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Executive Summary

Region 11

The Department of Child Services began the process of analyzing service availability, delivery and perceived effectiveness in September 2009. This planning process culminates in the Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan (the Plan). The Plan encompasses the Early Intervention Plan, Child Protection Plan, and Regional Service Plan. The Early Intervention Plan was completed historically to list and summarize child abuse prevention efforts in a county. The Child Protection Plan outlined the policies and procedures surrounding services delivered by the Department of Child Services to assess families after an allegation of abuse or neglect has been made. The Regional Service Plan outlined the intervention services contracted by DCS. The Early Intervention Plan, Child Protection Plan and Regional Service Plan have been all combined into one plan, the Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan.

The planning process to develop the Plan involved a series of activities led by a guided workgroup composed of representatives from the community. The activities included a needs assessment survey, public testimony, and review of relevant data. While DCS has several other mediums with which to determine effectiveness of DCS provided services, such as practice indicator reports, Quality Service Reviews (QSRs) and Quality Assurance Reviews (QARs), this process took that information and looked at it through a contracted service lens. The workgroup considered results from the QSR and practice indicators in conjunction with the needs assessment, previous service utilization and public testimony to determine the appropriate utilization of available services and to identify gaps in service. As a result, the workgroup developed a regional action plan to address service needs and gaps. The workgroup completed budget projections by service for the next fiscal year as well as the next biennial budget. It was assumed budget amounts would remain flat lined so the workgroup focused on how funds might be shifted.

Region 11 consists of, Hamilton, Hancock, Madison and Tipton counties. For all but Hancock county, (the ad was submitted but never published), the notices for public hearings were published in each county's local newspaper and posted at the DCS offices. Public testimony was very limited and focused on the need for probation/DCS coordination to continue to be enhanced with probation having more input into service standards and increased involvement in budgeting.

The workgroup reviewed the survey data, the practice indicators and QSRs. Needs were prioritized and a plan was developed to address the priorities. The plan includes local initiatives to be spearheaded by DCS and other recommendations for State consideration. Budget constraints were discussed with hopes of increased funding for Prevention in the future. In general, it was determined the Region has a lot of work to do to meet the needs of the children and families served by DCS. Other than Hamilton County, the region has somewhat limited array of prevention services. The Community Partners funds have been utilized to fill this gap, with a variety of services. Respite care has been awarded the largest amount of Community Partners funding.

In terms of the survey results, the priority focus was on availability of services. Acknowledging that 2.5 is not an ideal score for effectiveness, it is much higher than those scores for availability. Given the scope of the needs, the RSC expanded workgroup decided that effectiveness be seen as a secondary concern and one that can be better evaluated through outcome data. It is also noted that the validity of the responses to the question about effectiveness was questioned because many respondents found the question confusing in its intent. Although a somewhat arbitrary cut off, it was decided that the initial focus be those services rated below 2.0 in terms of availability. This decision was consistent with findings regarding barriers to services.

Although, the respondent mix appeared relatively balanced throughout the region, the variance in the number of categories per respondent group made any significant comparison unreliable, i.e., DCS (22), Probation (3), Courts/LEA/CASA/GAL (1). The largest group of respondents fell into the Other Key Informant category (47). In general, Other Key Informants rated both effectiveness and availability of services somewhat lower than other categories of respondents.

In general, Hamilton County services were rated higher in terms of both availability and effectiveness. It was believed that this finding was related to Hamilton County's relatively easy access to Indianapolis services. Although the data indicated that there were not enough services (2.5 or less) in all counties in the region, Tipton County was the most in need with over half of the services scoring 2.0 or less, followed by Madison County. In general, the effectiveness scores of all the counties were significantly higher than those for availability. Exceptions noted included Tipton County's effectiveness scores for groups for adoptive parents and programs for divorcing parents, all which scored under 2.0. Tipton County also seems to relate to Howard County more because it's geographically closer.

The list was divided into DCS funded services and non-DCS funded services and then a vote was taken to determine which areas were perceived to have the highest need and the highest return on investment. The other indicators were reviewed as well and priorities chosen. The priorities regarding DCS funded services were Domestic Violence Counseling for Perpetrators (DV), Sex Offender Treatment (SOT) for Youth, Diagnostic and Evaluation (D&E), Bilingual services, and Mentoring. For non-DCS funded services, the priorities were Inpatient Mental Health Services for Youth, Family Shelters, and again, Mentoring services. The following is a synopsis of the issues chosen and the recommendations made. Services that continue to need to be addressed but were not chosen as a priority are listed in UNMET NEEDS following the Regional Action Plan. These include services for adult sex offenders, transportation, services for gay, lesbian and transgendered youth and programs for divorcing parents in Tipton County.

Domestic Violence (DV) perpetrator counseling:

The workgroup perceived that there is a philosophical/policy conflict between Domestic Violence service providers for victims and DCS.

The workgroup suggests consideration of a new and separate service standard to be developed for DV perpetrator evaluation and counseling services. These services would include an assessment of the perpetrators improvement and the safety of the perpetrator to return to the home and/or to have contact with the family. Additionally, the workgroup asks for consideration

of revising the current DV service standard to require the victim's service providers to coordinate the family's treatment and follow up plan with the DCS and the perpetrator's service provider.

Sex Offender Treatment for Youth:

When youth fail a sexual perpetrator program and cannot return home or go to a foster home due to continued risk of perpetration, they often remain in the residential facility until they can be adjudicated as a delinquent and be sent to DOC. This is very expensive care for a youth who has already been determined not to benefit from treatment.

RM and RSC plan to coordinate with Region 9 and Judge David's initiative to research the possibility of dual adjudication as a default, so that as soon as a youth fails a treatment program they can be referred to DOC.

Youth and Adult Inpatient Mental Health Services

None of the counties have local access to inpatient Mental Health services and typically have to go to Indianapolis for this service

Madison County Director plans to approach St. John's Hospital in Anderson to discuss the possibility of them meeting the regional need.

Family Shelters

There are separate shelters for men and women but none for families in the region. More and more families are being evicted and/or having utilities shut off and have no place to stay as a family.

DCS directors plan to meet with local shelters and encourage expansion to meet the growing needs of families.

Adoption Groups in Tipton County

The Tipton County Director will be contacting adoption providers to ask if they can improve the quality and increase availability.

Mentoring adults for youth

DCS only funds this service related to youth receiving Independent Living Services. The services available in the communities (i.e., Big Brothers/Sisters) use outcome based models that include this service for youth at risk. All these providers have significant waiting lists and some communities do not have any providers.

Diagnostic and Evaluation Services

Although it appears the region has an adequate number of providers, their limited capacity negatively impacts the timeliness needed, especially for probation cases.

Bi lingual services

The region has experienced an increasing number of Spanish speaking clients. The quality of the proposals from bilingual providers has been inadequate and current providers of all services are unable to meet the language needs of Spanish speaking clients.

The workgroup recommend State DCS considered requiring access to bilingual staff in all services standards in area with significant need. It is also suggested that potential Spanish speaking providers be considered for assistance in writing proposals.

Unmet Needs

Services to Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual and Transgendered youth

Although this issue came up in all three funding categories as an accessibility issue, the workgroup did not feel the volume of need was significant enough to warrant a separate service standard. There was also discussion regarding requiring contracted agencies to serve this population. It was decided that the small number wouldn't justify specialized staff, and that some faith-based organizations may not be able to treat this population objectively. The workgroup suggests the State look at this issue Statewide and make appropriate recommendations.

Transportation

Transportation was an overriding barrier but not chosen as a DCS priority because multiple community organizations have this issue as a priority. The one suggestion made by the workgroup is that the service standards specify chosen providers have a local presence at least two days a week to minimize the transportation barriers and that the RFP have some estimate of volume of service needed by each county so potential providers can price their services accordingly. Estimating volume might also minimize waiting lists. The group also discussed establishing incentives for providers to serve smaller counties. This might also assist in mitigating the limited choices DCS has in smaller counties.

Sexual Offender Treatment (SOT) for adults

The workgroup perceives several issues needing attention in this area. Once a perpetrator has completed specialized treatment but needs ongoing counseling related to other family issues, counseling providers often indicate they do not provide services to perpetrators or cannot provide the service unless the perpetrator admits to the offense. Because there are often legal charges involved, the perpetrators are advised legally not to admit to the crime unless proven guilty in a court of law. To complicate it further, the DCS timeframe for reuniting or preserving the family and the legal/court schedule, typically do not match. Courts can take years to finalize these cases.

Programs for Divorcing Parents in Tipton County

Given the overall needs to be addressed, the workgroup did not perceive this need having a high return on investment

Funding:

The ideal plan for DCS funded service priorities is to reduce residential budgeted expenditures, and half of the amount would be redirected to Foster Care, and half would be redirected to the priority areas. It was also thought that the newly negotiated residential contracts will result in an overall savings, although not quantifiable at this time, particularly in light of recent rate cuts.

The largest amounts of Region 11's non-residential expenditures involve both home-based Family Centered Casework and Therapy. Non residential historical budget/expenditures highlight a steady increase in the utilization and funding of home based services. As is the case statewide, the regions goal is to reduce residential placements and length of stay and thereby reduce costs and allocate those dollars to other services, particularly foster care related programs and services and Community Partners. Region 11 anticipates an increase in the numbers of children and families served through 2013 and the estimated budget figures reflect the anticipated need.

