

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

P.O. Box 419064, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9064



December 11, 2014

CSS LETTER: 14-12

ALL IV-D DIRECTORS
 ALL COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS
 ALL BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PROCESS FOR FEDERAL
 FISCAL YEAR 2015

<u>Reason for this Transmittal</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> State Law, Regulation and/or Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Law, Regulation and/ or Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Court Order or Settlement Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Clarification requested by One or More Counties
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initiated by DCSS

This letter details the Department of Child Support Services' (DCSS) performance improvement process for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015. It outlines the shift from evaluating statewide and local performance improvement efforts exclusively by the five federal performance measures to a more customer-oriented, family-centered approach.

The five federal performance measures remain significantly important and are the underpinning to the federal program in terms of how the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) evaluates the effectiveness of the national child support program determining incentive payments to states and territories.

These five federal performance measures do not, however, provide a detailed, qualitative portrait of child support service delivery to families in our communities. As a result, DCSS, in consultation with local child support agency (LCSA) Directors, and representatives from the Judicial Branch and OCSE representatives, has advanced a broader, more holistic approach to measuring program effectiveness through the establishment of key *Practice Improvement Indicators* of program operations and improvements consistent with the new *California Department of Child Support Services FFY 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan*.

FFY 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan

The new five year Strategic Plan represents the collaborative work of state and local child support professionals to achieve a common vision - that children can rely on their parents for the financial and medical support they need to be healthy and successful. This focus ensures that child support is not merely something we collect, but something on which children and families can rely; increased reliability of child support payments to families and decreased amount of unpaid child support in conjunction with better and more timely customer service and access to services.

The Strategic Plan integrates the concept of evaluating the effectiveness of service delivery through the lens of customers for continuous program improvement. Key

program data elements have been identified to guide timely review and analysis on the effectiveness of program service delivery that includes qualitative data elements such as the timeliness of obtaining a child support order, receiving the first collection, and the percent of the ordered amount collected every month. This approach reinforces strategies and practices already in place in many California communities as a result of local Early Intervention Plans initially implemented in 2009 and subsequently refined each year by LCSAs. Local child support agencies identified specific strategies to engage both parents early and often to obtain reliable support for families by ensuring that orders are established timely, are based on accurate information, are appropriate and consistent with the obligor's verified income, and are effectively enforced. Early Intervention strategies, most specifically in the establishment process, have contributed to measurable improvements in program performance while providing real help to parents struggling to support their families; the new Strategic Plan builds on those successes.

Performance Management Plans

Statewide and local improvement efforts for FFY 2015 will be aligned with the new DCSS FFY 2015-2019 Strategic Plan with focused attention on tactics that lead to improvement in service delivery practices, which, with focused attention, monitoring, and timely review, will contribute to improved family outcomes. Specifically, local and statewide tactics will lead to conditions where families that receive child support services can count on child support payments as a reliable source of family income every month. Examples of specific practice improvements that will lead to favorable and improved family outcomes include but are not limited to the following:

- Shorten the current length of time and the redundancy of information and processes to establish a child support order.
- Increase the number of orders established as a result of successful engagement and agreement of both parents (stipulated/consent orders) and thereby reduce the number of default orders.
- Increase the number of orders established that are reasonable and appropriate based on information provided by both parents.
- Increase the percent of child support collected and distributed each month when compared to the amount ordered.
- Reduce the accumulation of arrears by contacting paying obligors promptly when regular payments cease.
- Support and facilitate, where appropriate, improved parent-child engagement.

- Improve timeframes with courts and other partners to reduce/eliminate unnecessary delays and time commitments required of participants.

LCSAs are required to develop Performance Management Plans for FFY 2015 using the attached template (Attachment A). The DCSS FFY 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan includes the following Goals:

- Goal 1 - Increase support for California's children
- Goal 2 - Deliver excellent and consistent customer services statewide
- Goal 3 - Enhance program performance and sustainability
- Goal 4 - Develop and strengthen collaborative partnerships
- Goal 5 - Be innovative in meeting the needs of families

In completing the FFY 2015 Performance Management Plan, LCSAs are to address each of the five Goals in the Strategic Plan. Using the practice improvement indicators, LCSAs may determine which Objectives and Strategies included in the DCSS FFY 2015 – 2019 Strategic Plan will most effectively lead to improved family outcomes. In addition, LCSAs may choose which practice improvement indicators (data set provided by DCSS) to use in identifying and subsequently monitoring tactics they determine to include in the LCSA Performance Management Plan. Particular attention should be paid on the nine key indicators included in the data set (bold text) provided by DCSS.

While meeting certain timeframes will continue to be essential in maintaining compliance with federal standards, achieving high standards for quality customer service will require continuous assessment and, where necessary, changes in practice for the effective establishment and enforcement of child support orders. This dynamic process will require continuous evaluation of specific tactics included in the LCSA Performance Management Plan for timely review and analysis to determine which practices prove to be effective and which are in need of modification.

The Performance Management Plan template can be accessed on California Child Support Central by using the following hyperlink: [2015 Performance Management Plan template](#). The new California Department of Child Support Services FFY 2015-2019 Strategic Plan will soon be uploaded on California Child Support Central and can be accessed by using the following hyperlink: [FFY 2015 -2019 Strategic Plan](#)

FFY 2015 Performance Management Plans must be submitted by e-mail by the IV-D Directors to their Regional Administrator by **December 31, 2014**. However, in light of

our new approach and other program considerations, if an LCSA needs additional time to complete their Performance Management Plan, please contact your Regional Administrator to request up to a 30 day extension.

Technical Assistance

DCSS recognizes the impact this shift in approach to performance improvement may have on local and state operations and our valued workforce. As with any change, big or small, there is a need to allow individuals and groups of individuals to take some time processing the impact the change, real or imagined, may have on their current work experience. As local program administrators, I am confident that you and your management team will effectively manage this change process with your workforce. In developing your Performance Management Plan, I encourage you to engage staff at all levels of the process and invite their input and participation; their meaningful engagement will add value to the work product and strengthen their commitment to successful implementation.

DCSS views this new approach as an opportunity to strengthen our collaborative partnership with our local offices. In support of the development of the LCSA Performance Management Plans, DCSS is scheduling conference/video calls with each LCSA to discuss the development of the local Performance Management Plans and to answer any questions that may arise through the process. Most importantly, there may be an occasion where a dependency is identified by the LCSA for the successful execution of a local tactic that is incumbent on the state DCSS to address. If such circumstance should arise, a full and candid discussion will be necessary to determine the feasibility of achieving the tactic in this federal fiscal period for either the LCSA or state DCSS. The concept of mutual accountability is paramount as we collectively move forward in addressing state and local performance improvements.

Review and Monitoring

Performance Management Plans will be reviewed within the context of practice improvement indicators (data sets) provided by DCSS. The review will provide additional confirmation that the LCSA Performance Management Plan is consistent with the customer-oriented, family-centered approach outlined in this letter. In the event that a Performance Management Plan does not follow this approach, the Regional Administrator will contact the LCSA Director to request revisions.

The Regional Administrators will monitor LCSA implementation and completion of the tactics detailed in the Performance Management Plans. The practice improvement indicators will serve as a critical source of information in the ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of tactics included in LCSA Performance Management Plans. As such, DCSS is prepared to provide LCSAs with refreshed data sets on a regular basis.

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LCSA progress in achieving FFY 2015 performance improvement goals will be monitored through review of the practice improvement indicators and ongoing communication and interaction with the LCSAs.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact your Regional Administrator.

Sincerely,

/os/

Alisha A. Griffin
Director

Attachment: A. Performance Management Plan template

