

County Name: Schuylkill

Date of Plan: November 8, 2013

Initial

Update

**Section I. Team Members**

**Sponsor Team:**

Lisa Stevens, Agency Director  
Linda Badger, Casework Manager  
Patti Moyer, Clerical Manager

**Supervisory Team:**

Suzy Connely, Placement Supervisor  
Jennifer Schumacher, General Protective Services Supervisor  
Samantha Kranch, Intensive Protective Services Supervisor  
Sharyn Wetzal, Service Planning Supervisor  
Heidi Eckert, Child Protective Services Supervisor  
Denise Pozza, Fiscal Supervisor

Theresa Kimmel, Placement Supervisor  
Kellie Potts, General Protective Services Supervisor  
Christine Lupo-Whalen, Truancy Supervisor  
Melissa Hanlon, Service Planning Supervisor  
Anne Kelly, Specialty Unit Supervisor  
Sandra Palokas, Legal Department Supervisor

**Implementation Team:**

Christopher Clark, Friendship House  
Marcia Hoke, Adoption Caseworker  
Kevin Lally, Contract Manager  
Denise Miller, Aftercare Coordinator  
Lisa Wilson, Family Support Unit

Patti Freiler, Kidspeace  
Ann Keer, Quality Assurance  
Ann Majestic, Truancy Caseworker  
Matthew Stine, Placement Caseworker  
Heidi Yeastedt, Service Planning Caseworker

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

Since 2009, Schuylkill County Children and Youth Services has been implementing innovative strategies for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) including a monthly review of cases overseen by the regional office, training in the strengths-based, solution focused approach to casework, and the DAPIM™ process. Upon completion of the 2013 on-site review, the county's local leads, consisting of the agency director, the casework manager, the contract manager and the quality assurance caseworker, met to review the QSR results and to determine areas needing improvement. At the conclusion of this discussion, the team decided to focus their improvement efforts in three areas: child/youth and family planning process, engagement of fathers, and pathways to independence for older youth. Supervisors were then invited to the next steps meeting at which time, the agency began to discuss the County Improvement Plan with representatives from the Regional Office and Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC.) At a follow-up meeting, the local leads selected members of the implementation team who became responsible for the development of the plan. The implementation team is comprised of personnel from both the agency and its contracted providers and team members were selected based on their experiences with the three identified areas.

In concurrence with this plan, the agency will be serving as an in-depth case study in a research program coordinated by the CWRC and the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA.) The study will evaluate CQI efforts with a focus on the organizational readiness for change and the use of organization effectiveness models, tools, and practices. As a participant in this study, the agency will be using the APHSA organization effectiveness DAPIM™ model in the implementation of the plan and in the monitoring of its outcomes. On November 15, 2013, members of the supervisory team, the sponsor team, and the implementation team will meet with representatives from the CWRC to select up to three goals based on this plan that will be evaluated throughout the study. This meeting will also include the development of scales using Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) to track progress three times over the course of one year.

**Outcome # 1: The agency will enhance their collaboration with children/youth and their families in the case planning process.** The 2013 licensing inspection summary reports that, despite recent efforts by the agency to include family members in the case planning process, improvement is still necessary. Among the agency's attempts were initiatives taken by agency supervisors to encourage caseworkers to include family members in the development of their Family Services Plans as well as making Plans individualized. Since 2010, the agency also began offering Family Group Decision Making to encourage families to resolve their safety concerns without agency intervention. Unfortunately, FGDM is not meeting the agency's expectations as the agency struggles with cooperation from the families and attendance at conferences is lacking. Meanwhile, a QSR focus group with older youth in out-of-home placement suggests that they do not feel that they have a voice in their case plan. While the agency's attempts to engage family in the planning process continue to need improvement, efforts the agency made are receiving some notice. Anecdotal information from a QSR focus group with school personnel indicate that the community's previous perception of the agency as "punitive" is "slowly changing." The focus group further commented that when families make progress with agency intervention, families have come to realize that they needed the help. Because the agency is committed to improving its outcome in this area and has seen some gains, it is fitting that the agency will use the CQI process to refine their efforts to accomplish the impact that they set out to achieve.

**Outcome # 2: The agency will improve its efforts in engaging fathers in services.** Through the QSR, the agency learned of the positive effects father involvement has on the youth active with the agency. Father involvement was a contributing factor to children's academic success as well as their emotional well-being. The agency also learned that fathers intervene when children are experiencing conflicts with their mothers or the father's paramour. Results from the QSR further suggest that, in Schuylkill County, when fathers are known, they are more likely to be involved in their

children's lives. Because this information highlights how father involvement directly impacts the lives of the county's children, it is necessary for the agency to make planned interventions in enhancing their work with fathers. The QSR made apparent that the agency is struggling to engage fathers adequately in services. The QSR gave unacceptable ratings for fathers' involvement in the case planning process as well as assessment of fathers in 33% of the cases reviewed. Similarly, the licensing inspection summary also found that the agency's efforts to include non-custodial parents in the case planning process, even when the parent is involved, need improvement. Through efforts at improving father engagement, the agency anticipates achieving more success at reaching out to and including all absent parents in services as well as effectively communicating with fathers who are present in the home.

**Outcome # 3: The agency will improve its assessment of older youth as they prepare for adulthood and provide them with services focused on their transitions to independence.** The status indicator of Pathways to Independence was the final area identified as needing improvement because results from the QSR showed that the agency is struggling in this area for both in-home and out-of-home cases. The results suggest that while adolescents have life skills necessary for adulthood, youth in Schuylkill County do not have adequate community supports that enable smooth transitions to adulthood. Additionally, the QSR found that the youth reviewed are not developing plans for their future. According to the most recent licensing inspection summary, the agency is aware of the needs of this population and has started implementing improvement strategies. The licensing inspection summary reports that the agency is making strides in their transition planning for children in out-of-home placement. Meanwhile, during the on-site review, a focus group with older youth in placement indicated that they have positive relationships with agency IL staff. Since receiving positive feedback on efforts already in place, the agency expects that enhancing these interventions will result in improved practice with this population at all levels of agency involvement.

**Outcome #1: The agency will enhance their collaboration with children, youth, and their families in the case planning process.**

Strategies	Action Steps	Indicators/ Benchmarks	Evidence of Completion	Person Responsible	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Status	Monitoring
The agency will communicate their purpose to families.	The agency will develop a parent handbook to explain services and provide contact information for resources.	The agency will have a uniform way to communicate the casework process to all families.	Completed handbook will be available to staff for distribution.	Legal Department	February 2014	Staff time	In progress	The Legal Department will review the handbook annually to determine if updates/revisions are necessary.
	Families will receive CYS parent handbook during the entry	Families will have information to make educated decisions about	Families will sign that they received the handbook and the signature	Caseworkers	Ongoing	Printing costs	Planning	Supervisors will ask caseworkers if the family received the handbook and

	level phase of the case.	the case process.	page will be filed in the agency record.					review agency record to ensure signature page is filed.
Team meetings will be used to develop Family Service Plans.	The agency and contracted providers will review and modify the referral process.	Contracted service providers will expedite services.  The agency will expedite referrals to FGDM.	Contracted service providers will attend the FSP development meeting.  The number of referrals to FGDM will increase.	Contracted providers, Quality Assurance Unit	Ongoing.	Staff time to communicate new policy to agency and contracted providers.	Planning.	Casework manager will ensure correct paperwork is submitted and will forward referrals to contracted providers.
	The agency will develop and pilot a program using team meetings to increase family input into Family Service Plans.	Family members will have a voice in the goals both on their FSP and in their contracted provider service plans.  Contracted service providers will have input in the FSP.	Caseworkers will document date of team meeting on the FSP and participants in attendance in agency record.  FSP and contracted providers will document consistent goals for family members.	Caseworkers, supervisors, contracted service providers	Ongoing	Staff time	In progress	Supervisors will monitor caseworkers' coordination of FSP meetings.  The regional office will review the input of family members in the FSP during annual licensing inspection.

	Team meetings will be held at least every three months to review family progress on the FSP.	Family members, agency staff, and service providers will hold each other accountable for progress made.  Supervisors and family members will become more familiar with each other and supervisors will make better informed decisions about the case.	Caseworkers will document the team meeting in the case record.	Caseworkers, supervisors, contracted service providers	Ongoing	Staff time	In progress	Supervisors will monitor caseworkers' coordination of team meetings.  The regional office will review the input of family members in the FSP during annual licensing inspection.
Agency will educate staff in Family Finding to learn how to use families' informal support systems in the case planning process.	Agency staff will complete Family Finding Training.	Agency staff will learn how to identify and locate informal family supports. Agency staff will learn how to engage informal family supports in the case planning process.	Training certificates.	Caseworkers and supervisors.	Present-May 2014	Staff time; CWRC training	In progress	Supervisors will ensure caseworker attendance; Regional office will ensure training hours during annual licensing inspection.
	Participants in the Family Finding Training will communicate to staff at staff meetings and in the agency	All staff will be educated on how to include informal family supports in the case planning process.	Agency will document attendance at staff meetings.  Newsletter will include recommenda-		Ongoing	Staff meeting, Agency newsletter		Implementation Team will monitor that information is shared at staff meeting and in agency newsletter.

	newsletter recommendations on how to include informal family supports in the case planning process.		tions on including informal family supports.					
	Agency staff will ensure informal family supports are invited to team meetings.	Informal family supports' attendance at team meetings will increase.  Families will become reliant on their natural support systems which will enable earlier safe case closure.	Agency staff will have parents sign a consent that documents that informal supports are in attendance.  Caseworkers will document team meetings in the agency record.		Ongoing	Staff time		Supervisors will review caseloads to ensure that informal supports are included in the case planning process.  Regional Office will review inclusion of informal supports at monthly case reviews.
Supervision will be consistent across all units.	Supervisors will develop critical case review checklist to use during weekly supervision.	All units will have equal expectations for engaging families in the case planning process.	Critical case review checklist will be developed.	Supervisors	May 2014	Ongoing	Planning	The Implementation Team will approve the checklist.

	During weekly supervision, supervisors will use the critical case review checklist to monitor family engagement and progress on FSP.	Caseworkers will be held accountable for ensuring progress on the FSP and engaging family in the case planning process.	Supervisors will maintain record of supervisory reviews.  Caseworker will document supervision in casenotes.  Agency director will review checklists.	Supervisors; agency director	Ongoing	Staff time	In progress	Agency Director will monitor the quality of supervision.
	Supervisors will select and attend home visits to observe caseworkers' engagement skills.  Supervisors will observe new employees three times within 6-months of the worker's obtaining a caseload and observe experienced workers at least once annually.	Supervisors will give caseworkers feedback on their job performance.  Caseworker skills with engaging families in the case planning process will improve.	Agency record will include documentation of supervisors presence at home visits.  Annual employee evaluations will reflect the supervisors' observations of staff in the field.	Supervisors.	Ongoing	Staff time	In progress	Agency Director will review annual evaluations.

**Outcome # 2: The agency will improve its efforts to engage fathers in services.**

Strategies	Action Steps	Indicators/ Benchmarks	Evidence of Completion	Person Responsible	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Status	Monitoring
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Engage non-custodial parents at point of assessment /investigation	Intake screeners will obtain identifying information from referral source level.	Agency will engage non-custodial parents from the start of agency involvement.	Family Face Sheets will include identifying information for non-custodial parents.  Intake screening form will document efforts to locate absent parents.	Intake screeners; Service Planning supervisors	Ongoing	Staff time	In progress	Supervisors and Agency Director will review Family Face Sheets to ensure agency has identifying information for all parents.
Engage fathers throughout the lifetime of a case.	Staff will attend Engaging Fathers training.	Staff will be better educated on the role of the fathers in the case and to how to engage fathers in the casework process.	Training certificates.	Caseworkers, supervisors, Agency Director	Ongoing	CWRC training	In progress	Agency Director will ensure staff attend training and report to the regional office that staff attended.
	Participants in the Engaging Fathers training will communicate to staff suggestions for engaging fathers at a staff meeting. Agency newsletter will be used to communicate tips for engaging fathers.	All staff will be educated on how to engage fathers in the case planning process.	Agency will document attendance at staff meetings.  Newsletter will include recommendations on engaging fathers in the case planning process.			Ongoing		Staff meeting, Agency newsletter



	<p>Staff will use recommendations to engage fathers in the case planning process.</p>	<p>Agency staff will provide fathers with positive feedback on their interaction with children/youth.</p> <p>Agency staff will accommodate fathers by scheduling meetings around parents' work schedules and by using conference calls.</p> <p>Father's voice and opinion will be heard.</p>	<p>Licensing inspection will find increase in contact with non-custodial parents.</p> <p>The ratings for father engagement will be acceptable in the next Quality Service review.</p> <p>Documentation of father's participation in the agency case record.</p>	<p>Caseworkers, supervisors</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Staff time; CWRC training as necessary</p>	<p>Supervisors will review with caseworkers how they are engaging fathers.</p> <p>The regional office will review father engagement at monthly case reviews.</p>
<p>Orientation of</p>	<p>Agency will provide staff with reference materials on how to write letters to non-custodial parents to encourage their involvement in case planning and to explain their role in the FSP.</p>	<p>Agency will become more efficient in engaging absent parents through written communication.</p> <p>Absent parents will make better informed decisions about their involvement with the agency.</p>	<p>Written document of agency's attempts to engage non-custodial parents will be found in the agency record.</p>	<p>Agency Intranet gatekeepers, mentors, and supervisors.</p>	<p>May 2014</p>	<p>Agency Intranet; staff time for orientation</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Implementation team will verify that reference materials are available to staff.</p>

	new workers will include a review of reference materials.							
	Agency will develop a DNA/paternity test contract to identify fathers.	Agency will identify fathers in a timely fashion and engage them in services as soon as possible.	The agency will develop a contract with a provider that performs the service.	Contract Manager	February 2014.	Contracted provider that performs the services; funding	In progress.	Agency Director and County Commissioners will approve the contract.
Engage incarcerated parents.	Caseworkers and supervisors will contact prisons to learn of services available to parents who are incarcerated.	<p>Caseworkers will be informed of services available to incarcerated parents.</p> <p>Caseworkers will provide incarcerated parents with written documentation of services available in the prison setting.</p> <p>Parents will have the opportunity to work on the goals of the FSP prior to their release.</p>	<p>Letters will be filed in the agency record.</p> <p>Verification of parents' completion of treatment will be filed in the agency record.</p>	Caseworkers and supervisors	Ongoing	Staff time	In progress	Supervisors will review with caseworkers if they identified available services, informed the parents of the services, and are monitoring participation in them.
	The agency and	Service	Provider reports	Service	Ongoing	Funding for	In progress	Casework

	contracted service providers will coordinate services for parents incarcerated in the county prison.	providers will meet with parents open for their services in the county prison to address the goals on the FSP.	will document contact with incarcerated parents.	Providers		contracted providers		manager will coordinate services with contract service provider managers; caseworker and supervisors will coordinate individual case plans with service provider worker.
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**Outcome #3: The agency will improve its assessment of older youth as they prepare for adulthood and provide them with services focused on transitions to independence.**

Strategies	Action Steps	Indicators/Benchmarks	Evidence of Completion	Person Responsible	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Status	Monitoring
Agency staff will competently assess the transitional needs of older youth.	Agency staff will develop a life skills survey to assess the transitional needs of older youth.	Agency staff will have an assessment tool to determine the needs of older youth.	A life skills assessment will be available for agency staff to use with older youth.	IL unit, Quality Assurance Unit	November 2014	Staff time	Planning	Implementation team and supervisors will review the survey.
	Agency staff will complete the life skills assessment on all youth age 16 and over.	Agency staff will improve their understanding of the needs of the older youth.	FSP action steps will reflect that the agency is addressing areas of concern from the life skills assessment with the youth.	Caseworkers and supervisors	Beginning in November 2014 and then, on an on-going basis.	Surveys	Planning	Supervisors will monitor the caseworkers' use of the surveys.
Agency will enhance the	Agency staff will share the	Mentors will have a better	Mentor reports will document	Provider mentors,	Beginning in November 2014	Staff time/provider	Planning	Agency supervisors and

services provided to adolescents.	findings of the life skills assessment with contracted provider mentors.  Referral paperwork will provide detailed reasons for referral.	understanding of youth's needs and provide individualized services to youth.	that they are meeting the individual transitional needs of each child on their caseload.	caseworkers, and supervisors	and then, on an on-going basis.	time		contracted provider supervisors will ensure findings from the life skills survey are shared with each other.
Agency staff will have resources to adjust their services to meet the needs of older youth.	An older youth toolkit will be available to all staff on the agency intranet.	Resources will assist workers in being educated on appropriate resources for transitions to adulthood.	Resources will be available on the agency intranet.	IL unit, Agency intranet gatekeepers.	November 2014	Staff time, agency intranet	Planning	Implementation team will monitor the agency intranet to learn if resources are available to staff.
	IL unit will have laptop computers accessible to use with older youth.	The IL unit will complete assessments in a timely fashion.  Older youth will have access to IL services available on the internet.	The IL unit will have laptop computers in their possession.	Agency Director	November 2014	Funding, internet access	Planning	IL unit will report to the implementation team if they obtained computers.
	The agency contract manager will explore alternative resources for transitional services	Youth age 16 and over will receive a variety of services that will meet their individual needs.	The contract manager will meet with the agency director to discuss possible services.	Contract Manager, Agency Director, Casework manager	Ongoing	Staff time, internet access, funding	In progress	The contract manager will report to the implementation team progress made on identifying alternative

	available to older youth.							services.
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