

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	HS-8
Title of Program	Trauma Informed Practice in Child Welfare Services
Program Category	Human Services
Submission Date	6/7/2016 1:52:41 PM
County	Catawba
Employee	Margaret Allen
Employee title	Public Information Officer
Email	mallen@catawbacountync.gov
County Department	Social Services
Phone	828-695-6583
Address	P.O. Box 669 Newton, NC 28658
County Manager	Tom Lundy
Supervisor	Jordan Vinson
Implementation Date	12:00:00 AM
FLSA Designation	Both (if applicable to a team)
Project Team Members	Entire Child Welfare Team

Description of Productivity Improvement

The area of Child Welfare encompasses a variety of services, such as: Child Protective Services, In-Home Services, Foster Care, Adoption, and Post Adoption. Our focus on preventing and treating early exposure to trauma, including child maltreatment, is grounded in emerging science about its devastating impact on lifelong wellbeing. Abuse and/or neglect can derail a child's normal development, disrupt critical attachments, and impair social and emotional functioning. As a result, childhood maltreatment can have a negative effect on school success, future earning potential and ability to engage in healthy relationships. Research has even shown that childhood trauma can result in poor physical health as adults, including a greater risk for many of the leading causes of death, such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. To combat these problems, our entire child welfare staff has been trained in working with children and families experiencing trauma. This team approach allows staff to provide a depth and level of trauma informed services that is not rushed or diluted. We have also provided training in this area to foster parents through a program called Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma. The goal was to decrease the number of children coming back into foster care, reduced use of mental health services, greater placement stability, and fewer placement moves. Although this program is still in its early stages, we have seen evidence that is working.

Description of why this project was initiated

This project was started in response to emerging science that shows that childhood maltreatment can result in lifelong problems for children who experience it. By training our entire staff, from administrative assistants through clinical staff, in trauma informed practices, we can identify and respond quickly to help children recover from this type of trauma. Children entering the child welfare system are screened for trauma. Those who need behavioral healthcare counseling are provided with this counseling through our in-house behavioral healthcare services. By improving services to children and their families, we hope to minimize the long-term difficulties often experienced by these children.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

We were able to leverage existing state/county mental health dollars to offset the costs of this training. We also made additional funds available through staff attrition and through billing for Medicaid-eligible services. There was minimal additional cost for training our staff, since we qualified existing staff as trainers, and they trained the remaining staff. For a minimal investment, we are starting to see results in the form of more resiliency on the part of children undergoing needed counseling, fewer placement disruptions, and other indicators of childhood wellbeing.

Other descriptive information

Although this program is in its early stages, the outcomes for the past fiscal year indicate we are moving in the right direction. For example, 89.29% of children in foster care for 12-14 months in our county experienced two or fewer placements, excluding moves toward permanency, compared to the large NC county average of 86.17% and our prior year average of 88.72%. Eighty percent of children aged 3-17 who entered foster care in our county engaged in treatment as a result of a mental health trauma informed assessment within 30 days, compared to 50% in the prior fiscal year. 100% of our preschool children who completed services with our clinical specialists demonstrated greater resiliency, increased ability to meet his/her needs, increased ability to express feelings with appropriate words and actions and stronger relationships as indicated in the total protective factors score as measured by the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment, 2nd Edition.