



NC Department of Health and Human Services

Pre-Event Education PowerPoint

Social Services and Child Welfare Reform

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March 2019

Origin of Child Welfare and Social Services Reform

- **A statewide need to improve North Carolina's Child Welfare system was identified in a federal review in 2015**
- **Legislature raised concerns about the poor performance and began drafting a law to strengthen child welfare and social services in NC**
- **Rylan's Law (Session Law 2017-41) was passed in June 2017 to address child welfare and social services needs in NC**
- **Family First Prevention Services Act is federal legislation passed in February 2018, specifically related to child welfare**

Programs Included in Rylan's Law



Summary of Rylan's Law



Social Services Working Group (SSWG)

- Developed recommendations on the number of regions and various functions
- Group chaired by former Senator Barringer included representation from state leadership, county DSS directors, commissioners, attorneys and a judge



Third-Party Vendor to Draft Reform Plans

- Center for Support of Families was selected as the vendor in March 2018
- Preliminary recommendations released in September 2018 and final recommendations due in March 2019



County Memoranda of Agreement

- Agreement between state and counties to meet certain performance metrics
- Those metrics will be part of a dashboard that reports on county and statewide performance



DHHS Regionalization Plans

- Identifies resources and legislative changes needed to shift from central to regional supervision
- Plan submitted by DHHS to Legislature in February 2019



Child Well-being Transformation Council

- Multidisciplinary group of statewide leaders
- Provides coordination between public agencies and organizations serving children

Social Services Working Group has Two Phases

Phase 1
October 2017 - April 2018

Developed recommendations to address:

- **the size, number, and location of the regional state offices**
- **the allocation of responsibility between central/Raleigh, regional, and local/county officials**

Phase 2
March 2018- *February 2019

Developed recommendations to address:

- **changes necessary to improve processes for information sharing, conflicts of interest, and intercounty movement of clients**
- **a vision for transitioning the State from a *centrally* supervised system to a *regionally* supervised system**

*Note: workgroup completed tasks and ended in December 2018

Center for Support of Families has Three Phases

Phase 1
March - August 2018

Assess and make recommendations to enhance state supervision and support of county-administered child welfare and social services systems

Phase 2
Sept. 2018- March 2019

Work with state and counties to further develop and implement certain Phase 1 recommendations, plans, and technical assistance that does not require new laws or budgets

Phase 3
April 2019- April 2020*

Continue technical assistance and implementation of certain recommendations from phases 1 and 2

* Proposed timeframe

County Memoranda of Agreement and Data Dashboard



Initial metrics were introduced to counties in June 2018 and are being revised for SFY 2019-20

Data dashboard development is underway and will provide public-facing data on county performance for certain metrics



Performance metrics and the data dashboard are tools to promote transparency and accountability to improve outcomes for people served by programs included in Rylan's Law.

DHHS Regionalization Plans

- **Concurs with many recommendations from the Center for Support of Families and the Social Services Working Group**
- **Key recommendations propose:**
 - **7 regions for supervision of county-administered child welfare and social services**
 - **A regional staffing structure**
 - **A plan for repurposing staff and identification of new staff and resources needed to staff regional offices**
 - **A phased approach in shifting to regionally-based supervision by March 2020**
 - **Legislative recommendations to further strengthen key program functions and structures**

Child Well-Being Transformation Council

- **Began meeting in December 2018**
- **Primary goal is to coordinate public child-serving agencies across the state**
- **Council is administratively housed with the General Assembly**
- **Members consist of representation from agencies such as:**
 - **NC Division of Social Services – Child Welfare Section**
 - **County Department of Social Services**
 - **Department of Juvenile Justice**
 - **NC Division of Public Health**
 - **NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services**
 - **Other agencies are also represented**

Family First Prevention Services Act

- **Federal legislation passed in February 2018 with bipartisan support**
- **Shifts child welfare system toward prevention and safely keeping children with families**

Key Provisions

- **Allows existing federal dollars to be spent on prevention services such as mental health, substance abuse, and parent skill-building services**
- **Limits federal dollars that are spent on children in congregate care to the first two weeks of placement, with certain exceptions**
- **Other provisions that support safety, permanence and well-being**

Key Takeaways

- **Rylan's Law is state legislation that promotes transparency and accountability in North Carolina's child welfare and social services systems.**
- **Recommendations from the Social Services Working Group and the Center for Support of families have been reviewed by top leadership at DHHS and prioritized.**
- **County departments of social services will continue to administer social services/child welfare programs as the state transitions to a regional model of supervision.**
- **The Family First Prevention Services Act is federal legislation that allows states to use existing federal dollars to expand services to prevent children from entering foster care, and limits federal funding for children in group placement settings. There are other provisions that support child safety, stability, and family support.**
- **North Carolina is integrating key components of Rylan's Law and Family First to ensure provisions are aligned as implementation of both laws are underway.**

Resource Guide

- **Social Services Working Group reports and materials can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/background>**
- **Center for Support of Families Preliminary Reform Plans can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2DsdIZI>**
- **A comprehensive summary of the Family First Prevention Services Act can be found at <https://www.childrensdefense.org/policy/policy-priorities/child-welfare/family-first/>**