of youth eligible for IL services to ensure that their IL needs have been consistently addressed. Survey of youth to determine how they believe their IL needs were addressed.	Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors	By 02/10/2012	Staff training, communication with school personnel Possible technical assistance from the CWRC	IL focus group conducted in February 2012 as part of the QSR. Practice and assessment are ongoing. Implementation of the Education Screen will support this objective. The Education Screen is pending final revision and release by OCYF. Agency staff were not trained in the initial version.
2. Refine the agency's IL process, policies, and procedures.	1. Update the IL process to require a referral for an IL assessment for any youth from entering substitute care at ages 15.5 to 17 years old.	1. All youth entering care between the ages of 15.5 and 17 years old will receive an IL assessment.	Completed policies and procedures. Documentation of youth referred for IL services.	Improvement Team	By 11/18/2011	Staff time commitment to develop the new process, staff input	Completed August 2012.

	2. Staff IL referrals at internal administrative permanency case staffings.	2. All IL referrals are staffed by an administrator to determine what course of action best meets the youth's IL needs.	Documentation as a part of the agency's permanency packet.	Improvement Team, Caseworker Managers, IL Caseworker, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors	By 11/18/2011	Development of a form for documentation specific to IL	The agency's internal permanency review process has been restructured for administration to check in at key decision-making points in order to consistently move permanency cases.
	3. Develop specific criteria required for the IL assessment so multiple individuals and/or agencies will complete the assessments in a consistent manner.	3. Consistent IL assessments will prevent gaps in services and will ensure a youth's needs are met within a timeframe that meets the urgency of the need.	Consistent IL assessment document and procedures.	Improvement Team	By 12/16/2011	Input from service providers and youth	In process as part of refining policies and procedures related to Independent Living. A focus group regarding implementation of the Ansell Casey Like Skills Assessment will occur by January 2013. Ongoing defining, assessing, and planning is occurring at this time.
	4. Access external services such as the Older Child Matching Initiative (OCMI)	4. Youth have the opportunity to renew and develop family relationships and	Policies and procedures which specify when a referral to these services needs to be	Improvement Team	By 12/16/2011	Education of agency staff on these resources	The agency has used services such as OCMI and CSR to search for matches for some

	and SWAN units of service (e.g., child-specific recruitment/CSR) and internal services such as Family Finding to identify and develop connections for youth in substitute care and aged 15.5 to 21 years old.	kinship connections to be considered as permanency resources or to become life connections and resources for the youth's transition to adulthood.	made.				of the most difficult cases in which youth have been in placement for several years. Many times these services have not been successful because of the significant needs of these youth who often have experienced multiple traumas. The agency continues to work toward developing the capacity of internal agency foster homes as options for permanency for some of these youth.
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Monitoring: Jason Kavulich is the administrator responsible for monitoring this outcome. While we believe that we have achieved significant changes in the continuity of services for youth eligible for IL, we recognize that additional opportunities for growth exist. We also know that consistent investment in monitoring the quality of services is needed so that we can continue to provide cost-effective services that meet these youths' needs. Mr. Kavulich is involved in the regular flow of IL work which serves to keep him aware of emerging needs and trends as well as resources. Mr. Kavulich will re-assess the IL needs of the agency at least annually using agency data in order to identify any new needs and formally reconvene the improvement team as indicated.

Improvement Team(s)/ Members *(List the members of the Improvement Team and identify co-chairs with an asterisk if applicable):*

This outcome has been completed.

Outcome # 2: To build on the strengths which enable us to partner with other child- and family-serving systems to form teams around children and families to improve the functioning and communication of these teams.

STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS
1. Engage school personnel to participate on the Improvement Team and provide input into the planning, training, communication, and problem resolution processes.	1. Contact personnel in county school districts to explain the QSR/CQI process and invite their participation on and input into the Improvement Team.	1. The Improvement Team is in communication with participating school personnel at least monthly for information sharing and exchange of ideas.	School personnel regularly attend Improvement Team meetings and plans reflect their input.	Improvement Team	By 11/04/2011	Time commitment from school personnel	Completed December 2011.

<p>2. Cross-education between the educational system and YFS on what each system's responsibility is when working with families</p>	<p>1. Overview training for YFS staff to learn how the educational system works and their practices for working with families involved with CYS.</p>	<p>1. YFS staff understands the process for how the educational system works with families involved with YFS and the process for the educational system's communication with YFS.</p>	<p>Training report.</p>	<p>Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, School Personnel</p>	<p>By 01/13/2012</p>	<p>Commitment from school districts to participate in the cross-training process</p>	<p>A plan for formal multi-system training was not able to be realized. Informal training and discussions have occurred regarding education and the link to the child well-being as measured in the CFSR outcome and QSR indicator. We have engaged our educational partners by inviting them into the QSR process which allows for a live, uncensored experience of what child welfare is along with what we are striving for. One of our 2013 QSR focus groups was educators and they reported very positive experiences with learning more about the child welfare system and with having liaisons work directly in their schools as discussed below.</p>
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	2. Overview training of educational personnel on how the social services and child protective services systems work and what the regulatory requirements and case process are.	2. Educational staff understand how the child protective services system functions and what its scope is.	Training report.	Improvement Team	By 01/13/2012	Staff identified to train school personnel	A plan for formal multi-system training was not able to be realized. YFS has worked to informally educate the educational system about child protective services, including having a liaison in ongoing contact with school districts and conduct brief trainings for school personnel. YFS has four school liaisons who focus on referring families to preventative services before they need to become involved in the court system, juvenile probation, or child protective services. In addition a caseworker from the agency's clinical unit conducts training for schools and other providers regarding reporting child abuse. The presentation includes information about what the child welfare system can and cannot do, what services the agency offers, and the importance of prevention before a situation rises to the level where children are neglected or abused.
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<p>2. Develop a process in collaboration with school districts to ensure that knowledge about the child is provided to the individuals directly involved with the child.</p>	<p>1. Survey school districts to determine their policies on how they communicate with YFS.</p>	<p>1. Information from all county school districts on their process for communication with YFS.</p>	<p>Survey report.</p>	<p>Improvement Team</p>	<p>By 11/18/2011</p>	<p>Collaboration with school districts</p>	<p>Completed December 2011.</p>
	<p>2. Review of school policies to identify which processes might be barriers to communication from YFS and how identified issues can be resolved.</p>	<p>2. Identification of barriers. Communication with the school districts about possible resolutions.</p>	<p>Survey report.</p>	<p>Improvement Team</p>	<p>By 12/09/2011</p>	<p>Communication with school districts, input from school districts</p>	<p>Completed January 2012.</p>
	<p>3. Develop policies and procedures for caseworkers to communicate with schools taking into consideration the school's process.</p>	<p>3. Caseworkers consistently provide and obtain information about children involved with YFS. Caseworkers consistently attend educational</p>	<p>Completed policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Improvement Team</p>	<p>By 02/17/2012</p>	<p>Input from the school districts</p>	<p>Completed January 2012.</p>

		meetings for children they are providing services to.					
	4. Regular communication between administrative staff at YFS and the school districts to assess and address any communication issues as they arise.	4. Issues which arise in communication between YFS and the educational system is addressed and resolved in a timely manner.	Documentation of meetings. Survey of agency personnel, school personnel and families with CYS-school interagency teams to determine if increased collaboration is occurring.	Improvement Team, Administrative Team	By 11/18/2011	Commitment from the school districts Possible technical assistance from the CWRC regarding survey	Completed January 2012. A monthly meeting in which YFS and the school can staff a case or air general grievances is scheduled.

Monitoring: Nancy Johnson is the administrator responsible for monitoring this outcome. Ms. Johnson hosts the monthly meeting if it is required in order to resolve any conflicts or communication issues between the agency and the schools. Schools are now notified once a case is opened for protective services and this puts them directly in contact with the caseworker and supervisor so there has not been much need for the monthly meetings. School officials now better know whom to contact if a problem exists instead of e-mailing the director who is overburdened with e-mails and who may miss an important communication. Ms. Johnson will continue to serve as the education liaison and monitor agency-school communication on a monthly basis to determine if the current practice fits the needs of both systems.

Improvement Team(s)/ Members *(List the members of the Improvement Team and identify co-chairs with an asterisk if applicable):*

This outcome has been completed.

Outcome # 3: To engage fathers in the assessment and planning process for their children at all levels of and points in the family's involvement with YFS.

STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS
1. Engage fathers at the point of assessment/ investigation	1. Obtain information about the father(s) from the referral source at the point of call intake.	1. Each referral has documentation of efforts to obtain information about the father and his location.	All referrals have the father of each child identified with his demographic and contact information or documentation of why that information is missing.	Improvement Team, Screening Unit and Supervisor	By 10/17/2011	Updated policies and procedures	Required as part of agency policy/practice.
	2. Train agency staff on what information to obtain about fathers, how to document their efforts to obtain information and locate fathers, and how and when to complete diligent search requests.	2. All protective service caseworkers and supervisors are trained and understand the process of obtaining information about fathers and initiating diligent search requests.	Training report.	Improvement Team, LSI Paralegals, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors	By 12/02/2011	Staff and LSI paralegal time commitment	Completed November 2012.
	3. Efforts are made to locate fathers whose information or whereabouts are unknown.	3. Contact with family members and friends to obtain information about the father's whereabouts.	Documentation in case files of efforts to locate fathers, including requests for diligent searches and	Improvement Team, LSI Paralegals, Protective Services	By 12/09/2011	Updated policies and procedures	Revisions to the agency's administrative pre-placement staffings (now called Teaming

		A diligent search request to locate the father.	the results. Supervisor reviews document directives on obtaining information and locating fathers.	Caseworkers and Supervisors			Meetings) and permanency staffing at key decisions-making points are addressing this need. Checklists for intake and ongoing cases require the supervisor to assess if the caseworker took sufficient action to obtain information about the father, to locate him, and to actively engage him in the process of the case. Fathers having contact with their children are expected to be assessed using the FAST as described above. Supervisor reviews must continually focus on the process of engaging all parents. Supervisor meetings discuss father engagement at least once per month.
	4. Contact the father during the assessment/ investigation to	4. Information obtained from fathers is included on safety assessments, risk assessments, and	Documentation in the case file of interviews with fathers and	Improvement Team, Protective Services	By 01/13/2012	Updated family assessment process,	Same as above.

	inform him of the process, to obtain information on his history and his situation, and to engage him in the assessment process.	in family assessments. Information from collateral resources is obtained relative to fathers. Fathers have input into the assessment.	collateral resources. Supervisor reviews document engagement efforts.	Caseworkers and Supervisors		updated intake policies and procedures	
2. Engage fathers throughout the time the case is open for protective services.	1. Discuss the status determination with the father at the conclusion of the intake and include the father when sending a letter to close a case or to open the case for protective services.	1. Fathers are informed of the status of the case and given an opportunity to ask questions.	Copies of letters to fathers are included in the file. Documentation of contacts with fathers in the case file.	Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors	By 01/13/2012	Updated policies and procedures	Same as above.
	2. Engage the father to participate in the development of the Family Service Plan (FSP) or Child's Permanency Plan (CPP) - inform the father of the process and send a letter ahead of time inviting him to participate. Inform the father of the	2. Fathers participate in the development of objectives and tasks for the FSP/CPP for themselves and their children. Fathers participate in FGDM to develop their Plan.	Objectives and tasks on the FSP/CPP are specific to the risk factors and absent or diminished protective capacities relative to fathers. Documentation that fathers were informed in advance of the opportunity for FSP/CPP/FGDM participation and	Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, FGDM Caseworker(s)	By 01/13/2012	Updated policies and procedures, additional training	Same as above.

	opportunity to participate in Family Group Decision making (FGDM) and what the process entails.		input.				
	3. Refer fathers to the agency's fatherhood group more regularly on in-home cases. Educate fathers on how the group will benefit them and help them to complete their objectives on the FSP/ CPP.	3. Fathers are assessed for this group at key case decision-making points and at the point of FSP/ CPP development.	Documentation of discussion with fathers about the group. Documentation of why fathers were not referred to the group.	Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Fatherhood Group Coordinators	By 01/13/2012	Staff education, updated policies and procedures	Education for staff has been ongoing and new workers typically observe a group as part of their orientation. Use of the FAST will help assist caseworkers identify cases in which the service which best meets a father's needs is the fatherhood group.
	4. Conduct focus groups of fathers and of agency staff to identify additional barriers to consistent and ongoing engagement of fathers throughout the life of a case.	4. Fathers and agency staff have the opportunity for input into what barriers they identify and what possible additional solutions are.	Report from the focus group.	Improvement Team	By 10/28/2011	Technical Assistance from the CWRC	Completed as part of the QSR in February 2012. The improvement team has been assessing the recommendations along with reaching out to providers to determine which services may be more "father-friendly". The improvement team is focusing on concrete items that

							can be developed or implemented, such as a brochure explaining fathers' rights. Additionally, the team is striving to develop alternate ways of gathering fathers' input as it has been difficult for fathers to commit to be part of the team.
	5. Train agency staff on engaging fathers, the effects that father absence could have on children, and how to assess the risk and safety threats they present to their children in order to identify suitable services for them.	5. All protective service caseworkers and supervisors are trained and understand why engagement of fathers is important. Information on the father(s) is obtained on all cases and fathers are assessed to determine if they present risks and safety threats to their children, what services they require, and if they can safely be involved with their children.	Training report. Review of a sampling of cases. Follow-up surveys or focus groups of fathers to determine if barriers have been resolved and if engagement of fathers has increased.	Improvement Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Fatherhood Group Coordinators	By 02/03/2012	Technical Assistance from the CWRC; Possible agency-specific training by the CWRC	Completed November 2012.

	<p>6. Implement the Enhancing Critical Thinking supervisor toolkit as the tool of supervision so that supervisors and caseworkers will develop critical thinking skills to walk them through the process of engaging fathers and identifying what steps to take.</p>	<p>6. The tool is used for each supervisor review. Supervisors and caseworkers develop critical thinking skills and can demonstrate knowledge of the considerations and process for engaging fathers. Supervisors and caseworkers plan how to engage fathers.</p> <p>Fathers are engaged at each point in the life of a case and are included in the decision-making process.</p>	<p>Documentation in case files; content of supervisor reviews; contact with father; involvement of fathers in plan development; FAST results</p> <p>Managers' reviews of case files.</p> <p>Managers' supervision documentation (support).</p> <p>Case staffings (support).</p> <p>Supervisor meetings (support).</p>	<p>Sponsor Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Managers</p>	<p>By 01/01/2014</p>	<p>Fall 2013 Supervisor Training Event-QSR; Possible training or TOL by the CWRC</p>	<p>In the planning phase-this action step was added as part of the 2013 CIP</p>
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Monitoring: Amanda Helring is the administrator responsible for monitoring this outcome. This improvement team needed to be revitalized after a number of staff left the agency. A new call for volunteers resulted in new participants. The team has had difficulty gaining commitment from father to participate regularly so they continue to seek new ways to obtain fathers' input without needing their ongoing attendance. One idea is querying fathers who felt that they have been engaged to see what they feel the process should look like. Continual discussion of engaging fathers at supervisor meetings helps to keep this topic in the forefront. At this point, all caseworkers, supervisors, and managers completed the Engaging Absent Fathers Training and TOL and supervisors completed an additional six hours of training in Valuing Fatherhood, Sustaining Engagement so no training need exists. Focusing on concrete tasks such as providing a father with a brochure allows caseworkers and supervisors to build task upon task to develop a coherent process for engaging fathers and having meaningful discussions with them about their children. Improvement team notes are submitted monthly to document the activities and progress of the team.

Improvement Team(s)/ Members *(List the members of the Improvement Team and identify co-chairs with an asterisk if applicable):*

Nicole Lance, YFS, Chair
 Debbie Marichak, YFS
 Nancy Johnson, YFS
 Pete Cady, YFS
 J.D. Miller, YFS

Adrian Maillet, YFS
 Rachel Green, YFS
 Maria Kovaleski, YFS
 Bea Ferguson-Murphy, YFS

Outcome # 4: To deeply and accurately assess and identify the needs of mothers, fathers, and children related to their functioning and well-being.							
STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS
1. Implement the FAST and CANS	1. Plan implementation and discuss on an ongoing basis with staff	1. The timeline for implementation is developed and staff are familiar with the changes that will occur	Documentation of supervisor meeting; E-mails detailing the plan; individual unit trainings.	Implementation Leaders	By 07/01/2013	Training; time commitment to educate staff; consultation with trainer	Begun 09/2012, completed 07/01/2013
	2. Train agency staff and providers to complete the FAST and CANS and use it for communication and planning	2. All program staff are trained to complete the FAST and CANS and are certified in the CANS	Training report; sign-in sheets.	Implementation Leaders; all program staff; providers who volunteer	By 07/01/2013	Trainer; time commitment by participants	Completed 05/09/2013
	3. Train supervisors and program administrators to train staff to complete the FAST and CANS	3. All supervisors and program administrators are able to train others to complete the FAST and CANS	Training report; sign-in sheets.	Implementation Leaders; all supervisors and program administrators	By 07/01/2013	Trainer; time commitment by participants	Completed 05/31/2013

	4. Complete FAST and CANS assessments on new intakes and protective services cases after 07/01/2013	4. All families receive a FAST and a CANS assessment according to established requirements and timeframes. FAST and CANS tools are discussed in supervision.	Case documentation; case sampling; discussions during case staffing; statistics from the agency database; alerts from the agency database.	Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Managers	By 07/01/2013	The tools are meant to be completed in collaboration with the family and other team members	Implemented 07/01/2013
	5. Use the FAST and CANS, along with the risk assessment and safety assessment, to identify needs and develop a comprehensive plan with measurable objectives to address specific needs.	5. For cases with no placements, the caseworker meets with the family and the team to complete the FAST and CANS, identify the needs, and develop the plan. For cases with placements, a consultant acts the coordinator for a FTC where the agency, family, and team collaboratively review or complete the FAST and CANS depending on how recently the placement occurred. The team then collaboratively develops the plan and the family may choose to have a Family Group Conference.	Case documentation; case sampling; administrative oversight of FTCs.	Implementation Leaders; Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Managers; Consultant; family members, team members	Ongoing	Planning ahead; ongoing supervision	Implemented 07/01/2013

	6. Implement the Enhancing Critical Thinking supervisor toolkit as the tool of supervision so that supervisors and caseworkers will develop critical thinking skills to walk them through the process of assessing and understanding the needs of families and individuals.	6. The tool is used for each supervisor review. Supervisors and caseworkers develop critical thinking skills and can demonstrate knowledge of the considerations and process for assessing families. Supervisors and caseworkers plan how caseworkers will complete the FAST and CANS and develop the plan with the family and team.	Documentation in case files; content of supervisor reviews; contact with father; involvement of fathers in plan development; FAST and CANS results. Managers' reviews of case files. Managers' supervision documentation (support). Case staffings (support). Supervisor meetings (support).	Sponsor Team, Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Managers	By 01/01/2014	Fall 2013 Supervisor Training Event-QSR; Possible training or TOL by the CWRC	In the planning phase
2. Train program staff regarding trauma so that they can recognize the needs	1. Schedule training dates	1. All program staff are scheduled to attend training	Training roster	Training Liaison	By 08/15/2013	The module is able to be self-learned and trained by skilled trainers available in the agency.	In the planning phase
	2. Program staff attend the two-day training	2. Completion of training	Training report	Trainer; Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors,	By 10/01/2013	Staff time and commitment to learn	In the planning phase

				Managers			
	3. Staff are able to recognize signs of trauma in both children and adolescents.	3. Staff can proficiently discuss trauma with the family in a sensitive way. Staff understand the impact that traumatic experiences have on behavior, needs, and compliance with the agency and staff can develop individualized plans which address the trauma at a point that will best move the case forward. Staff demonstrate new insight into the types of behaviors which are often based in trauma but which are typically attributed to willful noncompliance. Staff can educate team members about trauma.	Documentation in case files; content of supervisor reviews; contact with father; involvement of fathers in plan development; FAST and CANS results. Managers' reviews of case files. Managers' supervision documentation (support). Case staffings (support). Supervisor meetings (support). Review of plans.	Protective Services Caseworkers and Supervisors, Managers	By 01/01/2014	Supervision	In the planning phase

<p>3. Develop a guide for a narrative piece in the FAST and CANS as this is not part of the structure of the tool. This narrative will streamline the assessment process by replacing the narrative of the agency's prior process.</p>	<p>1. Meet twice per month to develop a guide for which information needs to be documented in narrative format to support the ratings on the FAST and CANS. Review the tools, the prior family assessment process, and the regulations to determine what needs to be documented.</p>	<p>1. A guide has been developed so that staff are clear about what needs to append the FAST and CANS. Staff use the guide in order to document the breadth of information needed.</p>	<p>Completion of the guide; case documentation; supervisor notes</p>	<p>Improvement Team</p>	<p>By 01/01/2014</p>	<p>Time commitment; review of documents</p>	<p>In the planning phase</p>
<p>Monitoring: Kerry Browning and Amanda Helring are the administrators responsible for monitoring this outcome which represents a portion of our CWDP plan. Data will be reviewed on a monthly basis for monitoring. Case staffings and supervisor meetings will provide opportunities to observe skills and knowledge development as well as to provide guidance, mentoring, and support. Modeling will occur at the FTCs.</p>							

Improvement Team(s)/ Members *(List the members of the Improvement Team and identify co-chairs with an asterisk if applicable):*

Kelly Atkinson, YFS, Co-Chair
Tara Williams, YFS, Co-Chair
Lisa Kanavy, YFS
Catrina Romano, YFS
Mary Rose Moran, YFS
Jennifer Breig, YFS

Maria Reed, YFS
Jerri Regan, YFS
Lisa Paglia, YFS
Nicole Lance, YFS
Cristin Wormuth, YFS

Month and Year for the next state-supported Quality Service Review: March/April 2014

Definitions

Strategy: The overall approach/plan to achieve the outcome. Several strategies may be identified for each, but should all connect to the particular outcome you are trying to achieve.

Action Steps: Clear and specific steps to be taken to achieve the strategy. There may be several action steps identified for each particular strategy.

Indicators/Benchmarks: These indicate how the strategies and action steps will impact the outcome as well as indicating how progress is measured.

Evidence of Completion: Evidence that verifies that each individual action step has been completed.

Persons Responsible: The individual who is responsible for completing each individual action step.

Timeframe: Expected time of completion for each individual action step. Consider Quick Wins (completed in 30 days), mid-term improvements (completed in 6 months); and longer-term planning and continuous improvement goals.

Resources Needed: Resources needed to achieve the strategy or action step. May include, but is not limited to, financial resources, partnerships with technical assistance providers, and staff resources.

Status: Progress toward completion of each action step upon review of the County Improvement Plan.

Monitoring: Although monitoring occurs after implementation, how a plan is to be monitored is actually established during the development of a plan. After the written plan is developed, the continuous improvement team takes increasing ownership of the improvement efforts. Continuous improvement teams should outline how they will monitor progress and communicate monitoring methods to staff and key stakeholders. Examples of monitoring:

- Implementation Reviews: Measure accomplishments
- Impact Reviews: Measure actual vs. expected impact
- Lessons Learned Review: Address new and emerging questions
- After Action Reviews: What worked, What did not work, What to do differently