

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



March 2, 2005

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-12-05

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL COUNTY CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS  
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW

REFERENCE: ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 04-05

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change  
 Federal Law or Regulation Change  
 Court Order  
 Clarification Requested by One or More Counties  
 Initiated by CDSS

The purpose of this All County Information Notice is to provide clarification regarding the requirements of the Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR). The proper implementation of the PQCR is paramount to promoting the exchange of best practice ideas among the counties. In partnership with the California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has updated the framework of the PQCR process. This notice responds to frequently asked questions received by CDSS regarding the PQCR process.

**BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to State Law (A B 636, Steinberg, Ch. 678, Statutes of 2001), effective January 2004, a new Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability System began operation in California. The new system, referred to as the California-Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR), was developed in accordance with the provisions of WIC §10601.2 and focuses primarily on measuring outcomes in safety, permanence and child and family well-being. The new system replaces the former Child Welfare Services Oversight System which focused exclusively on regulatory compliance and brings California's oversight into alignment with the Federal Child and Family Service Review oversight system of the states.

**OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the PQCR is to provide a rich and deep understanding of actual practices in the field by bringing in outside expertise to help shed light on the strengths and challenges for county Child Welfare Services (CWS) delivery systems and social work practices. For probation, the goal of the PQCR is to identify key patterns of agency strengths and concerns for the services for youth in out-of-home care. Both agencies benefit by using peer reviewers that can offer objectivity to the process and serve as an immediate training resource. The PQCR is an extension of the county's Self-Assessment (SA) process, is an integral part of a complete review and is to be used to inform the county's System Improvement Plan (SIP).

**CWS AND PROBATION CONCURRENT PQCR**

It is essential that both CWS and probation agencies collaborate in an overall review of service delivery and practices to effectively impact positive outcomes for children and youth. To facilitate an effective review that will help to focus a plan for improvement countywide, it is important for the

PQCR to be co-chaired by both CWS, probation and CDSS. It is understood by CDSS that there can be different areas of focus by the two agencies. The CDSS requests that a concurrent review be conducted in a county to allow for strategic use of PQCR resources and comprehensively inform the development of the county SA and SIP updates.

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

The C-CFSR process will be a tri-annual review with a third of the counties completing all steps in the review process every third year, with annual updates to their county SIP. For the implementation year counties are not required to conduct a PQCR. However, several counties on a voluntary basis will complete the PQCR process during 2004/2005. Counties whose SIP focused on safety and had implementation timeframes of one-year were selected for this first year PQCR schedule. The CDSS will develop a schedule for the remaining counties for the subsequent two years of the tri-annual cycle.

### **ROLE OF THE STATE**

The C-CFSR system replaces the former CWS oversight system in which the State conducted onsite compliance reviews. The new system represents a fundamental shift from monitoring process activities to evaluating service delivery practice issues that are relevant to the outcomes that the review seeks to help the county improve. Even though the oversight system has changed, it is necessary that the State continues its onsite administrative responsibility. To meet this requirement, the State will co-chair, in partnership with the host county co-chairs, the review, assist with the pre-planning phase, participate in the onsite review and co-write the outcome report. The State's participation in the PQCR will focus on providing technical assistance needed to accomplish the critical components of the C-CFSR.

### **TRAINING**

The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) is developing a web-based resource for PQCR. The CalSWEC web site will maintain a variety of PQCR resources that will include a PQCR training guide, core case review and interview tools, a menu of questions that counties can use to adapt interview tools for the county's area of practice focus and de-briefing and written report guides. This resource will develop on a flow basis incorporating lessons-learned throughout the initial tri-annual cycle. The Regional Training Academies (RTA) have been identified as a valuable resource for participation in the PQCR process. Counties are encouraged to invite their RTA to assist with PQCR training related activities.

### **CASE REVIEW TOOL**

A core case review tool (CRT) has been developed and piloted for both CWS and Probation. The PQCR pilot counties (San Bernardino, Riverside, and Los Angeles) found the CRT helpful to prepare the interviewers with case information for the social worker interview, yet very labor intensive. To assist with this task, the Children's Research Center, through a contract with CDSS, will auto-populate key sections of the CRT based on CWS/CMS extracts. The CDSS will grant a county access to SafeMeasures during the PQCR to complete the CRT on-line, or the document can be provided in a hard-copy format. The PQCR reviewer will have the ability to document an over-ride to an item on the auto-populated CRT on-line or on the hard-copy document. Only sections of the CRT that are pertinent to the area of practice focus need to be completed. The CRTs are not to be attached to the PQCR written report, but are intended to assist with developing the summary information leading to the observations and recommendations.

**OUTCOME REPORT**

The co-chairs are responsible for drafting an objective summary of the PQCR findings and recommendations within two weeks of the end of the on-site review. The draft of the review findings is to be distributed to the PQCR team members for review and feedback. The final written report of the findings needs to summarize outcomes in the context of program strengths and areas needing improvement and propose a clear set of recommendations that can be used to inform the county's SIP. A final report guide, template, and samples will be posted as resource material on the CalSWEC web-site.

**PQCR WORKGROUP**

The PQCR workgroup provides a framework for continued evaluation and updating of the PQCR process. The workgroup meets periodically to review feedback on the process from pilot counties and from volunteer counties through June 2005. Workgroup participation is open to any county preparing for a PQCR.

If you have additional questions or need further information, please contact your C-CFSR Consultant at (916) 651-8100 or send an e-mail to [chldserv@dss.ca.gov](mailto:chldserv@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

WESLEY A. BEERS, Chief  
Operations and Evaluation Branch

c: California Welfare Directors Association  
Chief Probation Officers of California