

## County Improvement Plan (CIP)

County Name: Lackawanna County Office of Youth and Family Services  
Date of Plan: 7/29/16

Initial  
X Update

### Section I. Team Members

Lackawanna County Department of Human Services Office of Youth and Family Services' Sponsor and Implementation team consists of the agency's administrators: William Browning Director of Human Services/Director of the Office of Youth and Family Service, Patricia Sack Assistant Department of Human Services, Adrian Maillet Human Services Chief Administrative Officer Department of Human Services, Kerry Browning Court and Community Service Director OYFS, Nancy Johnson Casework Manager OYFS, Jason Kavulich Casework Manager OYFS, Kathy Snyder Administrative Officer OYFS, Jennifer Wildermann Clinical Program Specialist, Lisa Paglia Quality Assurance Program Specialist.

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

The Sponsor team developed the fifth County Improvement Plan (CIP). In this plan, the team highlights progress the agency made since the last Licensing Inspection Summary (LIS) and Quality Service Review in 2014 in addition to refining those outcomes that continue to be an integral part of the practice in Lackawanna County. The Sponsor team reviewed data gathered from the Child Welfare Demonstration Project (CWDP), Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), QSR Focus Groups, and the QSR report to develop the outcomes the agency will focus on.

Since the 2014 CIP the agency has utilized four assessment tools, in conjunction with Safety and Risk Assessments, to assess families and individual's needs. The Family and Adolescent Support Tool (FAST), Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA), and Ages and Stages are a critical component to developing and recommending appropriate services to the families and youth that the agency serves. Family Team Conferences, Family Group Decision Making, Teaming Meetings, Mediation, and Permanency Team Conferences provide the agency with the necessary data to expand evidence-based practices and to identify areas of need. These meetings also offer the families and youth an opportunity to participate in the development of their plan. These efforts, the use of evidence-based practices and the continued participation in the CWDP reinforce the agency's established philosophy through the reduction of redundant services, streamlined case management, and the conservation of resources as well as supporting the use of natural supports.

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Consistent with previous practice initiatives a variety of Teaming Meetings with participants integrated from all human service areas are the key component to successful service planning and implementation. Ongoing dialogue and the review of cases at critical junctures enables the agency to identify barriers to permanency quickly and to adjust case planning when necessary in order to achieve timely permanence. The Sponsor Team has determined that the outcomes the agency chose to focus on can be achieved through these established practices. Continued use of evidence-based practices such as Safe Care, Parent Child Interactional Therapy, Incredible Years, Parents as Teachers and Trauma Focused CBT will continue to play a central part of the agency's practice moving forward. The agency will continue to analyze data acquired from the CWDP to achieve better outcomes.

The Sponsor Team believes by prioritizing these outcomes, the areas in the QSR receiving the lowest acceptable ratings can improve over the next rating period. The Areas of Timely Permanence, Teaming, Academic Status, Stability, Transitions and Life Adjustments and Caregiver Functioning are incorporated into each of the chosen outcomes.

- **Outcome # 1:** To consistently apply indicators from the assessment tools into the investigatory phase, teaming meetings, service planning, and transition meetings with families and youth.
  - In the last rating period, assessment was a major focus point for the agency. This core practice has shifted the agency away from subjectively based decision-making and case planning and replaced it with quantifiable assessment tools such as the FAST, CANS, ASQ and CLSA. Currently, the agency is evaluating the reliable and valid application of these assessments through case reviews.

Through the use of established teaming meetings among parents, youth, providers and the agency along with the information gathered through proper assessments, a comprehensive service or transition plan with time sensitive attainable goals can be developed. This practice will clearly identify the roles, expectations and responsibilities of each participant.

Teaming Meetings for new placements, Family Team Conferences, and Permanency Team meetings will provide administration an opportunity to oversee progress and to assess accurately areas of need. The agency has recently revised the Permanency Team meetings to expand discussions on cases beyond the goals, concurrent plans and reasonable efforts the agency is making. The expanded process looks more closely at the areas of assessment while ensuring required AFSA timelines are followed. Additionally administration has piloted a new tracking document to follow cases throughout their placement history.

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The CLSA is typically completed with a unit of Child Preparation Services and reviewed with the entire IL team and the youth. The Assessment is primarily utilized at the point when the youth is beginning to attend the Independent Living Support Group. The intent is to complete the assessment at any early point and to utilize it as the foundation of the youth Family Service Plan and Transition Plan. Units of service through the State Wide Adoption Agency will continue to play a critical part as will the Teen Success Agreement developed by the agency's Youth Advisory Board.

- **Outcome # 2:** To better prepare families and youth for transitions and life adjustments.
  - Based on the data reviewed by the Sponsor Team from the QSR this outcome was developed to focus on planning for all forms of transitions, stability, and academic status. As previously stated through the use of established systems individuals and families will be engaged during critical life adjustment phases. This practice will better prepare families, youth and children for significant changes by bringing to the table providers, school liaisons, care givers, parents and youth and identifying what difficulties each participant is experience to help better facilitate and cope with the change.

In response to what the agency has learned by developing and expanding our Youth Advisory Board this objective will empower youth with a voice to make change, express concerns and provide feedback to the workers, supervisors and providers. This practice intends to utilize meaningful, youth driven Transition Plans and Teen Success Agreements to support youth in times or critical life adjustments. These efforts can greatly enhance stability, academic success, and healthy transitions.

An area of need that often times does not get the attention that is warranted is affordable sustainable housing and the impact that homelessness has on the families we serve. Lackawanna County DHS in partnership with OYFS has highlighted this area of need and is working with the community to assess and provide adequate services to these families ending the cycle of homelessness. These efforts can help reduce the number of children in care due to housing related issues and prevent placements. This initiative will also capture the underserved population of homeless youth.

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- **Outcome # 3:** To ensure that timely permanence occurs in all cases.
  - Permanency remains a focal point for this CIP as it has been in previous years. The Sponsor Team believes in continued education, growth and refinement of the agency's permanency process in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for those we serve. Several changes have been made administratively to enhance the process. The process has opened up to Court Appointed Special Advocates, SWAN Providers and other service providers. The information gathered at this meeting from those sources in addition to the information gathered through the newly developed permanency tool allows for the best possible planning on each case.

Cases and ASFA timeline requirements are monitored through traditional supervision and through administrative reviews of each case at the intervals 2 months, five months, eight months, ten months, and twelve months. Cases requiring more intervention are assigned time frames to return for meetings in order to ensure timely permanence. The continued utilization of units of SWAN services remains an important part of the agency's permanency practice. Child Specific Recruitment Units for Concurrent Planning, Child Preparation Services for Transitions and Adoption Finalization Units all have been integrated into the agency's practice and will be expanded upon over the next review period.

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### 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.)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome # _1_: To consistently apply indicators from the assessment tools into the investigatory phase, teaming meetings, service planning, and transition meetings with families and youth.</li> </ul>								
STRATEGIES <sup>1</sup>	ACTION STEPS <sup>2</sup>	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS <sup>3</sup>	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION <sup>4</sup>	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE <sup>5</sup>	TIMEFRAME <sup>6</sup>	RESOURCES NEEDED <sup>7</sup>	STATUS <sup>8</sup>	MONITORING <sup>9</sup>
Ensure the proper	In conjunction with Risk and Safety	Caseworkers will meet with the family	Case documentation and case	CQI Team Caseworkers Supervisors	Ongoing through March	Trained Staff Invested	Ongoing Practice	Teaming Meeting to review prior to

**1 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.

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

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

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

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

**6 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.

**7 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.

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

**9 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

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utilization of the FAST and CANS	Assessments use the FAST/CANS assessments to create a comprehensive plan with measureable objectives and specific needs.	members to complete the assessment tools and develop the plan.  In placement cases a Family Team Conference is held to develop the plan with the family. Through this collaboration the family may choose to have a Family Group Decision Making	sampling.  Family Team Conference Data	Family Team/Group Facilitator	2018	Providers		placement. Permanency Team Meetings
Ensure the Proper Utilization of the Casey Life Skills Assessment	Use of the Casey Life Skills Assessment to create a comprehensive transition plan with measurable objectives and specific goals.	Caseworker, IL coordinator and SWAN provider will meet with the youth to complete the tool and develop a plan.	Case Documentation and Case Sampling	IL Team, CQI Team, and SWAN Provider.	On Going through March 2018	Trained Staff and Providers.	Ongoing Practice.	Quarterly IL Reviews Yearly IL Evaluation

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Ensure Proper CPP Development through the use of Family Team Conferences and Family Group Decision Making Conferences.	In conjunction with Risk and Safety Assessments, FAST/CANS assessments and collaboration with the family and providers a comprehensive plan with measureable objectives and specific needs is developed at the FTC	Family Team Conference is held to develop the plan with the family. Through this collaboration the family may choose to have a Family Group Decision Making	Case documentation and case sampling.  Family Team Conference Data	CQI Team Caseworkers Supervisors Family Team/Group Facilitator	On Going through March 2018	Staff, facilitators, cross trained providers	Ongoing Practice.	Administrative monthly service plan reviews.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome # _2_: To better prepare families and youth for transitions and life adjustments.</li> </ul>								
STRATEGIES <sup>10</sup>	ACTION STEPS <sup>11</sup>	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS <sup>12</sup>	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION <sup>13</sup>	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE <sup>14</sup>	TIMEFRAME <sup>15</sup>	RESOURCES NEEDED <sup>16</sup>	STATUS <sup>17</sup>	MONITORING <sup>18</sup>
Ensure all youth	All youth 12 years of age	Collaborative Teaming	The data will reflect better	CQI Team, Independent	On Going through	Staff, facilitators,	New Practice	Quarterly

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entering care, changing placement settings, or exiting care have been provided an opportunity participate directly in transition planning.	or older will be offered a Family Team Conferences, Family Group Decision Making or a Mediation Round table within a meaningful time frame related to the youth but no later than 90 days before or after the transition.	meetings with the youth.	placement stability and an improvement in academic status for these cases.	Living Staff, Supervisors, Caseworkers, FGDM Coordinators, Mediator, Family Team Facilitator and Education Liaisons.	March 2018	cross trained providers	Initiative	Administrative reviews of youth 12 and older in care.
Ensure all families with children entering care, changing placement settings, or exiting care have been provided an opportunity participate directly in	All families will be offered a Family Team Conference, Family Group Decision Making or a Mediation Round table within a meaningful time frame	Collaborative Teaming meetings	The data will reflect better placement stability and an improvement in academic status for these cases.	CQI Team, Independent Living Staff, Supervisors, Caseworkers, FGDM Coordinators, Mediator, Family Team Facilitator and Education Liaisons.	On Going through March 2018	Staff, facilitators, cross trained providers	New Practice Initiative	Quarterly Administrative reviews



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transition planning.	related to the youth but no later than 90 days before or after the transition.							
Ensuring all families benefiting from hotel or shelters stays have a voice and participate actively in their transition plan.	All families befitting from housing services will participate in a housing teaming meeting within 48 hours of the initial approval.	The Teaming meeting will clearly define established expectations for both providers and the participating family.	The data will reflect better housing stability and an improvement in academic status for these cases. Families will no longer appear on the HUD Chronic Homeless List	CQI Team, Housing Coordinator, Supervisors, Caseworkers, FGDM Coordinators, Mediator, Family Team Facilitator, HAP Case Manager, Nativity Shelter Case Management, and Education Liaisons.	On Going through March 2018	Staff, facilitators, cross trained providers	New Practice Initiative	Quarterly Administrative reviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome # <u>3</u>: To ensure that timely permanence occurs in all cases.</li> </ul>								
STRATEGIES <sup>19</sup>	ACTION STEPS <sup>20</sup>	INDICATORS/ BENCHMARKS <sup>21</sup>	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION <sup>22</sup>	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE <sup>23</sup>	TIMEFRAME <sup>24</sup>	RESOURCES NEEDED <sup>25</sup>	STATUS <sup>26</sup>	MONITORING <sup>27</sup>

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<p>Ensure that timely permanence is achieved for all children and youth in care.</p>	<p>Every placement case will be administratively reviewed at the 30 day, 2 month, 5 month, 10 month, and 12 month intervals.</p>	<p>Each meeting will review current assessments, goals, and concurrent plan. Clear instructions and time frames will be outlined for the agency staff to follow through with. Appropriate units of service will be referred.</p>	<p>The agency DATA will reflect significant changes in placement data. The number of active ongoing cases and the number of case re opening for service will reduce.</p>	<p>CQI Team, Independent Living Staff, Supervisors, Caseworkers, FGDM Coordinators, Mediator, Family Team Facilitator and Education Liaisons.</p>	<p>On Going through March 2018</p>	<p>Trained Staff and Providers.</p>	<p>Ongoing Practice.</p>	<p>Quarterly Administrative reviews</p>

**Month and Year for the next state-supported Quality Service Review: March 2018**

*State-supported QSRs must occur at least every 3 years, but frequency cannot occur more than once every year.*