

North Carolina's Multiple Response System

Implementing and Sustaining Practice Models
National Resource Center on Organizational Improvement
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Multiple Response System (MRS) in Brief

- comprehensive child welfare system reform beginning in 2001
- practice model defined by 6 principles of partnership and 6 system of care values
- a model existing within the framework of 7 core strategies designed to enhance the delivery of child welfare services from intake to permanency
- began as a pilot project in 10 NC counties and spread across the remaining counties over a four-year period

Principles of Partnership

1. everyone desires respect
2. everyone needs to be heard
3. everyone has strengths
4. judgments can wait
5. partners share power
6. partnership is a process

System of Care Values

1. service delivery that is culturally competent
2. child, youth, and family involvement
3. individualized, strengths-based care
4. community-based services and supports
5. interagency collaboration
6. accountability to results

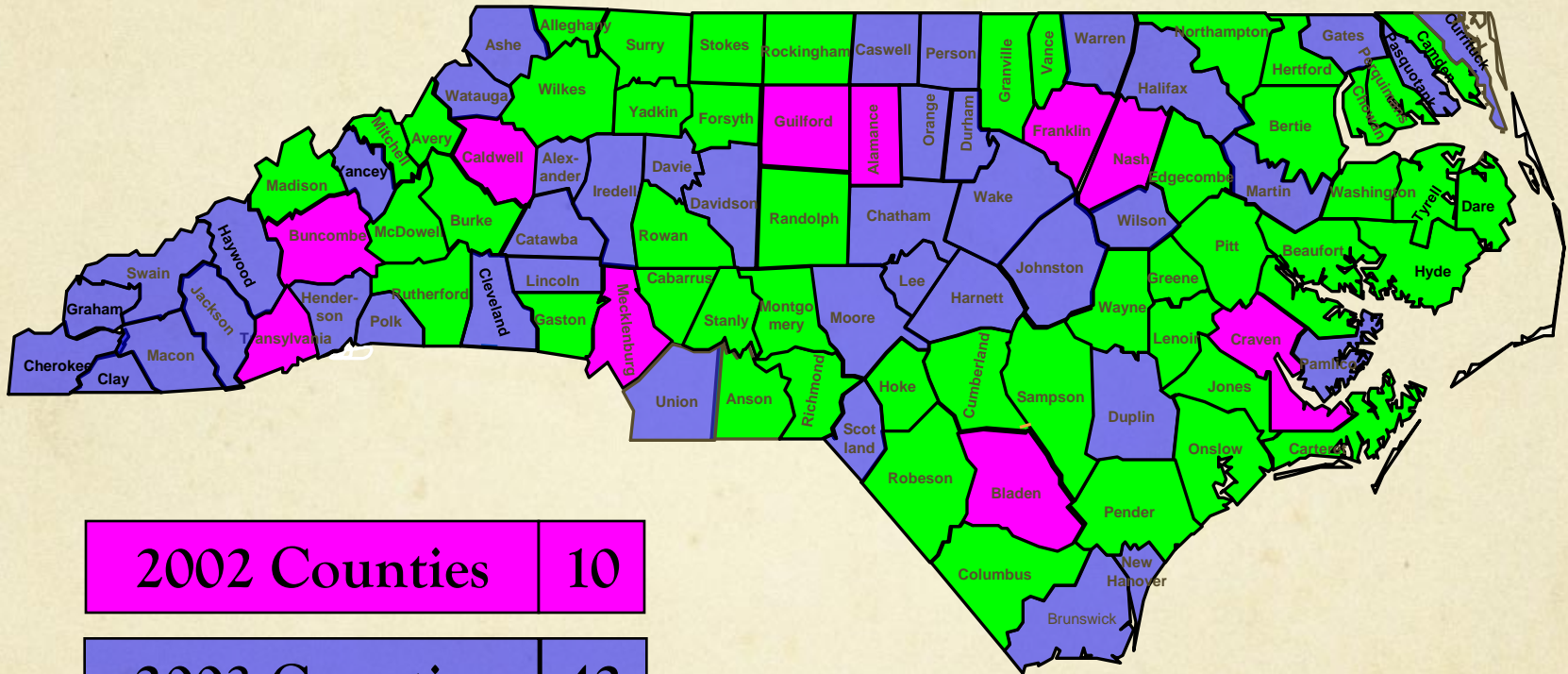
Seven Strategies of MRS

1. strengths-based structured intake
2. choice of dual response to reports of child abuse, neglect, or dependency
3. enhanced coordination between law enforcement and child welfare to hold perpetrators more accountable
4. collaboration between TANF and child welfare

Seven Strategies of MRS (cont'd)

5. redesign of mandatory on-going child protective services based on level of risk
6. family group conferencing model (child and family teams) throughout the life of the case
7. Shared parenting meetings within the first 7 days of placement out of the home

Multiple Response System Roll-Out



2002 Counties	10
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2003 Counties	42
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2006 Counties	48
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Keys to Successful Implementation

- parallel process
- state level - pilot counties
- county level - small tests of change
- supports for counties making changes
- limited financial support
- dedicated state staff positions

Parallel Process

- uses the same values or strategies to reach similar but different results; often occurring at different levels of an organization
- critical to NC's success implementing a practice model in a county-administered, state-supervised system
- in the case of NC's MRS, the parallel process is best expressed by the phrase, "what's good for agencies, is what's good for families"
- policy development similar to creating family service case plans

State Level - Pilot Counties

- began small (10 counties) and expanded state-wide over time
- convened pilots regularly to:
 - discuss lessons learned from peer perspective
 - develop policy and procedures
 - celebrate successes
- implemented a “buddy-county” system as expansion moved beyond Pilot 10
- allowed pilots and expansion counties to self-determine path to more critical aspects of change (differential response)

County Level – Small Tests of Change

- counties encouraged to set their own pace with implementation with differential response strategy
 - eligible reports assigned as Family Assessment assigned based on allegations, geo-district, age of children, etc.
- counties frequently dialogue with partners on MRS
 - engage placement provider community on shared parenting strategy, develop MOU with law enforcement for abuse cases, etc.
- state adopted Child and Family Team meeting process in all aspects of a case based on county input

Supportive Process

- monthly / regular face-to-face meetings which evolved to monthly webinars
- annual multi-day “Learning Institutes” to allow counties and public and private community partners to present on innovative practices related to MRS
- instituted legislative changes to provide definition to NC’s dual-response portion of child welfare reform (G.S. § § 7B-101 (11a) (11b))

Supportive Process (cont'd.)

- Duke University's Center for Child & Family Policy (<http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/>) to evaluate efficacy of MRS implementation
- NCSU's Center for Family & Community Engagement (<http://www.cfface.org/>) to provide TA around Child and Family Team meeting processes
- UNC - Chapel Hill's Jordan Institute for Families (<http://ssw.unc.edu/jordan>) to provide trainings
- dedicated MRS resource webpage on Division website (<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs/index.htm>)

Limited Financial Support

- legislative allocation provided to reduce caseworker ratio from 1:12 to 1:10
- not directly related to seven core MRS strategies, reduction intended to allow selected counties to focus on providing one caseworker / casework team for each family served
- caseload policy remains unchanged and is one of lowest in the country
- contracts with university partners for indirect supports (regular newsletters, TA around child and family teams, evaluations, etc.)

Dedicated State Staff

- MRS Program Coordinator (central office based) and Program Consultant (field based)
- both positions filled by supervisory staff from Pilot 10 counties; both individuals practiced child welfare prior to MRS implementation
- coordinator now the child welfare policy administrator and consultant now a staff development trainer ensures retention of practice model in policy and practice

Challenges to Model Implementation

- resistance to change
 - within child welfare agencies
 - external partners
- mapping lessons consistently across jurisdictions
- limited financial support
- sweeping reform efforts produces barriers to isolating variables that impact change (MRS, SDM tools, economic conditions)

MRS Practice Model Resources

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs/index.htm>

- multi-year evaluations
- county “fact sheets”
- articles on practice model
- training materials
- current and past newsletter issues
- meeting notes

Thank you

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18