



Effective Child Welfare Practice

MONITORING PERFORMANCE

INTRODUCTION

Since the former Consent Decree was renegotiated during the summer of 2011 and became the Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA), the Children's Services Administration has been creating programs, developing policy, hiring staff, and plotting a course to achieve compliance in all areas of the new Agreement. DHS has received a report on Michigan's performance during the first monitoring period of the MSA (October 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011).

DHS has also been operating under a program improvement plan (PIP) for the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). While the MSA and the CFRP PIP are two different federal mandates to improve performance, the efforts are very much intertwined. DHS has made every effort to ensure that actions taken to improve outcomes in child welfare satisfy requirements of both and to the extent possible our reporting mechanisms are the same.

MONITORING REPORTS

For each MSA reporting period, the court-appointed monitors, also known as the Michigan Monitoring Team (MMT), perform external validation activities to evaluate Michigan's child welfare practices. At the end of each reporting period MMT compiles that information and data submitted by DHS to create a performance report which is submitted to federal court.

DHS's ability to prove high performance and quality case practice hinges on case documentation and data. DHS relies primarily on SWSS/SWSS Web, the Data Warehouse, JJOLT, BCAL and some case reads for information on our performance. Going forward, it is imperative that case records (SWSS and paper reports) document casework activities accurately and timely. To that end, the DHS

PRACTICE POINTS

- This is the Department's first compliance report under the new Modified Settlement Agreement.
- Performance is derived through data reports, interviews and case validation.
- DHS's failure to comply with the MSA will result in penalties and sanctions imposed by Federal Court.
- Counties are being monitored for compliance by CSA through data reports from SWSS, SWSS Web, JJOLT and BCAL.

Child Welfare Field Operations Administration has been and will continue working with counties and private child-placing agencies to improve performance and child welfare outcomes.

Shortly after the release of the MSA 1 report, DHS will begin compiling information to submit to MMT for the MSA 2 report period (January 1, 2012 – June 30, 2012). Reporting for this second period will focus more on the implementation and practical application of requirements in the field. Some critical areas of assessment will include review of compliance with caseload ratios, caseworker visits with children and families, execution of required health appointments, and availability of foster homes. Performance in MSA 2 will be closely scrutinized as it will reveal whether our efforts towards comprehensive systems change have begun to take root.

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

The importance of documented case work cannot be overstated. Although the current case management system has identifiable deficits in reporting, many efforts have been made to improve accuracy. Key actions that help improve our reporting systems include:

- **Understand Requirements:** Use supervision, unit meetings, home visits and other mechanisms to ensure you and foster care providers understand the requirements in policy, law and the MSA so that your practices meet those requirements.
- **Management Tools:** Use recently released and existing management reports to ensure upcoming due dates are met and overdue assignments are resolved quickly.
- **Identify and Correct Errors:** When using management reports, take the time to identify and correct any errors (via Remedy/Help Desk) to ensure our data systems accurately reflect the work done. It is important to understand that many reports on our performance are derived from the Data Warehouse, not the SWSS production environment. Errors may not always be visible in SWSS so it is important to use the management reports to ensure any inaccuracies are corrected.
- **Enter Data:** Ensure that case contacts and other critical elements in SWSS or JJOLT are updated timely and accurately.

SUPPORT

DHS is attempting to provide more evaluative and supportive information to field staff on child welfare performance. The Children's Services Administration will begin releasing **Effective Child Welfare Practice** updates to highlight practice area topics and practical implications related to performance outcomes. In addition, Child Welfare Field Operations will seek out alternate methods of communicating with local offices and agencies while continuing to sponsor regular telephone and in-person meetings to discuss priorities and barriers to improvements.