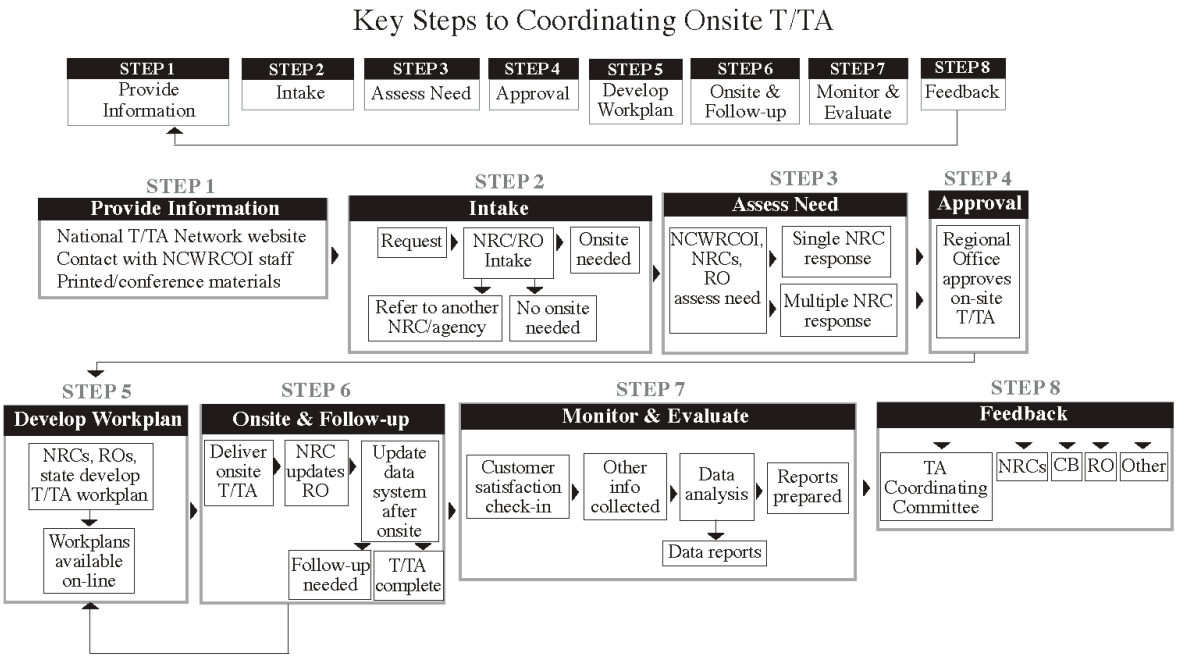
THE CHILDREN'S BUREAU TRAINING/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK
KEY STEPS TO COORDINATING THE T/TA PROCESS

The Children's Bureau (CB) is implementing a new process for accessing Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA). This process is designed to enhance the utilization if Children's Bureau T/TA to achieve systemic change in State and Tribal child welfare programs.

With the start of the 2005 fiscal year, the Children's Bureau entered into a new set of cooperative agreements with the seven National Resource Centers (NRCs). To better coordinate services to States and Tribes from the NRC's, the procedure for requesting training and technical assistance (T/TA) is now a central point-of-coordination for all on-site requests. Under the new Children's Bureau T/TA Network structure, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NCWRCOI) is responsible for coordinating, facilitating and evaluating onsite T/TA. In responding to requests for on-site T/TA, all Children's Bureau NRCs and AdoptUSKids will cooperate with the central point-of-coordination. A Training and Technical Assistance Coordinating Committee, made up of the Children's Bureau's Federal Project Officers (FPOs) for the NRCs and ACF Regional Office staff, developed the following guidance on procedures for States and Tribes to follow in requesting on-site T/TA from the seven NRCs and AdoptUSKids.

In the role of the central point-of-coordination for all on-site requests, the NCWRCOI will facilitate the involvement of appropriate staff from ACF Regional Offices (RO), NRCs/AdoptUSKids (referred to collectively as "NRCs" for the remainder of this paper), the Children's Bureau (CB), and other critical stakeholders in the T/TA needs assessment and in the development of a work plan. For each State and Tribe receiving onsite T/TA, the central point of coordination will insure a better coordinated response, avoid delays and duplication, and result in sound T/TA work plans.

The flow chart below summarizes the key steps in the new, coordinated onsite T/TA process. Because the process will be flexible based on the unique needs of each State and Tribe, the steps will not necessarily occur in the exact order presented for every onsite T/TA request.



The T/TA process described in this paper reflects input from the CB T/TA Coordinating Committee, ACF RO staff, and all the NRCs/AdoptUSKids. In the future, the NCWRCOI will work closely with these same groups to refine and improve the process as necessary.

Step 1: Providing Information about National T/TA Network Services and Process. One of the keys to facilitating coordinated and responsive onsite T/TA is providing States, Tribes and other key participants with up-to-date information about available T/TA resources and the onsite T/TA request process. The NCWRCOI will ensure that participants can access such information through multiple sources, including a new, interactive National T/TA Network web site, descriptive materials distributed at national conferences and meetings, and direct contact with designated NCWRCOI staff. In addition, individual NRCs will continue to publicize their own services and expertise through their websites, attendance at conferences, mailings and other activities.

The National T/TA Network web site will provide comprehensive, updated information to help State and Tribal staff understand the T/TA process, determine whom to contact in various NRCs for more specific information, and initiate their requests for onsite T/TA, including:

- descriptions of services and activities for each NRC and AdoptUSKids, and links to their web sites;
- details of the onsite T/TA request, approval and work plan development process;
- electronic T/TA request forms States can complete and submit immediately via the web site;
- contact information for NCWRCOI staff who can provide additional, individualized assistance; and

- links to ACF RO staff and other organizations with available resources and critical information (Children's Bureau, National Clearinghouses, other ACF Resource Centers, etc.).

In addition to the web site, NCWRCOI staff will provide information through the distribution of written materials, presentations at conferences, and other outreach activities. The NCWRCOI will publicize the National T/TA Network and its activities throughout the 5-year grant period to ensure an accurate and consistent understanding of the resources available to all States and Tribes, the process for accessing them, and their relevance to improving outcomes for children and families.

Finally, designated NCWRCOI staff will be available by telephone, email or videoconference to work with State/Tribal staff individually, answer questions, and assist in contacting NRCs or other resources to ensure that States/Tribes understand the process and receive necessary information from the outset. Kris Sahonchik will manage the T/TA coordination function and serve as the lead contact person for the NCWRCOI.

Step 2: Intake for all types of T/TA (including on-site T/TA). Providing responsive T/TA requires a consistent and timely intake process to: (1) determine the viability and appropriateness of requests from States/Tribes, (2) begin to hone initial T/TA requests and (3) connect State/Tribal agencies with the NRCs most suited to meet their needs. State/Tribal agencies may contact RO staff, NRCs or the NCWRCOI initially with specific onsite T/TA requests. They also may have more general questions about the types of T/TA available or need information about specific issues on which they are working. For example, States may request assistance from ROs or NRCs in developing broad PIP strategies or in determining the types of T/TA services they can include as action steps in their PIPs. The NRC Network should treat all these initial contacts as intakes to the T/TA system and work with each agency to determine its specific needs, involve all NRCs and organizations that might be needed, and assist in determining whether the agency ultimately needs to request onsite T/TA.

In order to ensure a coordinated, consistent and responsive approach to onsite T/TA, the staff at the initial point of contact in the T/TA Network should collect some basic, standardized information from each State/Tribe. Based on that information, the initial contact person should either begin processing the formal request or refer the agency to the appropriate NRC for further assistance. In addition, if the initial contact is not with the RO, the appropriate RO staff person should be informed about the request. Finally, the contact person may involve the NCWRCOI in determining which NRC(s) would be best suited to meet the State/Tribal agency's needs or if T/TA will have to be provided by more than one NRC and will require integration and coordination. For example, the NCWRCOI can help the RO and States define T/TA needs during the PIP development process and involve appropriate NRCs in the process before the PIP has been finalized.

The goal of the intake is to determine whether the request is feasible for onsite T/TA through the NRC(s) and, if so, to process the request for onsite T/TA in a consistent, efficient and timely manner. Even in cases where the intake reveals that onsite T/TA is not necessary, a

consistent intake process will ensure a more targeted response from the T/TA Network to meet State or Tribal needs.

Among the key pieces of information that should be discussed and collected during the intake process are the following:

- Contact's information (e.g., position in the agency, address, email, telephone, etc.)
- Type of agency (e.g., state, county, tribal, Court, etc.)
- Whether state's single point of contact for onsite T/TA has approved request
- Reason for request
- Nature of the need
- General timeframes for T/TA
- Whether other NRCs and/or organizations may need to be involved
- Whether ACF RO has been informed about possible T/TA needs
- Whether needs are related to the CFSR, PIP, CFSP or other Federal requirements or CB initiatives

Step 3: Assess Need. If the intake discussions confirm that the request for onsite T/TA is viable, the appropriate NRC(s) and RO staff will work together with the State/Tribe to assess the need more thoroughly and determine the most effective response. If the T/TA needs require the integrated involvement of multiple NRCs, contact the NCWRCOI to assist in the coordination of the assessment process.

The T/TA assessment process will build on the intake, and include a number of standard elements. The standard assessment will ensure consistent and timely responses to State/Tribal agency needs and ultimately inform the RO as part of its onsite T/TA approval process. The standard intake and assessment elements will be incorporated into TATIS, the web-based tracking system for the National T/TA Network. Thus, NRCs will include the information in their onsite T/TA tickets as they enter them into the system.

Among the key issues that should be explored during the assessment are the following:

- Agency's expectations for onsite T/TA
- Relevance of request to national T/TA strategy and priorities
- State's/Tribe's objectives and their link to agency's strategic plans (e.g., CFSP, PIP, CIP, etc.)
- Need for involvement of multiple NRCs and organizations
- Estimated number of onsite T/TA days required
- Information on T/TA provided by other consultants/contractors that may have impact on the T/TA request area(s)
- Potential for building agency capacity through T/TA, including discussion of possible barriers and confirmation of commitment of agency's executive staff to work that will be undertaken
- Ability of relevant NRCs to offer responsive T/TA
- Elements of a preliminary onsite T/TA work plan

To facilitate coordination across the T/TA Network, the NRCs or RO staff will notify the NCWRCOI about all onsite T/TA requests during the assessment process. These notifications can be emails alerting the NCWRCOI about new assessments, or telephone calls to discuss issues in more detail if necessary. The NCWRCOI will help identify other NRCs that should be included in the work, if necessary. Also, the NCWRCOI will alert the NRCs and RO involved in the assessment about any other NRCs currently working with the State/Tribal agency (based on information other NRCs have entered into TATIS). For T/TA requests requiring the involvement of multiple NRCs, the NCWRCOI will facilitate the assessment process by designating a lead NRC, monitoring timely communication among the NRCs, ROs and others, and convening key participants for assessment discussions.

Based on the information discussed and developed during the assessment process, the State or Tribal agency will make a formal written request for onsite T/TA to the appropriate RO staff person.

Step 4: Onsite T/TA Approval. As a result of the standard assessment process and their involvement in it, ACF RO staff responsible for approving onsite T/TA requests will have adequate and consistent information about the State's/Tribe's needs and the availability of NRC T/TA services for use in making informed approval decisions. Once RO staff make approval decisions, they will inform the State contact, the NRC(s) involved, and the NCWRCOI.

Step 5: Develop T/TA Work Plans. Information collected during the intake and assessment processes also will facilitate the development of standard, onsite T/TA work plans for all approved onsite T/TA requests. NRCs will use a standard work plan format that will be incorporated into TATIS and build on the intake and assessment information. The NRCs will work collaboratively with the State/Tribal agency and RO staff in developing each T/TA work plan, beginning in most cases during the T/TA assessment process. The work plans will inform all parties about T/TA activities and expectations, reflect ongoing modifications and results as the T/TA progresses over time, and serve as the basis for the National T/TA Network evaluation. In addition, these work plans should link onsite T/TA explicitly to other required agency plans whenever possible through the incorporation of elements such as objectives, action steps, responsible parties and timeframes from PIPs, CFSPs and/or other existing plans.

Among the key elements of the T/TA work plans (in addition to the information from the intake and assessment processes mentioned above) are the following:

- Scope and specific timeframes for onsite T/TA
- Responsible parties for various aspects of the work (e.g., NRCs, NRC consultants, State/Tribal agency staff, RO, etc.)
- Follow-up plans, time frames and responsible parties
- Expected outcomes for agency and for children/families served
- Plans for measurement and evaluation of outcomes

Developing clear expectations with States before going onsite is critical to providing responsive T/TA and ensuring the States participate and follow-up in a productive way. Since NRCs will enter these work plans directly into TATIS, the NCWRCOI will monitor them

regularly and follow-up with NRCs to ensure their implementation in a way that is most responsive to the States involved. As the Children's Bureau requires in its cooperative agreements with all NRCs, NRC staff will enter new work plans into the appropriate TATIS tickets within 30 days to ensure up-to-date information and facilitate this monitoring process.

Step 6: Onsite T/TA Activities and Follow-up. As they work onsite with State/Tribal agencies, NRCs often must refine their T/TA approaches in order to be more responsive. For example, agency staff and stakeholders may offer new information or challenges onsite that affect elements of the T/TA work plan. Also, in order to build agency capacity that will lead to sustainable, systemic changes, NRCs often have to work closely with agency staff and maintain communication with the appropriate RO staff over a number of months, with only a small part of the work conducted onsite. These realities require NRC staff to be flexible and focused on T/TA work plan outcomes while they are onsite.

Therefore, during each onsite engagement, NRCs should establish clear "next steps" with agency staff and determine the need for adjusting the T/TA work plan for the future. Under the new T/TA process, NRC staff will update on-line work plans in TATIS within 30 days of their onsite work. The updated plans will include a summary of onsite T/TA activities that have occurred so far, as well as any work plan changes, follow-up steps, and/or new T/TA activities that may be required in the future. If the NRC changes the work plan and/or becomes aware of barriers to their T/TA activities, the NRC will contact the appropriate RO staff. Similarly, if the RO becomes aware of any issue that may impact the effectiveness of the T/TA, the RO staff will contact the NRC.

The NCWRCOI will monitor all work plans through TATIS and follow up as necessary with the NRCs, State/Tribal agencies, and ROs to ensure timely follow-up on the T/TA. In addition, RO staff will have the ability to keep updated on T/TA activities and results within their states through reviewing work plans in TATIS.

Step 7: T/TA Monitoring and Evaluation. The NCWRCOI project evaluator will conduct a variety of evaluation activities once the evaluation plan has been finalized. The process evaluation will focus on the responsiveness of coordinated T/TA services in terms of timeliness, types of T/TA provided, and customer satisfaction. In addition, an outcome evaluation will focus on the amount of T/TA provided and the associated outcomes in terms of increased State capacity and the impact on client outcomes.

Step 8: Feedback. The NCWRCOI will update the NRCs/AdoptUSKids, RO staff and the CB T/TA Coordinating Committee on a regular basis about issues with the single point of coordination function and the general effectiveness of T/TA services. The NCWRCOI will distribute quarterly usage reports from the web-based tracking system that will focus on the responsiveness of the National T/TA Network (e.g. timeliness of response to States, timeliness of entering information into the system, etc.). The NCWRCOI also will coordinate focused discussions about the new T/TA process during the biannual NRC meetings. The project evaluator also will present regular updates on the process and outcome evaluations at the biannual NRC meetings. The goal of these regular reports and discussions will be to adjust the

process to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of the T/TA provided to States and Tribes.

Child welfare matters.

Improving organizations, making a difference

Spring, 2005

contents

In the fall of 2004 we received grant funding to continue operating as the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI), a service of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As the NRCOI, we will continue to provide our own training and technical assistance (T/TA) focused on improving critical management and administrative systems in child welfare agencies. Under our new grant, we are also responsible for coordinating on-site T/TA provided by the seven federally-funded national resource centers and AdoptUSKids that comprise a new Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance Network. Kris Sahonchik will direct this coordination to ensure strategic and responsive T/TA.

Your goal is to help children and families. Our goal is to help you.

In this first issue of *Child Welfare Matters* (formerly *Managing Care*) we highlight services available through the Children's Bureau T/TA Network, and what States, Tribes and Courts can expect from the coordinated T/TA process. QI Corner describes the NRCOI's focus in the area of quality improvement. Finally, we include some observations and tips on how to use consulting services effectively.

We look forward to working with you over the next five years, and always welcome your feedback—now through our improved website at www.nrcoi.org

Peter Watson, Director

Coordinated Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA)

As child welfare agencies have undertaken major organizational improvement efforts in the last few years—developing and implementing program improvement plans, infusing family-centered practice principles throughout an agency, or forming strong quality improvement systems—many have used training and technical assistance (T/TA) services from more than one of the federally-funded national resource centers (NRCs). As a result, the Children's Bureau has recognized the need to coordinate services across NRCs and to focus T/TA on building agency capacity to improve outcomes for children and families.

For the new five-year grant period, the Children's Bureau has emphasized the importance of this coordination, and has charged the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) with coordinating the on-site T/TA provided by seven federally-funded NRCs and AdoptUSKids (referred to collectively in this article as NRCs). These eight organizations (described on page 4) make up the Children's Bureau T/TA Network, which will provide T/TA services that are easy to access, responsive, coordinated and targeted to help agencies meet their goals and achieve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families. This new process is described below and summarized in the table on page 2.

Accessing T/TA: As in the past, States, Tribes and Courts can contact any of the NRCs directly for information or assistance. In addition, organizations can contact the NRCOI or federal regional offices (ROs) for help in identifying the NRCs best suited to meet their needs.

Intake: NRCs will conduct a consistent, coordinated intake process in response to requests. Each NRC will ask the same kinds of questions to identify the needs of the requesting organization, and to determine who should respond. The NRCs and ROs will coordinate intakes and inform the NRCOI about all requests. The NRCOI will use this information to inform NRCs and requesting organizations about other ongoing or recent NRC activity that may need to be coordinated or considered.

Assessment: If on-site T/TA will be required, NRCs and RO staff will work with the requesting organization to collect more detailed

Continued on page 2.

Coordinated T/TA

from page 1

information about the request and thoroughly assess its needs. The assessment process will explore the organization's expectations, which NRC(s) have the experience and capacity to be involved, and how they can help. To ensure that services are targeted to help organizations achieve their goals, other key issues will be explored:

- How do the objectives for the T/TA link to the organization's strategic plans (for example, PIPs, CFSPs, CIPs)?
- What is the potential for the T/TA to build the organization's capacity to work on its own in the future?
- What are the barriers to meeting the organization's expectations and needs?

If more than one NRC is involved, a lead NRC will be designated to coordinate the assessment process and T/TA services.

Approval Process: If on-site T/TA is necessary, State and Tribal agencies will submit formal requests to their federal ROs. The assessment process will give RO staff the detailed information they need to approve the requested T/TA services.

Workplan: Workplans will be developed for all on-site T/TA work. NRC(s) will work with the requesting organization and their RO to ensure that a written workplan defines:

- the scope of the T/TA to be conducted;
- key tasks to be undertaken;
- the responsibilities of NRC(s), RO, and the requesting organization for those tasks;
- expected outcomes of the T/TA and how the organization will measure the results; and
- a plan for follow-up whenever appropriate.

On-site and follow-up: Despite the best planning efforts, sometimes an organization's needs change once on-site T/TA begins. NRCs will work with the organization and the RO to adjust the T/TA and the workplan as necessary. While on site, NRCs will identify next steps and the parties responsible for follow-up tasks, and after the on-site will update the workplan, if necessary, and share it with everyone involved.

Evaluation: The NRCOI is responsible for evaluating the Children's Bureau T/TA Network and its services. The NRCOI has hired an independent evaluator, and an evaluation plan is currently under development in conjunction with the Children's Bureau T/TA Network. The evaluator will follow up with NRCs, ROs and organizations receiving services requesting feedback on the responsiveness and effectiveness of the T/TA.

Roles in Coordinated On-site Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA)

Key Steps in Coordinating On-site T/TA	ROLES FOR Requesting organizations	NRCOI	Other NRCs	Federal ROs
Intake	Request information and/or T/TA from any NRC or from RO	Collect standardized intake info; inform NRCs/ROs/requesting organizations about ongoing/recent NRC activity	Collect standardized intake info; inform NRCOI of all T/TA requests	Collect standardized intake info; inform NRCOI of all T/TA requests
Assess Need	Work with NRC(s) and RO to assess need and determine response	Work with RO to assess need and determine response; identify lead NRC	Work with RO to assess need and determine response	Work with NRC(s) to assess need and determine response
Approval	Make formal request for on-site T/TA to RO			Make approval decisions; notify state, NRCs and NRCOI
Develop workplan	Work with NRC(s) and RO to develop workplan	NRC: Works with agency and RO to develop workplan for on-site T/TA with clear expectations		Work with agency and NRC(s) to develop workplan
On-site and Follow-up	Work with NRC(s) and RO on workplan to refine T/TA and to establish clear next steps	NRC: During on-site refine T/TA to be responsive; develop clear "next steps"; adjust workplan as necessary		Contact NRC(s) if aware of issues that may impact on T/TA
Monitor and Evaluate	Provide feedback through evaluation	Project evaluator conducts evaluation; provides feedback	Provide feedback through evaluation	Provide feedback through evaluation

Successful Assistance

to Strengthen and Support Child Welfare Agencies

To effectively build organizational systems and improve practice, child welfare agencies may need assistance. To ensure that the assistance achieves the desired results, agencies should think about what the need is, what type of assistance would be most helpful and how it can be structured most effectively. In its new role, the NRCOI looks forward to continuing to help agencies select the type of assistance they need and to promote successful T/TA across the Children's Bureau T/TA Network.

Types of Assistance

What kind of assistance is needed? Several different types are available:

Consultation: information, advice or opinion, resources and referral, presenting a national perspective on different models and approaches;

Technical assistance: specialized, practical knowledge on a particular topic applied to specific examples;

Training: teaching and skill building; and

Coaching or mentoring: prompting and modeling to provide direction.

Selecting the Right Type of Assistance

As in the development of a service plan for children and families, the type of assistance selected should be based on a careful assessment of organizational needs, goals, expectations and priorities. Agency administrators should think about both long-term and short-term needs and how assistance can help build long-term sustainable infrastructure and positively impact outcomes.

Characteristics of Successful Assistance

For assistance to be successful and responsive, administrators, in conjunction with NRCs, should develop a specific plan that details the purpose, anticipated outcomes, level of effort and timeframe for T/TA. Other factors can make the assistance more effective:

Understand both the forest and the trees: Understand the kind of assistance needed and the issues presented as well as the organizational culture, strengths and weaknesses and available resources.

Provide resources: Provide the consultant with the information and staff access necessary to do the work.

Build on what has already been accomplished: Identify agency strengths and successful initiatives and build on those.

Clarify expectations: Identify goals and a means to measure their achievement.

Define roles and responsibilities: Clearly understand what the consultant will provide and what the agency staff will do during the initiative and after the assistance has been provided.

Engage leadership: Obtain support from the highest possible level and from all of the levels involved in the initiative.

Integrate with ongoing initiatives: Coordinate with other agency staff and communicate how the initiative is related to their goals and activities.

Sources:

Pires, S.A. (2002). *Building Systems of Care: A Primer.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University.

McNamara, C. (1999). *All About Using Consultants.* St. Paul, Minnesota: The Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits.

The Children's Bureau T/TA Network

These are brief descriptions of the T/TA available from each organization in the Children's Bureau T/TA Network. The Network includes additional NRCs cosponsored by the Children's Bureau and established to support statutorily mandated programs and provide services primarily to grantees. For more information on all of the NRCs, visit www. nrcoi.org or see the booklet published by the U.S. Children's Bureau: *Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance Network,* available through the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information at http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov or call (800)394-3366.

National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues

www.abanet.org/child/rclji • 1-877-222-1800 x1746 • Shante Bullock, Bullocks@staff.abanet.org

Provides training, technical assistance and consultation to agencies and courts on legal and judicial aspects of the child welfare system, including court improvement, agency and court collaboration, court process, reasonable efforts requirements, legal representation of children and their families, guardianship, and confidentiality.

National Resource Center for Child Protective Services

www.nrccps.org • 505-345-2444 • Theresa Costello, theresa.costello@actionchildprotection.org

Provides consultation, technical assistance and training in the area of child protective services (CPS). The focus is to develop and integrate policies and practices that improve the prevention, reporting, assessment and treatment of child abuse and neglect utilizing family-centered practices.

National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning

www.nrcfcppp.org • 212-452-7043 • Gerald P. Mallon, gmallon@hunter.cuny.edu

Works to increase the capacity and resources of child welfare agencies to integrate family-centered, safety-focused and community-based practices into the child welfare system and to promote permanency for youth and children in out-of-home care through:

- family-centered and strengths/needs-based practice approaches,
- community-based service delivery,
- cultural competency and respect for all families,
- open and inclusive practice,
- non-adversarial approaches to problem-solving and decision making, and
- concurrent rather than sequential consideration of all permanency options.

National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology

www.nrccwdt.org • 877-672-4829 • nrccwdt@cwla.org

Provides assistance to States, courts and Tribes to develop, implement, and improve effective case management and administrative data systems in child welfare and to use data to improve outcomes for children and families. Helps agencies assure the quality of data collected, provides staff at all levels with appropriate information, and builds the capacity to use the information for decision-making in strategic management and daily practice. Also provides technical assistance in meeting the reporting requirements of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the goals of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, the Child and Family Services Reviews, and other Federal, State, and local legislative requirements, policies and initiatives.

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption

www.nrcadoption.org • 248-443-7080 • Natalie Lyons, NLyons@spaulding.org

Provides technical assistance and training to help agencies build child welfare adoption programs, including:

- timeliness to adoption,
- adoption of older children and youth,
- Title IV-E adoption assistance,
- assessment and preparation of families for adoption,
- assessment and preparation of children/youth for adoption,
- developing post-legal adoption services,
- identifying information needs for managing adoption programs and planning, and
- information and research requests on child welfare adoption topics.

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd • 918-660-3700 • Kathy Sutter, ksutter@ou.edu

Focuses on increasing the capacity and resources of State and Tribal child welfare agencies to help youth in care establish permanent connections and transition successfully to adulthood. Training and technical assistance activities are focused in five primary areas:

- creating environments that are supportive of positive youth development-based programs and services,
- building organizational capacity to provide quality services to adolescents,
- strengthening the capacity of agencies to build and support staff skills,
- planning and implementing CFSRs and PIPs that incorporate youth involvement, and
- providing information and resources to engage and support youth.

The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids

www.adoptuskids.org • 888-200-4005 • Melody Roe, melody@adoptex.org

Provides T/TA on issues that pertain to the development and implementation of quality recruitment and retention services for foster and adoptive families. Specific training expertise includes:

- recruiting and retaining foster and adoptive families,
- placing children across inter-jurisdictional boundaries,
- utilizing the national online photo-listing,
- best practices in writing child narratives,
- developing and sustaining community-based partnerships,
- strategic planning and consultation related to the development of Title IV-B recruitment plans, and
- responding effectively and supportively to inquiring families.

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

www.nrcoi.org • 1-800-HELP KID (435-7543) • helpkids@usm.maine.edu

Helps child welfare agencies improve their management and operations, expand their organizational capacity and promote services integration in a number of areas, including:

- strategic planning,
- quality assurance and improvement,
- stakeholder involvement and interagency collaboration,
- training systems and workforce development, and
- the child and family services review process.

In addition, the NRCOI coordinates all on-site T/TA across the seven Children's Bureau NRCs and AdoptUSKids.

CONTACT US!

Listed below are some key NRCOI staff you can call on for assistance. For a complete staff list, go to www.NRCOI.org

Peter Watson, Director
pwatson@usm.maine.edu • 207-228-8330
Peter provides T/TA to agencies focused on developing and implementing quality improvement systems.

Kris Sahonchik, Director of Strategy and Coordination
kriss@usm.maine.edu • 207-780-5856
Kris is responsible for developing a national T/TA strategy and coordinating the Children's Bureau T/TA Network.

Lynda Arnold, Associate Director
larnold@usm.maine.edu • 405-621-2999
Lynda leads the Resource Center's efforts in leadership, systemic change, change management and workforce issues.

Steven Preister, Associate Director
spreister@usm.maine.edu • 202-723-0320
Steve provides T/TA in strategic planning, stakeholder involvement, community partnerships, interagency collaboration, systems of care, the service array in child welfare, supervision, training systems and workforce development.

Susan N. Kanak, Research Associate
skanak@usm.maine.edu • 207-780-5840
Susan's areas of expertise include curriculum design and delivery, training system reviews, adult education and implementing change in the public sector.

Anita St. Onge, Research Associate
anitas@usm.maine.edu • 207-780-5851
Anita provides T/TA on issues of interagency collaboration, domestic violence and child welfare.

Using Consultants....

An Interview with Lynda Arnold

Lynda Arnold worked with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services for 29 years, and served the last six years, until 1999, as child welfare director. Since leaving Oklahoma she has been consulting at a national level, and has served as Associate Director of the Resource Center for Organizational Improvement since 2004. Here she shares some thoughts on using consultants, drawing on her experience.

Can consultants bring about organizational change?

The vision for organizational change has to come from the agency and from the leadership. Consultants can then facilitate and help the state bring that vision to life—or "operationalize" the vision. It has to start with the agency, with the leadership, and then bring in people from every part of the agency, and often from outside the agency, to be engaged with what you're trying to do. It is a long, hard process—leadership has to occur all along the way. Consultants can help, but they certainly cannot bring about organizational change—it has to come from within.

Based on your experience in Oklahoma, what are some of the useful things consultants can do for state child welfare agencies?

In Oklahoma the biggest project we used consultants for was developing and implementing our SACWIS system. While we had defined what we wanted in a system, we did not have the capacity internally—the knowledge or the resources—to do it ourselves. So through a competitive bid process we brought in a vendor, but in the broader view, they really were consultants. In our case it was successful for several reasons, but the most important one was that we all looked at this as a partnership. We had an agency project director and project director on their side. All of the staff were housed together and worked as a team. We learned from them, but they also learned from us.

They helped us build a system based on the latest technology and innovations but, more importantly, that reflected the "practice"—the way we do business— in Oklahoma. But it wasn't just building the system—it was using the system and the data that come out of the system. They helped us develop training and reports that made using the system and data a way of life in Oklahoma. That is still very much happening in Oklahoma today, ten years later, even though the consultants are long gone. While the consultants helped us, we also helped them by bringing them back to our needs and building our capacity and making sure both these were addressed. As I said earlier, it was critical that the leadership and the staff in our agency had the will to do it, because it was a long, hard process—probably still is—that never would have been done without the commitment from the agency.

When the concept of managed care in child welfare was sweeping the country we brought in one of the national resource centers to tell us what managed care really meant so that the agency could make an informed decision about going to a managed care type system.

Several consultants have also helped us look at our practice or our organizational structure or processes to give us ideas on how to do things better—from how to achieve better outcomes for the children and families we serve to how to do "business" more efficiently and effectively.

Consultants sometimes served as external prompts for us. They would ask us questions that we needed to think about. Why do things work a certain way? Is there a better way? When working on projects they often gave us deadlines, which actually helped us accomplish things that maybe wouldn't have happened otherwise. When you get so busy in the day-to-day business of running things and crisis management, it is easy to forget the big picture.

Being a child welfare director can be pretty lonely. You've got colleagues across the country, but everyone is so busy you don't talk on a regular basis. Having someone who knows your system that you can use as a sounding board can be invaluable. Sometimes consultants fill that role.

What can organizational improvement consultants from the Resource Center do for child welfare agencies?

I think one of the first things we can do is to assist agency leadership in making change. The leader may have a vision, but we can help clarify the vision, and assist in making it a shared vision, if needed. We can then help the agency identify its strengths and goals, and the strategies that will help achieve the vision. It is also important that the agency clarify the roles for everyone—people within the agency, stakeholders and consultants. In other words, we can help

develop a workplan—with goals, tasks, leads and each person's role clearly defined so that everyone knows what they are supposed to do.

Consultants can also ask the hard questions —questions that people within the agency can't ask or that an external party may identify.

We can bring a national perspective, including models, best practices, or general information about how other states or jurisdictions are dealing with an issue. We can help an agency identify all the stakeholders, internal and external, that need to be at the table; and we can act as facilitators to bring stakeholders together.

What should a state expect when they ask for assistance?

First we will ask if the agency leadership supports the request. We will then want to know how the request fits into the agency's vision, priorities and strategic plan and how changes will be integrated throughout the agency.

Consultants don't work in a vacuum. It is important to know the environment—in the state and in the agency—and to coordinate with other efforts.

When we go into an agency we will identify the agency's role versus the consultant's role. Consultation is successful when everybody clearly understands their roles and responsibilities and fulfills them.

What should child welfare agencies look for in a consultant?

Someone with expertise in the field. Someone who is willing to listen, who is flexible and who follows through. Agencies need consultants to help assess the organization and its strengths, and build on those strengths to develop a plan that will meet the agency's goals, and improve outcomes for children and families.

QI CORNER

This first issue of *Child Welfare Matters* summarizes the NRCOI's ongoing training and technical assistance (T/TA) services and our new role in coordinating T/TA across the Children's Bureau NRCs. As part of this overview, I will highlight our planned quality improvement (QI) work for the coming year and some examples of how child welfare agencies can use our services.

As with all the NRCOI's training and technical assistance work, we customize our QI approach to the unique needs of each agency. However, based on recent experience with agencies, we plan to focus on several broad QI topics this year:

Create and implement Program Improvement Plan (PIP) measurement strategies. One requirement of state PIPs is a strategy to measure outcomes and demonstrate improvement on key CFSR items. NRCOI staff have assisted a number of states with their PIP measurement strategies, including developing new qualitative case reviews modeled on the CFSR, adapting the CFSR instrument or formulating new ones, training case reviewers, co-leading on-site reviews, and facilitating inter-rater reliability among state reviewers.

Develop a CQI implementation framework for child welfare. The NRCOI is partnering with Casey Family Programs to develop a framework describing what agencies must do to develop and implement real and sustainable continuous quality improvement (CQI) systems. In February, 2005 national experts met to develop the framework, which will include key CQI principles, components, and measures. Our goal is to create a framework that can serve as both the basis for a CQI Breakthrough Series Collaborative and as a stand-alone, useable guide for child welfare agencies.

Facilitate QI kick-off meetings. The NRCOI has worked with a number of states in the past year to develop and facilitate QI kick-off meetings. Generally, states use these meetings to communicate with internal and external stakeholders about new QI initiatives and engage them in the QI process going forward. NRCOI staff co-facilitate these meetings with agency leaders and QI staff. While the meeting content varies somewhat across states, some common focus areas include sharing leadership's vision for QI, teaching participants how to review and analyze data and information, helping participants use QI results to plan and make improvements, modeling the work of CQI committees, and sharing information on effective, existing QI practices in the state.

Develop a national QI peer network. The NRCOI believes facilitating peer-to-peer contact is one of the most powerful forms of providing T/TA. To that end, we plan to convene a national QI

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QI CORNER

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peer network in 2005 and hold a series of conference calls to share ideas, information and questions across child welfare agencies. The peers involved in the network will help define the conference call topics and other activities that would share QI expertise. We will contact QI staff from various states in the coming months, but we also would like to hear directly from anyone interested in taking part.

If you have any questions about these examples or if you need more information, please get in touch!

Thanks, Peter
pwatson@usm.maine.edu

UPCOMING TELECONFERENCE...

Using Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Resources Strategically to Improve Your Agency

Thursday May 12 • 2:30 pm EST

This teleconference will highlight the new role of the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) in coordinating on-site T/TA when multiple resource centers work within States and Tribes. We will review and discuss the key steps in the new, coordinated on-site T/TA process, and focus on how States, Tribes and regional offices can maximize the use of T/TA resources and target them appropriately for maximum benefit to the agency.

Presenters: Kris Sahonchik, Director of Strategy and Coordination and Peter Watson, Director, National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

FREE! To register visit our website at nrcoi.org or call 1-800-435-7543.

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE

www.NRCOI.org

for information about technical assistance services, the Children's Bureau T/TA Network, our publications and teleconferences, child welfare news and useful links. You can also give us input and request T/TA services!

Child welfare matters.
Improving organizations, making a difference

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National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service
University of Southern Maine
PO Box 15010, One Post Office Square
Portland, ME 04112

Peter Watson, Director

Tel: 207-780-5810
Toll Free: 1-800-HELP KID (435-7543)
Fax: 207-780-5817
TTY: 207-780-5804
www.nrcoi.org
email: helpkids@usm.maine.edu

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