

# **SUMMARY CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS**

## **From “Good Enough” to “Best Possible”**

### **An Assessment Tool for the Child and Family Services Plan**

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#### **Five Criteria for Assessment of the Child and Family Plan**

##### **1. Emphasis on prevention**

What strategies does the plan propose to help address the current service system’s bias towards crisis intervention?

What specific efforts are being made to strengthen and/or create new community-based preventive and supportive services?

What resources have been diverted from institutional services to community-based services?

What resources have been diverted from remedial to prevention-oriented services?

##### **2. Expand child and family-centered services**

To what extent does the proposed plan direct resources to new or expanded family-centered services?

What specific changes in financing, organization, management, staffing, in-service training, etc. are being proposed to help existing services become more child and family-centered?

##### **3. Establish more comprehensive and coordinated continuum of services**

How will this proposed action or strategy assist the establishment of a more comprehensive, diverse and accessible array of services for children and families?

Which types of services are being made more available or accessible?

Is the strategy based on a careful assessment of existing gaps in the state and community services continuum and how they are related to assessed needs, strengths and capacities?

Are present or new family support and family preservation services required to collaborate with other services for children and families?

##### **4. Join forces and maximize resources**

What strategies does the plan provide to obtain input from stakeholders and, more generally, to obtain perspectives beyond the traditional child welfare constituencies?

How does the plan identify the most important stakeholders to involve actively and what strategies are planned to do so?

What agreements are being made to coordinate and share resources across programs and sectors in order to implement the plan?

## **5. Plan and implement major changes in service systems**

Does the plan develop implementation strategies for, and assign resources to, changes in the system infrastructure such as financing, management, and staffing?

Does the plan mobilize the resources required to support and sustain service improvements, such as staff development and technical assistance?

## **Assessing the Tasks and Stages of the Planning Process**

### **Assessing the political, economical and organization context**

What strategies are being planned to overcome any current economic, political, ideological, and institutional barriers that have been identified?

What strategies are planned to take advantage of the economic and political trends and opportunities that could support and reinforce the state's family preservation and family support efforts?

What mechanisms are being used to link the states family preservation and family support planning effort with any cross-cutting governance structures at the Cabinet or Governor's level, such as state Child and Family Councils or Commissions?

What kinds of support are being sought from the legislature and the courts?

What kinds of support are being sought from the corporate and private philanthropies?

### **Creating a planning structure and identifying key leadership**

What are the sources of state leadership for the family preservation and family support? How much power and authority do they have?

How were the members of the state's family preservation and family support executive planning group chosen? Which stakeholders do they represent? What kinds of resources do they control?

What efforts have been made to create an interagency planning structure?

What mechanisms have been created to ensure that the regional office is appropriately informed and consulted?

Are sufficient funds and resources allocated to staff and support the planning effort?

How is the planning group linked with any other current state initiatives for comprehensive reform?

### **Identifying and involving stakeholders**

How broad a range of stakeholders is involved in the planning process at the state level? At the community level?

Is there a balance between those who represent traditional child welfare services and those who provide preventive and family support services?

What methods of involvement have been used to obtain stakeholder input? How intense has their input been?

How has those stakeholders whose support is most critical to the success of the family preservation and family support program been involved?

How have those whose opposition to the program is most likely to impede progress on the plan been involved?

What measures have been taken to get meaningful input from a diverse group of family members, both consumers and public members, at the state level? At the community level?

What efforts have been made to involve minority groups, including, when appropriate, Indian tribes?

What strategies have been put in place to go beyond “one-shot” stakeholder involvement to changing the current decision-making structure and process?

## **Buying into the vision**

To what extent have efforts been made to help the planners and key stakeholders understand the problems and limitations of the present service system and the need for reform?

In what ways have state needs-assessment data and other management information been used during the planning process?

What opportunities has the planning group had to hear from providers and consumers/families about the shortcomings of present services, as well as their strengths and capacities?

Are there plans to communicate the state’s vision of reform and the reason for reform to the public at key stages of the plan’s development and implementation? How is the media being used?

## **Assessing state needs, resources, and capacities along the continuum**

What kind of information is the planning team collecting for the state level needs assessment? Does it span the entire continuum of services?

What kind of information, and from which sources, is being gathered about service gaps, quality and effectiveness?

What information from non-child welfare public and private agencies and programs (such as data matches) is being used to find out about common clients?

To what extent are needs and resource assessments being conducted at the county and community levels and how will these relate to the state-wide assessments?

## **Targeting**

How was the particular balance between funding family preservation and family support service expansion chosen?

Who participated in the targeting decisions and on what criteria were these decisions based?

What is being done to support and encourage those communities that are interested in moving towards the family preservation and family support vision but will not receive any of the new family preservation and family support money?

If the state has chosen not to target, what criteria are being used to distribute the new dollars?

## **Developing goals, outcomes, and benchmarks to assess progress**

What child, family, community, and system outcomes are specified in the plan to be achieved at the end of the five years?

Can they realistically be achieved in this time span?

Are these outcomes clearly and logically related to the planned services and system reform strategy?

What kinds of interim benchmarks will be used to assess progress in implementation of the plan by the end of the first year and subsequent years?

Is the responsibility for reaching these outcomes and benchmarks to be shared across agencies and/or programs?

What mechanisms will be used to evaluate progress and change and, if necessary, adjust the goals and plans for subsequent years?

What plans are being made to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of the service expansion and improvements?

### **Human dimension of system reform**

Have the planners anticipated the reactions of administrators and service providers to the proposed changes?

What strategies are being designed to overcome people's resistance and support them in making the change?

Are those individuals expected to implement the changes involved in the planning?

### **Implementation Dimensions**

What implementation strategies for each of these areas is included in the Child and Family Services Plan?

- Financing
- Administration
- Policy development and governance
- Service design
- Staff development
- Technical assistance
- Cross-system data collection
- Public communication

Are these implementation plans realistic?

What is the budget allocated for making improvements or changes in each of these areas?

What mechanisms are provided for coordinating these implementation activities, for continuous feedback, and for making necessary adjustments?

What interagency agreements have been reached to implement these changes?