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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |
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Transmittal No: 92 LCM-26

Date: February 13, 1992

Division: Family and Children
Services

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Risk Assessment and SCR Redesign Implementation

ATTACHMENTS: "SCR Redesign and Risk Assessment" Integration Paper is
not available on line.

This will update you on plans for statewide implementation of risk assessment for child protective services cases and the timeframe for implementing the SCR Redesign. Also, the attached paper describes the programmatic relationship between risk assessment and service planning and the SCR Redesign. Please share this information with your Director of Services.

Risk Assessment

For the past 2 ½ years we have been intensively engaged in developing a risk assessment and service planning approach for cases with child protective services involvement. During that time we have been communicating with you regularly and seeking your feedback through written materials (89 LCM-165, 90 LCM-29, 90 LCM-97, and 90 LCM-170). We also have spoken at and sought your guidance at regional forums and given updates at NYPWA conferences and committee meetings.

In January 1991 we began a field test of the risk assessment and services planning model in Washington, Putnam and Onondaga counties as well as selected voluntary foster care and preventive services agencies. We had a number of principles that we wanted the model to reflect. The most important include:

- supporting key case work decisions such as whether a child needs immediate protection because he or she is presently unsafe, whether to keep a case open, and selecting appropriate treatment services aimed at reducing risk of future maltreatment
- supporting decision-making in a structured manner that requires, rather than replaces, professional judgement
- providing a consistent approach and common focus to case practice for all open CPS cases, regardless of the case planner and service providers
- striking an appropriate balance between comprehensiveness and workload impact; integrating risk assessment and service planning documentation within the Uniform Case Record whenever possible
- promoting a rehabilitative approach to working with families that goes beyond, but does not negate the need to reach allegation determinations.

An extensive evaluation of the field test was conducted and an options paper was developed so that Department staff, field test participants, and national experts could make recommendations about the final form of the risk assessment and services planning model.

The field test which ran through September 1991 was successful in a number of respects:

- participants reported overall satisfaction with the model.
- the concepts that the model was designed to promote were largely welcomed.
- it highlighted some places where the model could be improved and streamlined.
- it provided a very real opportunity to learn how to implement risk assessment in a local district.
- it identified how to improve the risk assessment training curriculum.

Statewide implementation of the model is a major initiative that will take place over the next two years beginning in March 1992. The model is intended to significantly influence case practice (and case documentation) expectations for all open child protective services cases. Therefore, in addition to providing 2½ days of "classroom" training for all your child welfare caseworkers and supervisors (who may become involved in an open child protective service case), we will be doing a considerable amount of pre and post-training work with districts. Our field test experience reinforced the importance of district preparation prior to implementation and the need for continued assistance after you begin implementation.

Family and Children Services regional office staff will work with you on developing timeframes for implementation in your district and coordinate implementation activities, especially the preparation and follow-up. The classroom training will be carried out by Department and Cornell Family Life Development Center staff in groups no larger than 35 people.

Implementation of the risk assessment and service plan model will also be occurring in foster care and preventive services agencies. As a result of resource constraints, most of these agencies will have to implement using a train-the-trainers approach. Therefore, for those agencies with whom you do a significant amount of work, it will be helpful for you to reinforce the practice messages and documentation requirements contained within the model. We will make every effort to bring voluntary agencies on at about the same time as those districts with whom they do business.

SCR Redesign

After a considerable amount of developmental work, the Department is beginning implementation of the SCR Redesign. Aspects of the new system are already underway in the SCR, and a short field test to confirm how it will perform locally is being initiated in Albany County in February 1992.

The redesign of the SCR's computerized information system has been undertaken to better meet the State and local districts' data maintenance and management needs.

The implementation timeframes for the SCR Redesign partially overlap with our implementation plan for risk assessment. Barring any significant problems, statewide implementation of the SCR Redesign is expected to occur between June and October of 1992. Bureau of Services Information Systems (BSIS) staff will conduct regionally based train-the-trainers sessions for each district's designee(s). In turn, your designee will provide training to your CPS and support staff. BSIS will be available for ongoing support, consultation, and trouble-shooting, as is necessary.

For the majority of districts, implementation of the SCR Redesign will take place prior to implementation of the risk assessment model. However, as a result of discussions and joint planning between you and the F&CS regional office, risk assessment may be implemented prior to the SCR Redesign. Although implementation of risk assessment is a more time consuming endeavor involving more district staff (all, or virtually all, child welfare staff) there is no preferable order for implementation.

Lastly, the attached paper describes the degree of integration of risk assessment and the SCR Redesign, mostly from a policy perspective. The paper also discusses some of the features of the two initiatives, and briefly identifies what operational overlap will exist and how it will be handled. The integration and overlap will be more apparent once your staff receive both the risk assessment and SCR Redesign training.

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If you have comments or questions concerning this memorandum, please contact your Family and Children's Services Regional Office Director. Specific questions pertaining to the SCR Redesign and its implementation may be directed to BSIS' Operations Unit at 1-800-342-3727.

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Family and Children Services