

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

INTRODUCTION

Year 2 (FY 2008) of the Ramsey County Comprehensive Family Assessment (CFA) Grant Project has been very active and productive. Activities occurring during this year include completing the baseline study for Child Protection Program and initiating a comparable baseline study for Child Protection Intake. We designed and piloted our new CFA model and conducted training for staff on the use of the model. We have begun a six-month randomized trial of the new model in Child Protection Program. In order to facilitate the accomplishment of the creation of a strong CFA model we completed two contracts with consultants to assist us: one for cultural consultation, and the other for training. Our activities and accomplishments are described below.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Administrative Activities

The vehicles for administering the project have become more and more effective as the project continues:

- Steering Committee: this group meets regularly twice each month and is composed of internal management and evaluation staff and the researchers from the University of Minnesota. It has proven to be an extremely effective way of sharing information and doing problem-solving.
- Advisory Group and Subcommittees: Our Advisory Group is composed of staff from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, administrators from private agencies, Ramsey County management staff, and our cultural consultants. We have used the Direct Practice and Community Subcommittees of the Advisory Group to help us design the new CFA model. This process will be described below.

Completion of Contracts with Consultants

During this grant year we completed contracts with vendors for cultural consultation and for training:

- Cultural Consultants: Following an RFP process a contract with our cultural consultation vendor, Full Circle Community Institute, Inc., was completed during the second quarter of the grant year. The objective of this contract is to recruit, organize, and coordinate parent response focus groups from four cultural communities: African-American, Native American, Hmong, and Latino. These groups will provide us with on-going feedback about the effectiveness of our new model

within the cultural context of the four communities. In addition, we are planning to have parents from the focus groups constitute the core of a parent advisory group for our project. The vendor initiated the first step of their plan in February and began to recruit the initial parent focus group members.

- Training contract: we completed a contract with Lorrie Lutz of L3P Associates to assist us with training staff, training trainers, and creating training materials. (See below)

Project Evaluation

Baseline Study of Family Assessment Processes in Child Protection Program Conducted by the University of Minnesota

During Year 2 (FY 2008) the analysis of the data for the components of the baseline study in Child Protection Program was completed. A final report was produced in April. The Baseline Study findings indicated that factors that appear to have affected practice most strongly in Child Protection Program include availability of clinical supervision and ongoing clinical training to emphasize the need for and process of conducting a holistic assessment. Also the application and implementation of the Family Centered Assessment (the previous assessment tool that will be replaced by the new CFA model) was uneven and differently understood among different workers and case management units. An addendum to the report containing the findings of the time study and family interviews will be completed in May.

The findings in the report were based on the following components:

- Case Record Review: 60 cases were reviewed in Year 1 (FY 2007) using a tool developed to determine the degree to which case assessment processes were aimed at achieving CFSR goals.
- Informational meetings were held with each case management unit. Focus groups were also conducted. They dealt with the ease and accuracy of use and any perceived casework difficulties or improvements encountered with the previous Family Centered Assessment process since it was implemented in 2005.
- Family Interviews: Originally it was planned to conduct interviews with ten families randomly chosen from the 60 families whose cases were reviewed. Because of a variety of obstacles involved in contacting families and/or securing their agreement to be interviewed, only 6 families (7 respondents) were interviewed.
- Time Study: At the end of July a 100% time reporting study was conducted for one week with all Program and Intake workers. Each worker received a half-day of training prior to the time study. The University subcontracted with the American Humane Association for the use of their software and aid in data analysis.

Baseline Study of Use of Assessment Protocols in Practice in Child Protection Intake Conducted by the University of Minnesota

In the second quarter of Year 2 (FY 2008) planning and implementation of a Baseline Study in Intake occurred. The study activities parallel those conducted in the Baseline Study of Child Protection Program, and include a case review, family interviews, and focus groups. The protocols used in the Child Protection Program study were modified to reflect the Intake work duties, but the tools being used are geared to the same CFSR items. Since Intake staff were included in the time study conducted in July, it was not necessary to do a separate time study as part of the Intake Study. To date, it has covered the following elements:

- Case Review: 120 cases are being read: 60 from traditional investigation and 60 from Family Assessment (Differential Response).
- Family Interviews: Ten are planned, and to date three have been conducted.
- Focus groups: A focus group was held with each of the three Child Protection Intake Units.

The New CFA Model

During this grant year we designed, planned, piloted and conducted training for our new CFA model. A randomized trial for the new model began on April 1. The activities involved are as follows:

Model Design: In August of Year 1 (FY 2007) a group was selected to design the new CFA model. The core of the group was the Direct Practice Subcommittee of our Advisory Group. The two Child Protection managers, additional Child Protection workers who volunteered, and representatives of community agencies and the Minnesota Department of Human Services were also involved. An experienced Child Welfare academic facilitated our design process. The process consisted of a day-long retreat and three shorter meetings held in September. Using the Family Centered Assessment and the Children's Bureau Comprehensive Family Assessment Guidelines the group created an outline for conducting family assessments that fit within the framework of the ten phases or steps of conducting an assessment from reviewing existing case information to the point of case closure. Particular attention was paid to finding ways to target the CFSR items requiring improvement.

Pilot: The draft of the new model created by the design group was reviewed and revised. Two staff were trained in the new model and began piloting it in December. They found the model to be helpful in that it presented focus areas they did not routinely address. It helped them to know the families better, and they were better able to help them based on their comprehensive knowledge of all family members. On the other hand, they identified that the new model takes considerable time as well as additional time and energy in supervision. Each staff received a laptop to use during the pilot to help make their work more efficient. Following the pilot, we reviewed and amended the draft of the new model with the assistance of our trainer, Ms. Lutz.

Training: At the end of March we had two all day training sessions conducted by Ms. Lutz for all the staff (16 staff in two units) who are in the experimental group in the randomized trial which began on April 1.

Also present at the training were relevant management staff and members of our Advisory Group and subcommittees.

Training Manuals: Based on the new CFA model we developed, Ms. Lutz created manualized versions of the new model: one for staff and one for supervisors. These manuals contain procedural steps and instructions about how to conduct the comprehensive family assessments. In addition, Ms. Lutz is completing a "Train the Trainer" manual on the new model. She has also created draft versions of a variety of materials to assist staff as they use the new model.

Randomized Trial of New CFA Model: On April 1 the randomized trial of the new CFA model began. Two units comprised of 16 workers form the experimental group for the trial. They are applying the new model to all new cases they receive after 4/1//09 and to all cases that will have been in Program no longer than 6 months as of 5/15/09. The control group is comprised of two other Child Protection Program Units that are housed in a satellite office. The trial will extend until the middle of September, after which it will be evaluated and the new model revised as needed. Each worker in the randomized trial will receive a laptop computer to enhance the efficiency of their work and make it more feasible to meet the requirements of the new CFA model.

Conference Calls with Ms. Lutz: In April a series of six case consultation conference calls began with Ms. Lutz. On each call a case is staffed with Ms. Lutz with the experimental group units in attendance.

Participant Engagement in the Process of Development, Piloting and Training for the New CFA Model: It seems that the process used to create the new model produced a high level of participant engagement, and we believe that the process helped to increase the quality of the final model. This judgment is based on comparisons with other agency change processes. There were participants from varied backgrounds, and each person's opinions and contributions were considered and valued. The two workers who piloted the new model are respected by their peers. The training with Ms. Lutz was met with great enthusiasm, and the consultation conference calls with her are proving very helpful to staff. The result of these factors has been a high level of enthusiasm and "buy-in" for the new model.

ACTIVITIES AND GOALS FOR YEAR THREE (FY 2009)

Our project began with the baseline study of practice in Child Protection Program and moved to the piloting of the new model in Child Protection Program. Now we are conducting the baseline study for Child Protection Intake. The activities of the coming year will continue with the unfolding of the stages of the project first in Program and then in Intake.

Child Protection Program

During FY 2009 the post-test of the randomized trial will be conducted for Child Protection Program by the University of Minnesota. This will consist of case reading; worker, family, and management interviews; and focus groups. The data from these activities will be analyzed. The manual for the new

model will be revised based on the information gathered through the post-test, and a finalized version of the manual will be completed. Further training will be conducted: Child Protection Program staff who were in the control group for the randomized trial will be trained, and the randomized trial group will have their training updated to reflect the revisions to the CFA model. A report on the randomized study will be completed, and full implementation of the new CFA model in Child Protection Program will occur during FY 2009.

Child Protection Intake

In FY 2009 a written report of the findings of the baseline study for Intake will be written. The CFA model will be revised and adapted to the specialized needs of Intake through a process comparable to the one used to design the model for Child Protection Program. A practice manual and materials will be created and training will be conducted for Intake. A small pilot of the new CFA model, comparable to the one conducted by the two workers in Program, will be done. Following the pilot, the Intake version of the model will be revised and plans will begin for a randomized trial to occur in Intake in Year 4 (FY 2010).

Cultural Consultants and Parent Response Focus Groups

During FY 2009 we will continue to have our cultural consultants conduct focus groups of African-American, Native American, Hmong, and Latino parents. Our newly developed CFA model encourages workers to attend to cultural issues, but it does not yet contain content specific to the cultural groups. As information and feedback are obtained from the parent response focus groups they will be incorporated into our new model. Also, with the assistance of the cultural consultants we will continue to develop a parent advisory group for our project.