

**NCIC Intensive Implementation Projects
June 2009**

The Northeast and Caribbean Implementation Center (NCIC) has completed its first request for application cycle and has received Children's Bureau approval to start implementation work planning in 4 states.

State / Agency	Project Name	Start Date	Duration
New Jersey Department of Children and Families	Managing with Data to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families	July 1, 2009	3 years
New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families	Statewide Family-Centered Practice Model for Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice	July 1, 2009	2.5 years
Connecticut Department of Children and Families	Advancing Child and Family Outcomes through Integrated Practice and Contracted Program Improvement Initiatives	Oct. 1, 2009	3 years
Massachusetts Department of Children and Families	Enhancing Supervisory Capacity to Support and Sustain the New DCF Integrated Casework Practice Model	TBD	2 years

As confirmed by the Review Committee and its advisors, NCIC believes that each of these implementation projects is central to the agencies' strategic plans, is designed to build critical organizational capacity, and is of sufficient scope to achieve and sustain change beyond NCIC involvement.

This report:

- describes NCIC's application review process, criteria, participants, and next steps;
- provides information on each proposed project, including a summary of the project, the key strengths to build on and areas to be addressed that were identified during the review process, the resources required to support the project;
- describes the reviewers recommendations; and
- identifies advisors to the Review Committee.

Application Review Process, Criteria, Participants, and Next Steps

NCIC used a multi-step, multi-participant process to review and select applications to recommend to the Children's Bureau (CB) for final approval. The first step in the process was developing and receiving CB approval for a [Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#) that defined the content and format of the applications, the evaluation criteria, and the review process. We issued the RFA in April 2009, and reviewed it with representatives from all 10 states and territories in ACF Regions 1 and 2 at our regional forum in May 2009.

NCIC selected a three person Review Committee comprised of individuals who brought diverse expertise in several relevant areas such as: child welfare knowledge and experience, implementing large-scale initiatives in child welfare systems, child welfare case practice, managing operational systems and structures, and a familiarity with a team process. The Review Committee members were: Jo Ann Lamm, former child welfare director in North Carolina; Heather Stowe, Bureau Chief of the Arlington County Department of Human Services' Child and Family Services Division; and Susan Maciolek, co-Principal Investigator of the NCIC. Susan Kanak, NCIC Project Director, facilitated the Review Committee's deliberations.

The Review Committee met together in Portland, Maine from June 8 to June 11, providing an invaluable opportunity to talk together about each proposal throughout the process of getting input from a variety of sources. Over the course of its meetings, Review Committee members shared their unique perspectives on each application, helped each other to see each application from different angles, and developed a far more comprehensive view of the opportunities presented by the applications than if the Committee had communicated via e-mail or teleconference. The Committee used its first meeting to complete a preliminary scoring and analysis of each proposal, using the criteria below. This was followed by a detailed discussion of each proposal in order to identify questions to pose to the submitting state.

- statement of need
- readiness and capacity for change
- work plan and timeline
- resources requested
- improved outcomes for children and families
- benefits from the investment of resources
- commitment to a family-centered value system
- commitment to involving internal and external stakeholders
- approach for monitoring
- plan for sustainability

The second day of meetings was dedicated to obtaining input from a variety of important sources. In the morning, the Regional Office Liaisons (ROLs), the ACF Regional Office child welfare specialists assigned to the states submitting applications, T/TA members currently working in the state or potentially needed to support the project, the NCIC FPO, and CFSR Team members participated in an advisory call with the Review Committee.

[A list of all participants is provided at the end of this report.] The advisory call had several purposes, which included:

- providing a variety of perspectives about the proposed projects to the Review Committee and NCIC;
- soliciting information the NCIC will use in the work planning that will occur after projects are approved by the Children's Bureau; and
- alerting the NRCs about potential resource requests, identifying any concerns about responding to those requests, and informing NCIC that we will need to locate alternate resources.

During this advisory call, participants discussed the following questions (which they received along with the proposals one week prior to the call):

1. What is your reaction to the state's proposal? In your view, how does it fit with the state's strategic direction, priorities and initiatives? Is it feasible? Is it substantial enough to create meaningful and sustainable change?
2. If your answer to any of the above is "No", what changes to the proposal would make it feasible / substantial? Is there something important not addressed in the proposal?
3. What could you do, in your role, to support the successful implementation of the proposed project?

The NRCs on the call expressed a willingness to support the projects in whatever way they could and an understanding that they might be called on for targeted TA once implementation plans are developed. Similarly, the ACF child welfare specialists committed to working with their assigned states to ensure the projects were successful.

The Review Committee also met with the NCIC project team to gather their input and insight on the proposed projects, using questions similar to those used to guide the Advisory Call. The Review Committee concluded its second day by identifying additional questions to pose to the states based on the feedback received by all of these sources.

On their third day of meetings, the Review Committee held a telephone interview with each of the four submitting states to clarify specific questions about the application. Questions were tailored to each proposal, some examples include: the proposed timeline; the current status of related initiatives including integration with CFSP, PIP development and the implementation of practice models (in 3 states); how internal and external stakeholders were engaged in the development of the proposed initiative; sustainability plans; intended use of T/TA Network resources; and current conditions and pressures in the state that might impact the project. By scheduling the four calls throughout the day, the Committee was able to debrief after each call to share their perspectives on what they had heard and learned from the states.

On the final day of the Review Committee's time in Portland, members finalized their scores, informed by the input received from the participants on the advisory call, the NCIC team, and the discussions with states. After individual scores were compiled and

totalled, the Committee discussed the resulting rank ordering of the proposals in order to craft a final set of recommendations for the CB. The Review Committee also provided NCIC with advice about anticipated efficiencies from cross-project synergies, detailed work planning with the selected states, and the range of competencies, knowledge, and skills that the NCIC team will need to have to support the states.

Recommended Projects

The NCIC concurred with the Review Committee's recommendation that all four of the applications be approved by the CB. We saw tremendous opportunities for synergy, peer learning, and the shared and efficient use of resources among the states. Although not planned by NCIC, all four projects focus on improving supervisory practice through a range of strategies, suggesting that this is a critical and compelling issue for child welfare agencies in Regions 1 and 2. The shared focus on practice models and supervision across projects as well as the project timelines all combine to create a unique opportunity not only for each state but also for NCIC to evaluate different strategies for accomplishing the same goals. All four projects are statewide initiatives and central to the agencies' strategic plans (as reported by both the states and the ACF specialists).

Three of the states (NJ, CT, and MA) are proposing to develop and implement a supervisory practice model to support the implementation of their new case practice models. NJ's and CT's models will encompass both supervisors and managers. NJ's, CT's, and MA's models will focus on the importance of using data to guide supervisory practice. CT also plans to engage their contracted providers in examining the performance of their programs in order to align them with the new practice model. NH is proposing to develop and implement a practice model and will benefit from the work and experiences of the other three states.

NJ is in the middle of their practice model implementation (begun in January 2007 and scheduled to be completed in 2011), for which they are using a rolling area strategy. They will implement their supervisory practice model in each area as a follow-up and reinforcement of the practice model. CT and MA will begin implementing their practice models soon – MA will implement statewide beginning in July 2009, CT will implement in regional phases beginning in January 2010. They will implement their supervisory models simultaneously with their practice model, also as a method for reinforcing and sustaining the new practice model. Because CT and MA are just beginning to tackle their practice model implementation, we recommended a start date later than July 1. This means, essentially, that NJ will develop its supervisory practice model first. We believe that NCIC can facilitate this work by building on the recently published guide, *Building a Framework and Model for Child Welfare Supervision*. The work in NJ can then inform the work in CT and MA. NJ's, CT's, and MA's work on supervision can inform NH's work to develop a practice model.

Next Steps

After receiving approval by the CB, the NCIC Project Director (PD) and Principal Investigator (PI) began calling all of the approved states to inform them of their selection and to schedule an initial meeting. For the projects starting July 1, we are scheduling a 2-

day on-site intensive work-planning meeting, which the PD, PI, and state liaison will attend. An NCIC evaluator will attend the initial meetings with each state. At that meeting, we will share details of our recommendation as well as feedback from the review process, meet with the commissioner and other key stakeholders, identify readiness concerns and the support needed to launch the projects as soon as possible. We will begin the process of developing the MOA, which includes negotiating the actual level of project resources and effort to be allocated to the project, developing the implementation and evaluation plans and timelines, and confirming any specific requests of the T/TA Network.

A second on-site visit will be scheduled to occur sometime in September to share the status of work agreed to at the first meeting. NCIC will share a draft logic model, implementation plan, and MOA for finalization at that second meeting. No later than that second meeting, NCIC will meet with and interview the person that the state identifies as a potential project manager. This process will be completed and the MOA will be finalized and signed during the three-month period July 1 to Sept 30, 2009.

For projects beginning later, we will plan a one-day on-site meeting with PD, PI, and state liaison to occur in August in order to provide feedback on proposed project, discuss specific readiness issues, and review the status of the practice model implementation. We will also share the details of NCIC's recommendations to the CB, including the level of resources and effort to be allocated. We expect the state to use this pre-project time to hire a project director, identify a team to work on this project, and to synchronize it with other initiatives. Once projects start, we would follow the same process as outlined above, with the MOA to be completed by December 31, 2009.

New Jersey

Submitting Agency: Department of Children and Families

Summary of Proposed Project: New Jersey's proposed project will introduce a new agency-wide model of management and supervision that uses data to manage toward improved outcomes for children and families. This project is a strong complement to other ongoing reform initiatives that will lead to sustainable improvements in outcomes for children and families. Its implementation will follow the intensive implementation of its practice model, which began in January 2007 and will continue through 2011. The final CFSR report will show that New Jersey has work to do to achieve outcomes and be consistent. This project will help to ensure that New Jersey is doing the work well and in a more consistent manner statewide. Recognizing that work with providers is also critical, NJ has begun sharing data as a first step towards performance contracting, an initiative that will likely follow this project.

New Jersey recognizes that the supervisory role is much more than managing with data; they are emphasizing data use because that is the area of practice where the most culture change is needed. There are two levels of supervisors in the local offices. The first is a hands-on supervisor with 4 to 5 frontline staff assigned. The second level supervisor is between the first-level supervisor and managers and has more of an administrative role. They review difficult cases but they should not be "super-supervisors". This project will help them focus more on the management of the overall work rather than on providing hands-on, clinical supervision.

Strengths to Build On:

New Jersey has developed extensive experience in implementation through its practice model initiative. They know well the level of executive leadership, effort, and resources needed to be successful. They have identified a project manager, which they are contributing as an in-kind resource to this project. This person currently oversees the IT and Data unit, but came out of the field, and can really marry the agency practice and the data. She is a career agency person, is well-respected, knows the agency well, and is an driver who can get things done.

DCF leaders have begun talking with area directors about the using data to manage. They have built a tool called "Safe Measures", which is a management reporting system that is updated daily as staff enter data into New Jersey SPIRIT (their SACWIS). During quarterly statewide managers meetings, the leadership team discusses agency priorities and actively uses management reports in those meetings to inform those discussions. They believe that they have whetted managers' appetites, and now the work is to ensure that there is a level of proficiency and consistency in using data across the agency.

Recommendation:

NCIC recommended and the CB approved a July 1, 2009 start date and a duration of three years for New Jersey's proposed project.

T/TA Network assistance requested: NJ has not identified any specific needs at this time, although they anticipate that NRCOI, NRCDT, and/or the Workforce Institute might be called on to offer their expertise.

New Hampshire

Submitting Agency: Division for Children, Youth and Families

Summary of Proposed Project: New Hampshire proposes to develop a statewide family-centered practice model. DCYF plans to integrate fully all aspects of the broad child welfare system into a statewide family-centered practice model that is developed in collaboration with families, staff, and community partners. DCYF believes a unified model of excellence in practice will ensure consistency in family engagement, communication with stakeholders, service delivery, and, above all, improved safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families in New Hampshire. In fact, the primary goal of the 5-year CFSP is to implement a practice model.

The proposed scope of the practice model includes both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. DCYF and the Division for Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS) operate as distinct divisions under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). However, the divisions collaborate in real and demonstrable ways, including a joint Case Practice Review process, the use of the same case management information system, a shared service array, and a joint case-planning policy for families involved with both systems. As a result of the 2003 CFSR, both agencies have prioritized improvements in permanency through concurrent planning, specific practice improvements, and collaboration with the courts.

Strengths to Build On:

DCYF has an executive team that is a truly a team. The Review Committee recommended this project in large measure because of this team. They have worked effectively together over the past several years and have built strong relationships with external partners, including service providers, the courts, and community agencies. Through these collaborations, they have implemented numerous initiatives to improve their case practice. For example, residential providers joined DCYF/DJJS to create a New Hampshire framework to achieve improved permanency outcomes for children and youth placed in residential programs. Building on a strong Court Improvement Project, New Hampshire established Court Protocols Relative to Abuse and Neglect Cases through significant collaboration among the District Court, Family Division, Probate Court and Superior Court, as well as representatives from the Bar, Legislature, CASA, the Division for Children, Youth and Families, Judicial Council, Foster Parents, service providers, law enforcement and the Attorney General's Office.

New Hampshire has worked with NRCOI and NRCFCPPP to craft the outlines of a practice model. That work has been presented and discussed at a statewide office staff meeting; bureau directors will be bringing the conversation to their staff next. District staff say that a practice model would be helpful to them in their work as a “touchstone”.

Recommendation:

NCIC recommended, and the CB approved, a July 1, 2009 start date and a duration of 2.5 years for New Hampshire's proposed project.

T/TA Network assistance requested: NRCOI and NRCFCPP just completed a successful engagement and might be called on in the future to advise on the direction of the implementation project.

Connecticut

Submitting Agency: Department of Children and Families

Summary of Proposed Project: Connecticut DCF has proposed a project that will advance child and family outcomes by supporting the implementation of their new practice model. Specifically, Connecticut has proposed to develop and integrate two critical supports for the practice model implementation. The first is a Supervision and Management model as the primary strategy for Practice Model implementation. The second is facilitating Agency-Provider collaboration to support improvements in contracted programs by articulating each program's contribution to the success of the new Practice Model. Connecticut envisions that by aligning and integrating the work of supervisors, managers, and service providers, its new practice model will become deeply rooted and sustained.

Connecticut engaged a consultant during this past year to develop a comprehensive, detailed practice model. They received a draft final report earlier this month and plan to present it to the executive team for their review and approval this month. Once approved, a statewide implementation team will be convened to spend the summer developing a detailed implementation workplan. Connecticut initially anticipated the practice model would be delivered and approved by March, making a July 1 start for an NCIC project a perfect fit. NCIC believes that with the slip in the practice model delivery and approval, recommending an October 1 start is appropriate and indeed more feasible. It is also respectful of the state to allow a delayed start without requiring that they resubmit an application during a future NCIC RFA cycle.

Strengths to Build On:

The Review Committee noted the strength of the vision reflected in the Connecticut proposal. The Committee believes that the timing could be advantageous (with delayed start of October 1) given the imminent and simultaneous implementation of the practice model. The Practice Model itself is the central strategy of the Program Improvement Plan, which was submitted to ACF this month, making this work the centerpiece of agency's focus for the next few years. Connecticut rightly sees the importance of supervisory and managerial practice as key to supporting and sustaining its case practice model. The contracted programs component is a nice parallel strategy for engaging providers in integrating the practice model into their operations thereby providing a coherent experience for families and children across DCF and its contracted programs. The commitment to make comprehensive changes both internally and externally at the same time, while tremendously ambitious and fraught with coordination challenges, was ultimately viewed as a strength by the Review Committee.

Recommendation:

NCIC recommended, and the CB approved, an October 1, 2009 start date and a duration of 3 years for Connecticut's proposed project.

T/TA Network assistance requested: CT identified the work of NRCOI on the Supervisory Framework guide as potentially needed TA.

Massachusetts

Submitting Agency: Department of Children and Families

Summary of Proposed Project: Massachusetts DCF proposed a project to enhance its supervisory capacity statewide in order to support its new integrated casework practice model. This project will develop a training and coaching program for supervisors that includes a curriculum focusing on the use of critical thinking and coaching in supervision. The project will also support the development of reporting tools to assist supervisors in using data to manage more effectively the achievement of outcomes. DCF supervisors will play a critical role in successfully guiding and coaching social workers during the implementation of the new casework practice model. Through implementation of this proposed project, the Department hopes to embed and sustain a standardized casework practice model that effectively and efficiently supports achievement of positive outcomes for children and families.

DCF developed its practice model as central component of its Strategic Plan, which was designed based on input from internal and external stakeholders and builds on key lessons from initiatives such as Teaming. DCF has a very aggressive timeline for implementing its practice model but has also identified resources and supports for doing so. Following piloting of selected casework tools this spring, DCF will begin implementation in July 2009 and expects to complete major components (e.g., extended screening, SACWIS changes) by December 2009, with other components (e.g., integrating assessment and service planning functions) still subject to union negotiations. Agency supports for implementation include Area Implementation Teams that have been meeting and will continue to meet for next 18 months. They are charged with identifying issues that come up during implementation and forwarding them to Regional Implementation Teams when necessary. In addition, there will be six regional coaches who will coordinate training and coaching for each region; former child welfare staff who will be “assistant coaches”; and a group of 3 to 5 informal leaders identified in each Area. These supports will begin this summer and will continue through June 2010.

Strengths to Build On:

All supervisors will participate in the training for the practice model itself. The focus of the proposed project is to help supervisors adapt to a new supervisory practice to support the new practice model. Massachusetts has a comprehensive vision of the supervisory clinical, educational, and administrative roles. The combination of a concrete, well-articulated practice model that has been discussed throughout the agency and a strong vision for the role of supervisors will aid Massachusetts in articulating a new supervisory model. In addition, the Assistant Commissioner for Quality Assurance & Professional Development is already working with Area Office management teams on the effective use of management reports to support the achievement of outcomes. This AC will oversee the proposed project and will be able to build on this experience to engage supervisors in the use of reporting tools as a key component of the supervisory practice model.

Recommendation:

NCIC recommended an October 1 start date and 2 year duration for the Massachusetts' proposed project; the CB approved the selection of Massachusetts as a site.

TT/TA Network assistance requested: MA has not identified any specific needs at this time. It is worth noting that MA has been a low user of the T/TA Network – this project might help them connect to these valuable resources.

Appendices

Advisory Call Participants	
Review Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jo Ann Lamm, MSW, Former/retired Deputy Director of Social Services, North Carolina • Heather Stowe, Bureau Chief of the Arlington County Department of Human Services' Child and Family Services Division • Susan Maciolek, Co-Principal Investigator, NCIC
Children's Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda Mitchell, CFSR Team Lead & NCIC FPO • Esther Sherrard, CFR Unit • Misty Will, CFSR unit
ACF Regional Office, Region 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penny Mattor, Regional Office Liaison to NCIC • Julie Munroe, MA specialist • Amy Lockhart, NH specialist • JoAnn Vizziello, CT specialist • Nancy Pickett, NH specialist
ACF Regional Office, Region 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evelyn Torres-Ortega, Regional Office Liaison to NCIC and New Jersey child welfare specialist • Junius Scott, Regional Program Manager
T/TA Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teresa Costello, NRCCPS • Lynda Arnold, NRC DT • Stephanie Boyd Serrafin, NRCFCPPP • Peter Watson, NRCOI • Kathy Sutter, NRCYD (via email notes) • Melody Roe, NRCOI (on the NH application via email)
NCIC Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Kanak, Project Director and Review Committee facilitator • Kris Sahonchik, Co-Principal Investigator • David Lambert, Evaluator • Tammy Richards, Evaluator • Nadine Edris, State Liaison • Julie Atkins, State Liaison • Melissa Locke, Program Assistant