

DCS Responses to the Recommendations from the Ombudsman Interim Report

The Critical Initial Response: DCS Assessments

August 2012

The DCS Ombudsman Bureau is pleased to report DCS's responses to the ombudsman recommendations included in the above report. The following responses illustrate the value of working together from different perspectives toward similar goals, and we look forward to continued progress.

Recommendations

1.) It is recommended DCS reallocate staff and/or reconfigure the calculations of caseloads to ensure that each individual FCM's caseload is within the 12/17 limit. To accomplish this, consideration should be given to establishing a system of "floaters" available to fill the necessary gaps when vacancies occur and/or excluding trainees from caseload calculations.

Rationale: When caseloads are above the standard, the work suffers regardless of any other supports or resources available. Therefore, manageable caseloads are a priority.

DCS Response:

Effective October 2012, DCS received approval to hire an additional 120 FCM's to ease caseload burdens and to maintain compliance to the 12/17 standard. As noted turnover combined with a volatile caseload contributes to the problems in adhering to the 12/17 standard. DCS has traditionally had a sufficient number of staff positions to handle the caseload; but due to turnover, medical leaves, and the large number of workers unable to carry a caseload while involved in the initial 12 week mandatory training, there have been times when active FCMs (those trained and available to carry a caseload) experience caseloads in excess of the standard. In order to maintain the caseload standard, DCS needs to ensure that the number of trained and available workers always meets or exceeds the standard regardless of the number of positions "on paper". DCS is currently identifying the areas of greatest staffing need and is targeting recruitment efforts for areas where there may be a deficit in the hiring pool. Hiring is expected to begin in December 2012 with three new cohorts of approximately 25 workers each entering training beginning in January 2013. The 120 new positions will be added to the cohorts along with the customary new hires needed to replace departing workers. New workers entering training will be designated as trainees and receive an increase in salary to the full FCM salary when their training has been completed.

Additionally since recruitment and retention are always issues in child welfare due to the gravity of the job and the accompanying pressure and public scrutiny, DCS received approval in October 2012 effective on the 11/14/12 paychecks to increase the salaries of FCMs and Supervisors as follows:

- FCM 0-2 years – 6%
- FCM 2-5 years – 8%
- FCM 5+ years – 10%
- FCM Supervisors – 7%
- LOD – 7%
- FCM Trainee salary \$33,748.
- New FCM 2 salary after completion of training (\$35,776).

2.) It is recommended DCS seek additional Supervisor positions to meet the CWLA standard of a 1:5 Supervisor/Case Manager ratio. Correspondingly, the role of the Supervisor to educate, mentor and oversee should be emphasized and supported via trainings and allocation of time.

Rationale: Supervisors play a critical role in ensuring quality work and staff retention. Supervisors provide hands on guidance necessary to operationalize and integrate policy and training information into best practice. The Supervisor is in a position to model and promote the type of critical thinking that is essential for sound decision making in Assessments. Supervision is particularly important in Assessments because this is frequently the only resource available to assist the worker in the decision-making process. The number of inexperienced workers in Assessments heightens the need. Therefore, providing Supervisors with a workload that enables them to perform these important functions is a priority. Adopting the CWLA standard for Supervisor/Case Manager ratio would demonstrate a vision alignment with the caseload standard.

DCS Response:

DCS agrees that the supervisor’s role in staff development, quality control, and retention is critical and is pleased to report that in October, 2012 permission was granted to add an additional 75 supervisors statewide to oversee the work performed by the FCMs. The addition of these new supervisors will bring the supervisor ratio to approximately 5.3 positions per supervisor if all FCM positions were filled and available or practically speaking approximately 4.9 active workers per supervisor. Additionally DCS was able to increase the salaries of each supervisor by 7% effective 11/14/12.

DCS is currently reviewing the hiring plan and location of these new supervisors. Because supervisor positions are usually filled by FCMs who promote, care must be taken to thoughtfully increase the supervisory staff without creating a larger FCM deficit in the field.

3.) It is recommended DCS develop a Differential Response System in response to allegations of abuse and neglect and seek any changes required to implement the program. The model developed should be tailored to meet Indiana’s needs.

Rationale: DCS appears to be heading in the direction of a Differential Response System, as evidenced by the shift from an Investigative approach to an Assessment approach and the collaboration with Community Partners in response to abuse/neglect allegations. However, the fact that the Assessor is still responsible for determining findings influences the approach to the Assessments, and has ultimately created limitations in the ability to actualize the type of

Assessment that focuses on underlying causes. The range in the depth of practice observed in the Assessment reviews suggests Assessors are conflicted about the expectations when conducting an Assessment. Adopting this flexibility in response would continue to promote family engagement and enhance the quality of the Assessment, and it appears to be the natural progression for what is currently in place.

DCS Response:

DCS has formed a work group to study differential response and agrees that it may well compliment our practice model. We are currently gathering data from other states that currently use an alternate or differential response. Additionally, the DCS Interim Study Committee has recommended this as a topic for their recommended DCS Oversight Committee.

4.) It is recommended Secondary Trauma Stress training continue to be provided to DCS staff and that recognition of the need for staff support is reflected in the day-to-day operations.

Rationale: STS has been identified as a factor influencing worker performance and retention. Agency provided education regarding STS and/or resiliency training would assist the worker in developing stress management skills and demonstrate organizational support.

DCS Response:

Our Staff Development team has recently developed and implemented secondary trauma training. This full day training is available for experienced workers and provides practical examples and tools to deal with secondary trauma.

Additionally DCS is revitalizing its long-standing “Critical Response Team” to be more responsive by using our Clinical Specialists to aid counties or regions requesting assistance with particularly traumatic events experienced by local offices. Our practice Support team is currently arranging specialized training in Critical Incident Stress Management. This training would be provided to our clinical specialist staff and a few others who may be interested. The clinical specialists would then take the lead in organizing our response to critical incidents. We are gathering up to 15 individuals from the field and clinical staff to respond to these incidents.