

County Improvement Plan (CIP)

County Name: Schuylkill

Date of Plan: 11/13/15

Initial

Update

Section I. Team Members

Sponsor Team:

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

Implementation Team

Krystal Andricks	Heather Davidow	Ashley Holshue	Ann Keer
Kevin Lally	Kaylee Moyer	Stephanie Rice	

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

Since before the 2013 Quality Service Review (QSR,) Schuylkill County Children and Youth Services has been striving to assess and refine their casework practices in an effort to provide quality services. The direction for the current County Improvement Plan originated during a meeting with the agency director, casework manager, contract manager, and quality assurance caseworker to review the final results from the QSR. During this meeting, three focus areas of improvement were selected based on the results of the QSR as well as initiatives already in the planning stages. Agency staff were then given the opportunity to participate in the development of the Plan and caseworkers volunteered to be part of the Implementation Team. The plan proposed by the Implementation Team was reviewed with agency administration, the Northeast Regional Office, and the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) at the Next Steps Meeting and a follow-up telephone conference.

Outcome # 1: The agency and county school districts will enhance collaboration to address child/youth academic needs.

The agency has a history of working with the county courts, juvenile probation, and school districts to address and improve school attendance throughout the county. The current county-wide truancy policy, developed in 2011, has become outdated and has become a primary reason the agency has planned to revise the policy. Based on information available through the CWRC and the Office of Children and Families in the Courts, truancy rates have remained steady with this policy: 2.22% in the 2011-2012 school year; 2.11% in the 2012-

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2013 school year, and 2.15% in the 2013-2014 school year. In its efforts to improve school attendance, the agency annually surveys both agency staff and school districts to obtain feedback on truancy trends in the county. Consistently, parenting is identified as the primary reason for truancy among elementary and middle school students. Meanwhile, a review of Truancy Elimination Plans from the 2014-2015 school year indicate students' refusal to attend school as the leading reason for truancy among high school students and the second most common reason for truancy among middle school students. Feedback from the surveys suggests that the current truancy policy is not comprehensive and additional clarification about the expectations of the districts and agency is necessary. In addition to truancy and other educational concerns, the agency and school districts regularly collaborate with each other to address a variety of factors that affect a child's well-being. Recommendations from the QSR included enhancing collaboration with the schools, and through this plan, the agency has looked at ways to strengthen its work with the districts in its efforts to serve families better.

Outcome # 2: Agency staff will improve their ability to assess and understand a case.

The agency has worked with the Regional Office as well as the CWRC to develop the assessment skills of staff. The agency conducts monthly critical case reviews with the purpose of achieving timely permanency for children in out-of-home placement. These meetings consist of local and state agencies that offer a varied perspective on how to best work with families. QSR focus groups acknowledge the benefits of these case reviews and how they keep cases moving forward. Findings from the 2015 QSR suggest these reviews have been succeeding as significant improvement has been made in the agency's efforts to achieve timely permanence. Agency staff also have the opportunity to participate in Safety Support sessions to think through safety decisions critically. Through these efforts, the agency has made a concerted effort to work towards safe case closure from the moment a family is referred to the agency. Nonetheless, the agency recognizes that staff encounter barriers in their attempts to close cases. The agency has used the development of this plan to identify these barriers and to develop interventions to help staff overcome them.

Outcome # 3: The agency will improve their efforts in involving the family in the case planning process.

Since the last QSR, the agency has been actively working on including the family in the case planning process. The agency participated in a research program coordinated by the CWRC and the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) to work on the 2013 County Improvement Plan. Through this research, the agency found that in at least 85% of cases open for services, caseworkers develop Family Service Plans (FSP) in face-to-face meetings with family members. These efforts are noticeable as one QSR focus group identified how the agency is bringing families "to the table" to develop FSP and Plans are individualized based on the family's preferences. Another focus group identified how families are aware of their Plans and "what needed to occur." Additionally, staff are using Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) to develop case plans. Over the past year, 32 FGDM meetings were successfully completed. According to the 2015 annual evaluation summary, families report that they are involved, empowered, and working with the agency toward a unified outcome. While these efforts are being noticed, the results from the QSR suggest that they are not effective as the rates in Child/Youth and Family

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Planning Process declined. In developing this plan, the agency identified new approaches aimed at increasing family engagement in the case planning process.

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

Outcome #1 The agency and county school districts will enhance collaboration to address child/youth academic needs.								
STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS	MONITORING
1. The agency will improve interventions to address truancy.	A. The agency will develop a workgroup including school officials and the courts to revise the county-wide truancy policy.	School attendance rates will improve.	A new truancy policy will be developed.	Agency director, school districts, county courts	July 2016	Time of workgroup members and meeting space	In progress	Surveys will be distributed to districts and agency staff. Survey results will be submitted to agency director.
	B. The agency will develop and pilot a youth group program to address academic success.		The agency will make referrals to the group. Youth will participate in group meetings.	Agency director and Quality Assurance (QA) unit	July 2016	Funding for the service. An agency to provide the service.	Planning	The agency will monitor the school attendance of students participating in the group.
	C. The agency will obtain feedback from families about the effectiveness of the truancy policy.	Families will have input into the policy.	Families who attended TEP meetings will complete surveys.	Agency education liaison.	July 2016	Paper, envelopes, and postage.	In progress.	Survey results will be submitted to the agency director.
	D. The agency will present one truancy case each month at	The agency will improve its response to truancy cases.	A truancy case will be presented monthly at critical case	Agency director	February 2016	Time availability of staff.	Planning	The regional office will monitor to see if a truancy case is on the

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	the critical case review meeting.		reviews.					agenda.
2. The agency will improve communication with the districts.	A. The agency will hold two annual meetings with the districts to address mutual concerns.	School districts will be invited to and attend joint agency/district meetings.	Meetings will be held.	Agency education liaison	Ongoing	Meeting space and time availability of agency and district personnel.	In progress	Meetings will occur.
	B. The agency will develop a workgroup with school personnel to determine if any other agency-district collaboration is necessary.			QA unit	July 2016	Meeting space and time availability of agency and district personnel.	Planning	Meeting notes and plans will be submitted to the agency director.
	C. The agency will be represented on school-related interagency meetings.	The agency will be more accessible to the districts.	Agency staff will attend school-related meetings regularly.	Agency education liaison	March 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Supervisors will monitor staff attendance at meetings.
3. The agency and contracted providers will collaborate on how to help families address school issues more effectively.	The agency and contracted providers will address at provider meetings how to address school issues	Providers will work with parents on improving skills addressing school issues.	School issues will be added to the agenda for provider meetings.	QA unit	Ongoing	Meeting space and availability of agency and provider staff.	Planning	Meeting notes will be distributed to agency director and agency supervisors.

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	with families.		
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Outcome # 2: Agency staff will improve their ability to assess and understand a case.								
STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS	MONITORING
1. The protocol for intake and on-call referrals will be reviewed to enhance how information is obtained at the time of referral.	A. Agency staff will complete a survey to determine how to improve the current referral process.	Service planners and CPS investigators will have accurate information prior to their first contact with family.	Agency staff will complete a survey. Responses from survey will be used to enhance the current process.	Caseworkers and supervisors	May 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Agency supervisors & agency director will discuss the effectiveness of the referral process.
	B. The agency and ChildLine will develop a protocol to receive referrals in a timely manner.	The agency will conduct more timely responses to referrals.	Agency will see a decrease in the amount of time between when ChildLine receives the report and when the agency receives the report.	Agency director and supervisors	May 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Progress will be discussed with the Regional Office.
2. The agency will increase support to supervisors and their efforts to enrich caseworker's assessment skills.	A. Supervisor workgroups will be held to identify areas of improvement for their units and develop individualized strategies to improve	Caseworkers will receive support in their efforts to improve assessment skills based on their areas of need.	Workgroup meetings will occur. Areas of improvement will be identified and plans to enhance these areas	Supervisors and CWRC	May 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Progress will be discussed with CWRC

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	casework practice.		will be developed.					
	B. Supervisors will attend trainings to enhance supervision.	Supervisors will learn how to broaden the critical thinking skills of staff to achieve safe case closure in a more timely manner.	Supervisors will attend trainings.	Supervisors	November 2016	Time availability of staff. Training space Availability of relevant trainings.	Planning	The agency director will monitor supervisors' attendance at training.
	C. The agency will restructure personnel to consist of three levels of management.	Agency responsibilities will be more evenly distributed so that all levels of staff will have adequate support to meet the increased workload demands on the agency.	The agency will have a new management system established.	Agency director	November 2018	Office space and funding for additional employees.	Planning	Progress will be reported to the Regional Office.
3. Ongoing caseworkers will have an accurate understanding of a case beginning at the time of case transfer.	Caseworkers will complete the supervisory checklist during staffing.	Caseworkers will have guidance to develop a thorough understanding of cases at the time of staffing. Caseworkers will be able to identify what is necessary for safe case closure at the	Supervisors will sign off on completed checklists and file in agency record.	Caseworkers and supervisors	February 2016	Paper	Planning	Supervisors will review case files and ensure checklist is completed.

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		time of staffing.						
4. The agency will provide caseworkers with opportunities to enrich their assessment skills.	A. The agency will prioritize trainings and encourage staff participation in trainings that enhance agency services.	Staff will be trained in areas that enhance their ability to assess and understand cases.	Caseworkers will attend necessary trainings.	Agency supervisors and agency director	July 2016	Availability of relevant trainings. Time availability of staff. Training space	Planning	Supervisors will monitor their staff's attendance at training.
	B. The agency will develop an internal quality service review process.	The agency will provide caseworkers with feedback on their direct practice skills.	Evaluations will be completed.	QA unit	July 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Completed evaluations will be submitted to the supervisors, QA supervisor, and agency director
5. Caseworkers will have the ability to testify to a comprehensive understanding of a case.	A. The agency will develop a protocol to provide caseworkers with feedback on court testimony.	Caseworkers will learn how to provide adequate information at court hearings.	Supervisors will provide feedback to caseworkers as necessary.	Supervisors and legal department	November 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	The legal department will discuss progress with the agency director.
	B. Casenotes will be in the record prior to the court hearing.	Caseworkers will have access to case history while preparing for court testimony.	Casenotes will be in the case record.	Clerical unit supervisor	May 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Supervisors will report to clerical supervisor if casenotes are not in record.
6. The agency will contract with outside sources to support	The agency will explore contracting with a D/A	Substance abuse evaluations will be more	The agency will have a contract with a D/A provider	Program manager and contract manager	November 2017	Funding for the service	Planning	Progress will be reported to the Regional Office.

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caseworkers in assessing client functioning.	provider for substance abuse evaluations.	accessible to family members.	for evaluations.					
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Outcome # 3: The agency will improve their efforts in involving the family in the case planning process.

STRATEGIES	ACTION STEPS	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS	MONITORING
1. Family engagement in the court process will improve.	A. The agency will explore ways to make the court hearing schedule more efficient.	Court days will be more accommodating to the family's basic needs.	Family members will increase their attendance at hearings.	Legal Department	November 2016	Time availability of legal department	Planning	Legal department will update agency director on the process
	B. Team meetings including legal partners will occur prior to court hearings.	Family members will be informed about agency recommendations prior to the day of court. Family members will have additional support in ensuring their input in case planning decisions.	Caseworkers will submit a completed sign-in sheet to the QA unit after team meetings.	Supervisors, caseworkers, and agency legal department	November 2016	Time availability of staff	Planning	Caseworkers will be asked about their team meetings at monthly critical case reviews. The agency director will receive a summary of team meetings held.
2. The FGDM process will be more individualized.	A. The quality assurance unit will	The FGDM process will reflect the family's	Agency staff will observe individualized FGDM	The QA unit & FGDM provider	Ongoing	Time availability	In progress	The supervisor of the QA unit will update

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	provide feedback to the FGDM provider about FGDM conferences.	preferences for case planning.	conferences.					the agency director on progress.
	B. The FGDM provider and QA unit will collaborate to make conferences more family-focused.							
	C. The agency will explore internal alternatives to FGDM conferences.			Agency Director	July 2016	Availability of staff Finances for supplies and staff for FGDM conferences	Planning	The agency director will report progress to the Regional Office
3. The agency will ensure contracted service providers engage families in the case planning process.	A. Supervisors will hold caseworkers accountable for having team meetings and completing sign-in sheets.	The agency will increase the opportunities available to families to participate in the case planning process.	Caseworkers will submit completed team meeting sign-in sheets to the QA unit.	Caseworkers and supervisors	Ongoing	Time availability	In progress	The QA unit will provide a list of team meetings to unit supervisors and the agency director.
	B. The team meeting sign-	The sign-in sheet will clarify team	A revised sign-in sheet will be	QA unit	March 2016	Time availability	Planning	The QA unit will provide a

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	in sheet will be revised.	members' responsibilities and expectations in a way families understand.	available to staff.					revised sign-in sheet to staff.
	C. The QA unit will develop a process with contracted providers to e-mail reports to caseworkers and supervisors.	Caseworkers will have timely information about families' progress.	Provider reports will be e-mailed to staff.	QA unit	July 2016	E-mail access	Planning	Staff will report to QA unit if reports are not received in a timely fashion.
	D. Directors of the contracted providers will be invited to professional development presentations at agency staff meetings.	Contracted providers will increase awareness of community services.	Directors will attend staff meetings.	QA unit supervisor	July 2016	Time availability of contracted provider directors	Planning	Provider staff will sign in at staff meetings

Month and Year for the next state-supported Quality Service Review: July 2017

