

Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group Meeting Minutes – 11.28.17

The third meeting of the Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group (SSWG) was held at the University of North Carolina School of Government (UNC SOG) on November 28, 2017.

Working Group Members and School of Government Staff in Attendance

Sen. Tamara Barringer, co-chair

Rep. Sarah Stevens, co-chair

Sen. Joyce Krawiec

Susan Perry-Manning, Deputy Secretary for Human Services, DHHS

Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services, DHHS

Hon. Robert Stiehl, Chief District Court Judge, Cumberland County

Hon. Kevin Austin, Commissioner, Yadkin County

Hon. Brenda Howerton, Commissioner, Durham County

Hon. Page Lemel, Commissioner, Transylvania County

Chris Dobbins, Consolidated Human Services Director, Gaston County

Glenn Osborne, Social Services Director, Wilson County

Hon. Bob Woodard, Commissioner Dare County

Susan Osborne, Social Services Director, Alamance County

Lisa Cauley, Chief, Child Welfare Section of the Division of Social Services, DHHS

Angie Stephenson, Social Services Attorney, Orange and Chatham Counties

Working Group Members Attending Remotely

Sen. Kathy Harrington

Working Group Members Not in Attendance

Rep. Jonathan Jordan

Rep. David Lewis

Convene

- Welcoming Remarks by SSWG Co-Chairs:
 - Sen. Barringer convened the Working Group with opening remarks.
 - Rep. Stevens followed with additional opening remarks.
- Introductions by SSWG members, UNC SOG Staff, and meeting attendees.
- M. Henderson reviewed the meeting purposes and agenda; the Working Group adopted these without change.

Approval of Minutes

- C. Dobbins moved to approve minutes.
- Commissioner Lemel seconded the motion.
- Minutes from the 11.02.17 SSWG meeting were approved.

Updates

- Working Group members were provided time to update the group on any thoughts, experiences, or conversations they have had since the second SSWG meeting.
 - Concerns were expressed over a possible disconnect between the emerging SSWG plan for regional supervision and the role of the counties in overseeing the agencies responsible for administering the programs. A. Wall noted that future meeting will address some of those potential concerns, particularly the relationship between the regional offices and the county commissioners.
 - Sen. Barringer expressed concern over recent press coverage of the SSWG and its charge and encouraged SSWG members to communicate openly with the public about the work underway.
 - Open communication and transparency builds trust, which will be necessary moving forward.
 - G. Osborne updated the SSWG on presentations he gave at the statewide Children's Services Committee meeting, statewide Social Services Directors meeting, and the Eastern Regional Directors meeting. Feedback from those meetings included:
 - An emphasis on regional supervision;
 - A need for continued clarity and transparency regarding the group's charge and progress;
 - Concern over financing;
 - Recommendation for higher quality, lower quantity regional offices;
 - Concerns over expertise at the regional level.
 - S. Osborne assured that county directors will be provided updates on the work being conducted every month in order to increase transparency
 - Sen. Barringer: Getting feedback is also very important.
 - K. Austin provided feedback to the group that he had received at a recent child fatality meeting he had attended:
 - Backlog in child fatality reviews are primarily a staffing issue.
 - Regional offices could be used to address staffing issues, thereby addressing backlog.

- A. Wall provided a research update that was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. Slides from the presentation can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Profile
 - SSWG follow-up questions/comments regarding Vocational Rehabilitation:
 - How long has this been in place?
 - Why did they go from 4 Regions to 3 Regions?
 - What are their experiences with transient populations?
 - Additional information on their contracting model is needed.
 - Highlights of Other Services: Adult Services, Food and Nutrition, Child Support, Medicaid
 - SSWG follow-up questions/comments regarding other services:
 - Core competencies must be established for program specialists providing support to local practitioners.
 - Child Support is one of the more unique programs in terms of administration.
 - Dave Richard will provide additional information about Medicaid Reform at the Dec. 14th meeting.

Allocation of Responsibilities

- A. Wall provided a brief explanation of the updated Table of Supervisory Functions.
 - A copy of the updated Table of Supervisory functions can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
- A. Sachs introduced “Agree or Flag” exercise and gave SSWG instructions for completing the activity.
 - Taking one function at a time, small groups shared whether or not they agreed with the regional functions as written, disagreed, or needed additional clarification.
 - The whole group then came together to flag or approve regional functions as per their small group discussions.

Allocation of Responsibilities, Follow-up Exercise

- A. Sachs introduced a follow-up exercise to Allocation of Responsibilities activity.
 - What should be the regional offices role for each supervisory function?
 - The entire group brainstormed high level themes regarding the role of regional offices for each supervisory function.
 - A. Wall took notes for the group to edit.

Designing Key Features of Regional Infrastructure

- A. Wall provided an explanation of key design factors that will contribute to the success of the regional supervisory role.
 - Accompanying PowerPoint slides can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
- M. Henderson introduced the Designing Key Features exercise.
 - Working Group members were provided 15 minutes to discuss design features at their tables.
 - Following table discussions, SSWG members were asked to indicate their design preferences for several key features by making a mark along corresponding spectrums.
 - The accompanying handout for this exercise can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.
- M. Henderson led a brief discussion upon the completion of the exercise; participant comments (rather than group consensus) are reflected below:
 - Physical Presence
 - Consistency and fidelity is increased with physical space
 - Work-from-home can be difficult to supervise
 - Flex spaces might allow a combination of telecommuting and physical interaction
 - Rotating Assignments
 - Regional administrator should remain, the rest of the staff can be flexible
 - North Carolina is a large state, it may be difficult to effectively rotate staff geographically
 - Human resources issues
 - Rotation should be based on performance, individuals with great outcomes should not be moved out. Pre-determined cycles could be detrimental
 - Audit functions – depending on the size of region.
 - Keep objectivity
 - Regional Staff Roles
 - Research on blended versus divided roles needed
 - Regional Administrator Role
 - Perhaps two people are needed – one is the director and the other is the administrator (or deputy director).
 - Risk management perspective
 - Communication with central office should go through director/administrator, no solid line between program specialists and central office
 - Regional administrators/directors need to be able to approve or adjust the work that is being done by their staffs.

- Number of Regions
 - Several members preferred 4-5 regions, several preferred 8-10 regions
 - More regions may result in less consistency
 - May not be able to recruit a large number of capable, competent regional leaders
 - Each region not include more than than 15% of the state's population
 - East, West, Central, Piedmont
- Presence of Districts within Regions
 - Numerous, small districts may conflict with the regional presences of other entities
 - Teams of program-specific consultants (5-6 specialists), fiscal consultants, and a regional director
 - We are asking the regions to take on more responsibility; they won't be able to do what they need to do if they are overseeing 20 or more counties.
 - Districts for specialists, not for directors
 - Districts are a function of region size
- SSWG members were asked to complete the "survey of characteristics to use in designing regions" and leave it on their table for SOG to collect and tabulate.
 - A copy of the survey can be found at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/social-services/materials>.

Wrap Up

- A. Wall reviewed future agenda items and reminded SSWG that the next two meetings (December 14, January 3) will be held remotely. The next in-person meeting will be January 9.
- SSWG members provided closing remarks to wrap up the meeting
 - The diversity of opinion and perspective in the room is a positive
 - Continue to focus on the charge of the group as it is described in the legislation
 - Make adjustments to agenda as conversation proceeds
 - Generally optimistic
 - Willingness to work and be open to the process