



# CHILD WELFARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES REFORM LEGISLATIVE REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NC Session Law 2017-41, Rylan’s Law<sup>1</sup> requires the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to submit “a plan [to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services] that outlines regional supervision of and collaboration by local social services programs,” and also requires DHHS to submit “preliminary recommendations to the Committee ... regarding legislative changes necessary to implement ... a plan to reform the State supervision and accountability for the social services system, including child welfare, adult protective services and guardianship, public assistance, and child support enforcement.”

The recommendations presented by both the Social Services Working Group (SSWG) and the Center for Support of Families (CSF) were carefully analyzed by DHHS and have significantly informed DHHS’ recommendations. SSWG and CSF included significant external stakeholder input gathered through surveys and focus groups held across the state in developing their reports. DHHS senior leadership actively participated as members of the SSWG. The Secretary’s leadership team, as well as various DHHS division directors and section chiefs, helped to inform the CSF report.

DHHS also considered these goals in developing recommendations:

- All North Carolina citizens should have equal access to whole person-centered, high-quality social services.
- North Carolina’s social services system should produce better outcomes for the citizens it serves and deliver maximum value to its customers, communities and taxpayers.

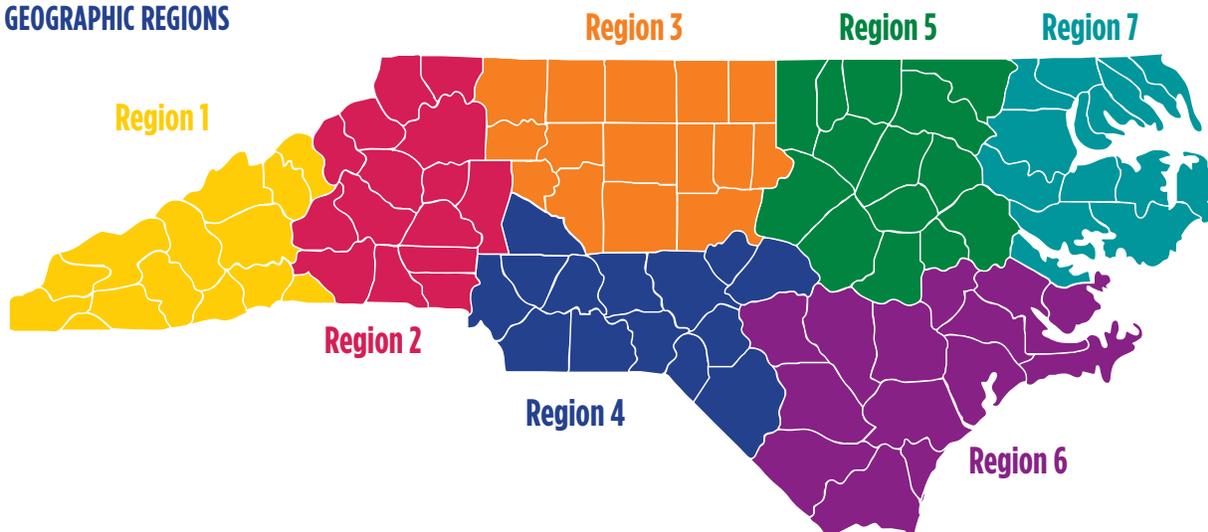
Detailed background and justifications for the 14 recommendations can be found in the [full report](#).

## A. Geographic Regions

The Department concurs with the recommendations from the SSWG to establish seven regions for regional supervision of county-administered child welfare and other social services. DHHS further recommends that legislation directing the establishment of regions allow for flexibility in determining county placement within regions. This will allow DHHS to make small adjustments as needed based on changes to judicial districts, new county level partnerships, significant population caseload changes, etc.

Among the considerations were ensuring that single counties are not divided by regions and that regions be contiguous. Also considered were total county population, geographic size and not disrupting judicial districts. DHHS supports the SSWG’s recommendation for establishing physical offices for regional supervision of child welfare and social services. However, it will take significant time and cost to procure and renovate or build offices. Therefore, DHHS recommends phasing in regional supervision by first establishing virtual regions and using existing community spaces for shared trainings and meetings while the procurement of physical office space is pursued.

### GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS



<sup>1</sup> NC Session Law 2017-41, Rylan’s Law: <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H630v6.pdf>

## B. Roles, Responsibilities and Staffing for Regional Supervision

Regional offices will be tasked with nine functions to strengthen support and supervision to counties:

- 1) best practice dissemination,
- 2) compliance monitoring,
- 3) fiscal monitoring,
- 4) integrated data systems and recordkeeping,
- 5) interagency coordination,
- 6) policy guidance and technical assistance,
- 7) quality improvement,
- 8) staffing standards and support, and
- 9) training.

Across these nine functions, a total of 40 duties are assigned to the central office in Raleigh and 45 are assigned to regional offices.

Both the CSF and SSWG Stage 1 reports recommended each region be staffed to cover all social services and child welfare areas: *Aging and Adult Services, Child Support Services, Child Welfare Services and Economic Services*. DHHS is proposing a staffing structure for regions based on caseloads, complexity of the program, and current staffing and performance.

**TABLE 1. PROPOSED REGIONAL OFFICE STRUCTURE**

ROLE		# OF POSITIONS
Leadership	Regional Director	1
	Administrative Assistant	1
Aging and Adult Services	Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist	3
Child Support	Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist/Trainer	2
Child Welfare	Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist	3
	Trainer	2
Economic Services	Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist	3
Fiscal Support	Local Business Liaison	2

In addition to the regionally-based positions, DHHS has sought to address the following resource deficiencies identified by CSF: *“There are five primary resource issues that must be addressed in order to successfully reform the current social services system: **inconsistent policy development and dissemination; deficiencies in workforce development in***

*the form of staff training; a lack of high quality community resources; underserved populations in need of mental health services; and **no easy access to reliable program and performance data ... The need for clear, consistent, accessible and timely policy and training was raised during focus groups, stakeholder interviews and calls, document reviews, and county and state-level conferences and meetings. The need for improved access to high-quality training cut across social services programs and was strongly voiced by counties of all sizes, types, and tier ranking.**”*

Maximizing efficient use of existing personnel was a top priority in developing the reorganization plan. DHHS conducted extensive analyses which resulted in recommendations to repurpose/redeploy existing central and home-based staff and identify the number of new positions needed.

DHHS recommends repurposing/redeploying 104 existing positions to support regionalization, repurposing/redeploying all managerial staff needed to support regionalization in the central office, and phasing in funding and positions to support 43 new regional and central office staff. DHHS further recommends prioritizing staffing to improve the child welfare system and moving to full implementation of a regional model with offices by March 2022.

## C. Legislative Changes

The proposed legislative actions address preliminary key changes needed to transform our social services and child welfare systems and are responsive to the preliminary recommendations identified in the CSF report and Stage Two of the SSWG report. Examples include:

- Supporting the adoption of the child fatality review process recommendations made by the Child Fatality Review Taskforce.
- Protecting children by enhancing the scope and depth of background checks for employees of child caring institutions, pursuant to the Family First Prevention Services Act.
- Ensuring compliance with the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act to ensure placement for children are not denied or delayed due to race or ethnicity.
- Expanding scholarships for post-secondary education for youth who age out of foster care to include those exiting from the Guardianship Assistance Program.
- Including a statutory provision that offers increased training opportunities for Social Services Boards.
- Conducting a feasibility and cost study of a proposed child support tribunal with dedicated court officers to hear child support matters using quasi-judicial procedures.

- Amending state laws and delegating authority to DHHS and the Social Services Commission to better address conflicts of interest in casework related to services provided by county departments of social services.
- Undertaking a study to address the transferring of adult guardianship cases from DHHS to counties. The study and recommendations should address equitable distribution of slots and funds, capacity needs of counties to manage the cases, as well as any necessary legislative changes.

## D. Other Key Enablers of Improved Child Welfare and Social Services

### COUNTY STAFFING CAPACITY

Many county departments of social services have significant staff challenges that negatively impact the provision of quality, timely services to citizens. A feasibility and cost study is recommended to establish caseload range guidelines, pay scales, a funding equity formula and salary pool for county child welfare and social services staff.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

A competent workforce is essential for improving outcomes for children and families. Counties face significant challenges with recruiting, training and retaining qualified employees at all levels.

To achieve a high-quality social services system with consistent practices across the state, counties need strong leaders committed to developing relationships across county lines, building and supporting excellent staff, and following law and policy closely.

It is recommended that DHHS, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, the Office of State Human Resources, a state public university partner, and key stakeholder groups, study and recommend a workforce development model for key positions in county departments of social services, regional offices and central offices.





# 2021-22 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ADULT SERVICES PERFORMANCE MEASURES FACT SHEET

Adult Services

Child Support Services

Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Work First Services

## WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan’s Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of six fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2021-22 Memorandum of Agreement. The six fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, and 6) Work First Services.

## Why Were These Adult Services Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes four Adult Services performance measures: two Adult Protective Services (APS) measures and two State-County Special Assistance measures. Together, these four measures address the immediate safety, ongoing protection from abuse and neglect, and long-term security and well-being of older adults and individuals with disabilities. The goal is to provide services and protections to individuals and families experiencing serious health and safety needs who are not, at least temporarily, able to assist themselves with the goal of helping them return to independent, community living.

### BASIS

NC G.S 108A-103 Article 6 requires that an APS evaluation shall be completed within 30 days for allegations of abuse or neglect and within 45 days for allegations of exploitation. NC Administrative Rule: 10A NCAC 71P .0604 requires that applications be processed and a notice approving or denying the application stating the effective date be mailed within 45 calendar days from the date the application form is signed for individuals aged 65 and older, and within 60 calendar days for those younger than 65.

## A Closer Look: Adult Protective Services Performance Measures

### 1. APS evaluations involving allegations of abuse or neglect will be completed within 30 days of the report for 85% of cases.

### RATIONALE

Adult Protective Services are considered emergency services that involve cases of irreparable harm and potential for death. NC GS 108a, Article 6, requires that a prompt and thorough evaluation is made of all reports of adult maltreatment and does not allow for the provision of services until the evaluation is completed. Completing the prompt and thorough evaluation is essential to protecting the adult. While state statute does not specify a percentage, 85% was selected because counties encounter extenuating circumstances that preclude them from completing a timely evaluation. Timely completion of 85% of these reports indicates substantial compliance with the statute.

### BASIS

State law requires that the director of social services receiving a report that an adult needs protective services make a prompt and thorough evaluation to determine whether the adult needs protective services and what services are needed. By statute, the evaluation shall be completed within 30 days for allegations of abuse or neglect.

- NC State Statute: [NC G.S 108A-103](#)

## 2. APS evaluations involving allegations of exploitation will be completed within 45 days of the report for 85% of cases.

### RATIONALE

Protecting a disabled adult from exploitation is critical to ensuring the protection of the adult. The Statute covers exploitation of assets as well as the person. NC GS 108a, Article 6, requires that a prompt and thorough evaluation is made of all reports of adult maltreatment and does not allow for the provision of services until the evaluation is completed. Completing the prompt and thorough evaluation is essential to protecting the adult. The timeframe of 45 days is allowed to ensure collection of necessary financial information in cases of exploitation of assets which often involves court proceedings. Timely completion of 85% of these reports indicates substantial compliance with the statute.

### BASIS

State law requires the director of social services to make a prompt and thorough evaluation of any report of potential adult abuse, neglect or exploitation and determine whether or not an adult needs protective services and what services are needed. The evaluation should be completed within 45 days for allegations of exploitation.

- NC State Statute: [NC G.S 108A-103](#)

## A Closer Look: State-County Special Assistance Performance Measures

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two State-County Special Assistance Measures. These measures address the timeliness in which the County DSS processes applications for State-County Special Assistance (SA), which pays for room and board for low-income individuals needing care in an assisted living facility. NC Administrative Code (10NCAC 71P.0604) sets the timeliness requirement for processing SA applications.

### 1. The County will process 85% of Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) applications within 45 calendar days of the application date.

#### RATIONALE

Individuals in need of placement in an assisted living facility generally require prompt placement to avoid further decline

in health or possible harm. State-County Special Assistance (SA) pays for room and board for eligible individuals in a licensed assisted living facility. Timely receipt of these benefits is essential to ensure proper care and treatment. While state rule does not specify a percentage rate, 85% was selected because counties may encounter extenuating circumstances that preclude them from completing a timely determination of eligibility. Timely determination for 85% of applications indicates substantial compliance with the state rule.

#### BASIS

State administrative rules require that applications be processed and a notice approving or denying the application stating the effective date be mailed within 45 calendar days from the date the application form is signed for individuals aged 65 and older.

- NC Administrative Rule: [10A NCAC 71P .0604](#)

### 2. The County will process 85% of Special Assistance for the Disabled (SAD) applications within 60 calendar days of the application date.

#### RATIONALE

Individuals in need of placement in an assisted living facility generally require prompt placement to avoid further decline in health or possible harm. State-County Special Assistance (SA) pays for room and board for eligible individuals in a licensed assisted living facility. Eligibility for SA also qualifies an individual to receive Medicaid benefits. Timely receipt of these benefits is essential to ensure proper care and treatment. DSS staff are required to verify several factors to determine eligibility related to income and assets.

While the state rule does not speak to a percentage rate, 85% was selected because counties may encounter extenuating circumstances that preclude them from completing a timely determination of eligibility. Timely determination for 85% of applications indicates substantial compliance with the Rule.

#### BASIS

State regulations require that applications be processed and a notice approving or denying the application stating the effective date of the payment be mailed within 60 calendar days from the date the application form is signed for individuals younger than 65.

- NC Administrative Rule: [10A NCAC 71P .0604](#)





# 2021-22 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT CHILD SUPPORT PERFORMANCE MEASURES FACT SHEET

Adult Services

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Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Work First Services

## WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan’s Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of six fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2021-22 Memorandum of Agreement. The six fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, and 6) Work First Services.

## Why Were These Child Support Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes four child support performance measures. The aim of the performance measures is to ensure that child support is a reliable, accessible source of income so that custodial families can become self-sufficient. Studies have shown that policies to collect child support not only increase financial resources to families, but their impact on payments increase visitation and contact between the children and their parents.

### BASIS

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Acts (PRWORA) of 1996, Section 454 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 654), 42 U.S.C. 658a(b)(6), Public Law 105-200, Section 201, and N.C.G.S. 110-129.1(a)(9) establish guidelines for performance and an incentive system to provide additional payments to any State based on its performance under the program. The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 (CSPIA) (Public Law 105-200, Section 201) provides the legal basis for the incentive award system. The purpose of Title IV-D incentives is to reward child support programs for good performance results, while holding these programs accountable for poor performance.

Eligibility for and the amount of incentive funding depends on all of the following:

- The total amount of federal funds that are available for a fiscal year.

- The state performance levels in five program service areas (paternity establishment, support establishment, current support payments, payments toward arrearages, and cost effectiveness). The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) distributes a shared pool of federal incentive funds to the states each year. To receive these funds, states must reach a specific level of performance for each of these program service areas.
- The reliability of the state’s data as determined by OCSE’s annual Data Reliability Audit (DRA). States must prove that their child support collection data in their computer systems is ninety-five percent (95%) reliable and accurate, based on the DRA (pursuant to 45 CFR 305).
- The relative performance levels of other states.

Each federal fiscal year, 85% of the federal incentive funds is shared with the counties, based on their performance in the program service areas mentioned above. The North Carolina Child Support Services (NCCSS) Central Office retains the remaining 15% to enhance centralized child support services.

Federal Regulations 45 CFR 303.52 require state IV-D programs to develop a standard methodology for the disbursement of incentive funds to the county/local agencies that are designated as the administrators of their child support programs.

**NOTE:** For 2021-22, the Child Support MOU measures will be separated from the goals designed to ensure continuous quality improvement of our child support program. All Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

## A Closer Look: Child Support Performance Measures

In accordance with Federal Regulations at [45 CFR 305.2](#), the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) determines incentive funding for states by measuring performance levels in these four program areas identified below. County performance measures are established not only to ensure that the child support program meets the performance measures set by the federal government, but that the program remains focused on improving the economic self-sufficiency of families with children. Counties falling below the minimum federal performance measure are subject to a corrective action plan.

### 1. County paternity establishment performance level must exceed 50% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).

**NOTE:** For 2021-22, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

#### RATIONALE

Paternity establishment is an essential component in obtaining and enforcing support orders for children. The Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP) is the percentage of children born out of wedlock for whom paternity has been established or acknowledged.

#### BASIS

Monthly performance is calculated for county/local agencies by determining the number of children in the IV-D caseload who have been born out-of-wedlock and for whom paternity has been established or acknowledged to the total number of children as of the end of the preceding state fiscal year who were born out-of-wedlock. Federal regulations require states to have a 90% minimum PEP rate to earn full incentives and avoid penalties to TANF block grant funding. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 50%.

- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 652\(g\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)
- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 658a\(b\)\(6\)\(A\)](#)
- North Carolina General Statute: [110-129.1\(a\)\(9\)](#)

### 2. County support order establishment performance level must exceed 50% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).

**NOTE:** For 2021-22, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

#### RATIONALE

A child support order obligates noncustodial parents to provide financial support for their children and stipulates the amount of the obligation and how it is to be paid. Child support payments enable parents who do not live with their children to fulfill their financial responsibility to them by contributing to the payment of childrearing costs.

#### BASIS

Monthly performance is calculated for county/local agencies by determining the number of IV-D cases with child support orders as a percentage of their overall caseload. The average of these monthly percentages is reported at the end of the federal fiscal year. Federal regulations require states to have an 80% minimum of cases under order rate to earn full incentives and avoid penalties to TANF block grant funding. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 50%.

- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 652\(g\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)
- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 658a\(b\)\(6\)\(B\)](#)
- North Carolina General Statute: [N.C.G.S. 110-129.1\(a\)\(9\)](#)

### 3. County current collections performance level must exceed 40% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).

**NOTE:** For 2021-22, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

#### RATIONALE

The current collection rate is an indicator for the regular and timely payment of child support. Higher rates mean better compliance with the support order and lower accumulation of arrears.

#### BASIS

“Current support” is the money that is applied to current support obligations and does not include payments toward arrearages. Monthly performance is calculated by determining the amount of current support that is collected as a percentage of the total amount of current support obligations due. The average of these monthly percentages is reported at the end of the federal fiscal year. Federal

regulations require states to have an 80% minimum current support collections rate to earn full incentives and avoid penalties to TANF block grant funding. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 40%.

- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 652\(g\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)
- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 658a\(b\)\(6\)\(C\)](#)
- North Carolina General Statute: [110-129.1\(a\)\(9\)](#)

#### 4. County arrearage collections performance level must exceed 40% at the end of the State Fiscal year (June 30).

**NOTE:** For 2021-22, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

#### RATIONALE

Child support collections have been shown to reduce the child poverty rate and improve child well-being. Studies also show that receipt of child support has a positive effect on academic achievement and improves young children's cognitive development.

#### BASIS

Arrearage collections is the money that was applied to past-due support on cases that have a past-due child support obligation. Federal regulations require states to have an 80% minimum current support collections rate to earn full incentives. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 40%.

- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 652\(g\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)
- Federal Code: [42 U.S.C. 658a\(b\)\(6\)\(D\)](#)
- NC General Statute: [110-129.1\(a\)\(9\)](#)





# 2021-22 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT CHILD WELFARE PERFORMANCE MEASURES FACT SHEET

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## WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan’s Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of six fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2021-22 Memorandum of Agreement. The six fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, and 6) Work First Services.

## Why Were These Child Welfare Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes six child welfare performance measures. Together, the six measures address the immediate safety, ongoing protection from abuse and neglect, and long-term security and well-being for children entering the state’s child welfare system.

### BASIS

The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 and subsequent amendments provide the foundational guidance for government’s role in child protection. CAPTA requires states to identify a minimum set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect and establish timeframes for responding to reports of abuse and neglect. Other federal law, funding and regulations also govern components of child welfare — for example, both Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA). Title IV-B addresses the provision of child welfare services that can be used for prevention of and response to child abuse and neglect. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA) focuses on providing safe and stable care for children who are in out-of-home care due to child maltreatment until they can achieve placement permanency by being safely returned home, placed permanently with adoptive families, or placed in other planned arrangements. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 45.1357.10 further defines requirements for child welfare services.

## FEDERAL COMPLIANCE INSTRUMENTS

The federal Children’s Bureau (CB) is planning to conduct a fourth round of reviews under the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) regulations, beginning in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 (October 1, 2021). The purpose of these reviews is to determine compliance with Title IV-B and Title IV-E plan requirements, and in doing so, assess the extent to which federally funded child welfare programs function effectively to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families with whom they have contact.

The overall goals of the reviews remain to:

- Ensure conformity with Title IV-B and Title IV-E child welfare requirements using a framework focused on safety, permanency and well-being through seven outcomes and seven systemic factors;
- Determine what is happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services including the legal and judicial processes; and
- Assist state child welfare systems in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.\*

To this end, the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services is advising counties that since these measures will be included in the Data Review and performance for CFSR Round IV, counties need to continue monitoring and striving to achieve progress toward accomplishing these measures, to ensure that North Carolina can be determined to be in “substantial

conformity.” In an effort to assist counties in monitoring and achieving these progress measures, check the following link for data provided by UNC-CH: <https://ssw.unc.edu/ma>.

*\* Child and Family Services Review Technical Bulletin #12  
Announcement of the CFSR Round 4 reviews, August 2020, Section I. Context and Overview of Next Round of CFSR – Round 4, pp 1-3*

The federal Children’s Bureau assesses states for “substantial conformity” with federal requirements for child welfare services through a periodic Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). Federal guidelines define “substantial conformity” to mean the measure is achieved in 95% of cases reviewed. Two relevant tools are used to evaluate state compliance during the CFSR. They are:

- National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators: The Data Indicators are aggregate measures, calculated using available administrative data. These measures look at outcomes for children, for example, whether a child is: a victim of child abuse or neglect while in foster care; a repeat victim of abuse or neglect; or able to achieve a permanent home in 12 months.
- The Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) includes only a limited sample of case reviews, interviews with children and families engaged in services, and interviews with community stakeholders – such as courts, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, and service providers. The OSRI looks at **outcomes for children and the type and quality of services children in child welfare services receive**. The OSRI involves an intensive review of small samplings of family case records and looks not only at whether a particular service or action occurred, but whether it was performed in a quality manner. Therefore, the OSRI measures are NOT used as a basis for the NCDHHS County Performance Measures, because data for the Performance Measures must be available for all counties and all cases and recipients of services.

## A Closer Look: Child Welfare Performance Measures

### 1. County will initiate 95% of all screened in reports within required timeframes.

**NOTE:** This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties. For Fiscal Year 2020-2021 MOU, the Department will not initiate any corrective action for a county’s performance related to this MOU performance measure.

#### RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure allegations of child abuse, neglect and dependency are initiated within mandated timeframes. This measure addresses how quickly a “screened in” report of child maltreatment (physical, sexual or psychological abuse, neglect, dependency, or human trafficking) must be followed up on with a full investigation. A “screened in report” means that information gathered in the report of child maltreatment has been determined by a county child welfare intake caseworker and supervisors to meet the legal definition of child maltreatment. That same caseworker and their supervisor will determine the urgency of conducting the investigation depending on the nature and severity of the alleged abuse, neglect, exploitation, or dependency.

#### BASIS

In North Carolina, the timeframes for initiating an investigation of child maltreatment are defined in state law as, immediately, 24 or 72 hours, depending on the severity of the alleged abuse. NC Administrative Rule and the NCDHHS Family Services Manual further define the processes for adhering to the state law.

- NC State Statute: G.S. §7B-302
- NC Administrative Rule: 10A NCAC 70A.0105
- NCDHHS Family Services Manual: Vol 1, Chapter VIII, Section 1408 Investigative and Family Assessments

### 2. For children who were victims of maltreatment during a 12-month period, no more than 9.1% received a subsequent finding of maltreatment.

**NOTE:** This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties. For Fiscal Year 2020-2021 MOU, the Department will not initiate any corrective action for a county’s performance related to this MOU performance measure.

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure that children who have been substantiated as abused, neglected or dependent are protected from further harm. This measure assesses whether the child welfare agency was successful in preventing subsequent maltreatment of a child if the child was the subject of a substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment.

**BASIS**

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment is 9.1% or less.

- [National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators](#): pages 3, 4 and 6

**3. The county will ensure that 95% of all foster youth have a face-to-face visit by the social worker each month.**

**NOTE:** This is now a Performance Measure.

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure the ongoing safety of children and the engagement and well-being of families. Caseworkers meet with children and families to monitor children's safety and well-being; assess the ongoing service needs of children, families and foster parents; engage biological and foster parents in developing case plans; assess permanency options for the child; monitor family progress toward established goals; and ensure that children and parents are receiving necessary services. Federal funding is contingent on the state ensuring that the safety and well-being of children in foster care is assured by a monthly face-to-face visit. Virtual face-to-face visits will count toward this measure as allowed, while this flexibility is allowed by the Administrative for Children and Families during the pandemic.

**BASIS**

The [Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006](#) amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to require that, "at a minimum ... children are visited on a monthly basis and that the caseworker visits are well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children."

- [Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006](#) Section 7 – Monthly Caseworker Standard; revises Section 422(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 622(b))

**4. The county will provide leadership for ensuring that 40.5% of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.**

**NOTE:** This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties. For Fiscal Year 2020-2021 MOU, the Department will not initiate any corrective action for a county's performance related to this MOU performance measure.

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure that children in out-of-home placements are able to obtain safe and permanent homes as soon as possible after removal from their homes. Permanency includes discharges from foster care to reunification with a child's parents or primary caregivers, living with a relative, guardianship, or adoption.

**BASIS**

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that at least 40.5% of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.

- [National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators](#): pages 4 and 6

**5. The county will provide leadership to ensure that of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period and who were discharged within 12 months to reunification, kinship care, guardianship, or adoption, that no more than 8.3% re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge.**

**NOTE:** This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties. For Fiscal Year 2020-2021 MOU, the Department will not initiate any corrective action for a county's performance related to this MOU performance measure.

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure that children exiting foster care either through reunification guardianship, or adoption are in stable homes so that they do not re-enter foster care. The measure assesses whether the agency's programs and practice are effective in supporting reunification and other permanency goals so that children do not return to foster care.

**BASIS**

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that no more than 8.3% of all children who enter into and are discharged from foster care within a 12-month period re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge.

- [National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators](#): pages 5 and 6

**6. The county will provide leadership to ensure that of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period in the county, the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care will not exceed 4.1%.**

**NOTE:** This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties. For Fiscal Year 2020-2021 MOU, the Department will not initiate any corrective action for a county's performance related to this MOU performance measure.

**RATIONALE**

Research shows that children who experience fewer placement changes are more likely to experience fewer school changes, less trauma and distress, and fewer mental health and behavioral problems. Research also suggests that fewer placements therefore contribute to better academic achievement and lasting positive relationships with an adult. This measure assesses whether the agency ensures that children whom the agency removes from their homes experience stability while they are in foster care.

**BASIS**

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, the average rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care does not exceed 4.1%.

- [National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators](#): pages 5 and 6





# 2021-22 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ENERGY PROGRAMS PERFORMANCE MEASURES FACT SHEET

Adult Services

Child Support Services

Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Work First Services

## WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan’s Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of six fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2021-22 Memorandum of Agreement. The six fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, and 6) Work First Services.

## Why Were These Energy Programs Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two Energy Performance measures. Energy programs help low-income families, seniors and adults with home heating and cooling to protect their health and well-being. These energy programs provide financial assistance so that vulnerable populations in our communities do not have to make difficult choices between heating and cooling their homes or affording other basic necessities such as food, medicine or shelter. Together the two measures address the federal requirements to assist households with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household energy bills.

### BASIS

The Federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Statute and Regulations and subsequent amendments provide the foundational guidance for government’s role in the administration of the Energy program. The LIHEAP statute was amended in 2005 by Subtitle B of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-58) which reauthorized LIHEAP through FY 2007. The LIHEAP statute is codified in the United States Code at:

- [42 U.S.C. § 8621-8630 \(2008\)](#).

The US HHS regulations for the LIHEAP block grant are found in [45 C.F.R. § 96. Subparts A-F, H](#). The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducts compliance

reviews. States determined to be in noncompliance face penalties of repayment of misspent funds and/or withholding of federal funds.

## A Closer Look: Energy Programs Performance Measures

**1. The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications, with no heat or cooling source, within one (1) business day from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.**

### RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that eligible individuals in a household without a heating or cooling source receive relief as soon as possible.

### BASIS

Federal Code requires that within one business day after a household applies for crisis benefits, the State will provide assistance that will resolve the energy crisis if a household is eligible to receive benefits and is in a life-threatening situation. North Carolina Administrative Code provides regulations on eligibility criteria.

- Federal Regulation: [42 U.S.C. § 8621-8630 \(2008\)](#).
- NC Administrative Code: [10A NCAC 71V](#)

**2. The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications that have a heat or cooling source disconnect notice within one (2) business days from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.**

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure that eligible households who are in danger of losing a heating or cooling source receive financial assistance to avert the crisis.

**BASIS**

Federal Code requires that within 48 hours after a household applies for crisis benefits, the State will provide some form of assistance that will resolve the energy crisis if such household is eligible to receive such benefits and is in a life-threatening situation. North Carolina Administrative Code provides regulations on eligibility criteria.

- Federal Regulation: [42 U.S.C. § 8621-8630 \(2008\)](#).
- NC Administrative Code: [10A NCAC 71V](#)





# 2021-22 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES PERFORMANCE MEASURES FACT SHEET

Adult Services

Child Support Services

Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Work First Services

## WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan’s Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of six fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2021-22 Memorandum of Agreement. The six fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, and 6) Work First Services.

## Why Were These Food and Nutrition Services Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes three Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) performance measures. Research shows that FNS Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits reduce poverty and food insecurity, and that this leads to improved health and economic outcomes over the long-term, especially for those who receive SNAP as children.

### BASIS

The [Food and Nutrition Act of 2008](#) (as amended through P.L.113-79, Effective Feb. 7, 2014) provides the foundational guidance for administration of the FNS program.

### FEDERAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE INSTRUMENTS

The USDA is mandated by federal regulations to monitor program administration and operation of the FNS Services program. Monitoring of the state’s compliance is completed through the Management Evaluation process. The Management Evaluation addresses and assesses State agency achievement of program objectives and FNS’ strategic performance objectives and priorities.

## A Closer Look: Food and Nutrition Services Performance Measures

**1. The County will process 95% of expedited FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 7th calendar day from the date of application.**

### RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure all households which are considered expedited FNS applications are processed within the required timeframe. A food-secure household means that all members of the household receiving FNS benefits have access to healthy and nutritious food to support the health and well-being of the family including children, the elderly and disabled.

### BASIS

The State is required to ensure benefits are available to the household no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the date of application. To ensure households are provided with benefits in a timely manner, FNS applications and reapplications must be approved no later than the twenty-fifth (25th) calendar day from the date of the application for regular FNS application and no later than four (4) calendar days for households identified as expedited.

- Federal Regulation: [7 CFR 274.2](#)
- Federal Regulation: [FNS 315 Application Time Frames](#)

- Federal Regulation: [FNS 320 Expedited Service](#)
- Federal Program Policy: [FNS Administrative Letter 1-2015](#)

**2. The County will process 95% of regular FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 30th calendar day from the date of application.**

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure all regular FNS applications are processed within the required timeframe. A food-secure household means that all members of the household receiving FNS benefits have access to healthy and nutritious food to support the health and well-being of the family including children, the elderly and disabled.

**BASIS**

The State is required to ensure benefits are available to the household no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the date of application. To ensure households are provided with benefits in a timely manner, FNS applications and reapplications must be approved no later than the twenty-fifth (25th) calendar day from the date of the application for regular FNS application and no later than four (4) calendar days for households identified as expedited.

- Federal Regulation: [7 CFR 274.2](#)
- Federal Regulation: [FNS 315 Application Time Frames](#)
- Federal Regulation: [FNS 320 Expedited Service](#)
- Federal Program Policy: [FNS Administrative Letter 1-2015](#)

**3. The County will ensure that 95% of FNS recertifications are processed within the required timeframes each month.**

**RATIONALE**

The intent of this measure is to ensure that families that were previously determined eligible have their recertification for benefits processed in a timely manner to ensure uninterrupted access to healthy and nutritious food to support the health and well-being of families that continue to be eligible for FNS benefits.

**BASIS**

In accordance with federal regulation, the State is required to ensure that households who received a notice of expiration and reapplied, receive either a notice of eligibility or a notice of denial no later than thirty (30) days from the last allotment received.

- Federal Regulation: [7 CFR 273.14 Recertification](#)





# 2021-22 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WORK FIRST PERFORMANCE MEASURES FACT SHEET

Adult Services

Child Support Services

Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Work First Services

## WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan’s Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of six fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2021-22 Memorandum of Agreement. The six fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, and 6) Work First Services.

## Why Were These Work First Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two Work First performance measures. Together, the two measures assist families in receiving timely benefits to help with reaching their goals of self-sufficiency and reduce the need for public assistance programs. Providing timely assistance to eligible county residents is a provision of the federal block grant funding.

### BASIS

Title IV-A of the Social Security Act (SSA) and The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) provide the foundational guidance for the government’s accountability in assisting needy families with children. Title IV-A addresses the required submission of a State Plan in which the State program defines timelines for the determination of assistance.

### FEDERAL COMPLIANCE INSTRUMENT

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) assesses states for compliance with federal. Title IV-A of the SSA requires that eligibility determination must be provided in a reasonable and prompt manner (timely). The North Carolina TANF State Plan defines reasonable and prompt manner or timeliness for applications as 45 calendar days from the application date. The timeliness for the recertification for a cash assistance is no later than the last day of the current certification period.

## A Closer Look: Work First Services Performance Measures

### 1. The County will process 95% of Work First applications within 45 days of receipt.

#### RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that families receive the Work First benefits for which they are eligible in a timely manner. Families that participate in the Work First Program rely on this service for cash assistance, job placement, training and education. Timely processing of applications ensures that applicants can access these services quickly and begin to receive services that lead to self-sufficiency.

#### BASIS

This performance measure determines the state’s conformity with Title IV-A of the Social Security Act to provide eligibility determination in a reasonable and prompt manner. NC General Statute and the NC State Plan provides the basis for program policy.

- North Carolina General Statute: NC GS 108A-31
- State Plan: TANF State Plan FFY 2019-2022

## 2. The County will process 95% of Work First recertifications no later than the last day of the current certification period.

### RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that families who were previously determined eligible for the Work First program continue to receive assistance and benefits without an unnecessary interruption in their benefits and case work services.

### BASIS

This performance measure determines the state's conformity with Title IV-A of the Social Security Act to provide eligibility determination in a reasonable and prompt manner. NC General Statute and the NC State Plan provide the basis for program policy.

- North Carolina General Statute: [NC GS 108A-31](#)
- State Plan: [TANF State Plan FFY 2019-2022](#)

