



Franklin County Coordinated Children's Services Initiative

Tier II Change of Placement Subcommittee Policy

It has been supported that the Change of Placement Subcommittee would benefit from having a written policy. Such a policy would allow us to refocus and to better collaborate our efforts as community service providers. A written policy to include how and why the group was formed, membership, the criteria for referral, referral process, the review process, confidentiality, and accountability was drawn up for the review of all who participate as well as the Tier II group.

History:

The Change of Placement Subcommittee was established on January 2, 2002. It was created by the joining of two other ongoing groups. The first of these groups was the internal DSS service review committee which reviewed three types of cases at their earliest involvement. The three types of cases reviewed were: new preventive referrals, new foster care placements, and indicated child protective cases. The purposes of this review were to make all DSS supervisors aware of cases in other units, when those cases might be referred to other DSS units, and to brainstorm other possible recommendations, suggestions, and solutions on how to proceed with each case. In addition to DSS administration and the supervisors and line staff from the three children's services, the supervisors of Adult Services and Medical Unit were involved and gave both a broader perspective and their wealth of experience. The other group, which was meeting on an irregular basis, was a group composed of Probation supervisors and officers and DSS Administration and supervisors. This group would meet prior to a court appearance where both agencies were submitting recommendations to the Family Court. The purpose of these meetings was to review the facts supporting each recommendation, make each recommendation stronger, and if possible coordinate the plan of what would happen after court.

The CCSI Tier II which also includes the county's SPOA (Single Point Of Accountability) committee found they were mandated by OMH to track data, some of which was already being discussed by these two groups. As such, the Change of Placement Subcommittee was formed from these other two preexisting and successful groups to meet this need.

Rationale for meeting:

In addition to these above mentioned state data collection requirements, the Change of Placement Subcommittee offers many other benefits to the agencies as participants, and through its process to the children being presented as well. First and foremost, the group offers participants a venue where they can bring their difficult cases and receive observations, suggestions, and recommendations from other disciplines. Being a small county, all of the children presented are known to more than one, if not all, of the agencies present. The referring agency is able to learn of what other agencies were observing with this child and family, have advance notice of recommendations from other agencies of an impending placement, have more time to prepare responses to such a placement, and more easily make referrals for needed services. Last but not least, each agency would feel supported by the other agencies. They would not feel as if they were alone in dealing with a difficult, stressful, and trying high needs case.

In addition, the subcommittee also offers an avenue to make recommendation to the court system as a whole community rather than as one particular agency. Although this has been done in only a very few cases, it has had a great impact.

Membership:

At present the Change of Placement Committee has representation from the following agencies and services: DSS Administration and consultants, Foster Care supervisors and caseworkers, Preventive Services supervisors and caseworkers, Probation supervisors and officers, North Star Behavioral Health supervisors and clinicians, Intensive Case Management supervisor and case managers, OMH Waiver coordinator and staff, Youth Advocacy Program Director, and Sunmount DDSO Crisis Team Leader. All other community service agencies are welcomed to participate. A representative from the educational system is sorely needed and being sought at this time.

Criteria for referral:

The Change of Placement Committee seeks to conduct a case review of any child who is at risk of or planned to change their physical placement in the near future. "In the near future" varies due to the number of referrals received. If too many referrals are received than can be covered in a the time frame of one meeting, those cases where placement is sooner rather than later are given priority for review. At minimum, cases where a change of placement will occur in the following two weeks are given top priority and will be reviewed regardless of the amount of time needed for the meeting. In practice, the group likes to have as much prior notice as possible so that any preventive measures or suggestions may be acted upon and given time to work. Examples of what are changes of placement are: court ordered or protective removals from a family home to foster care, Probation or Preventive recommendations to the court supporting removal from a family, Foster Care referrals to Residential Treatment Facilities or Residential Treatment Centers, and referrals to Inpatient Substance Abuse treatment. In addition to looking at movement to a more supervised or supportive level of care, the group will also review those children ready to step down to a less restrictive level. As such, children

ready to be discharged from residential treatment, hospitalization, or foster care are also appropriate for referral.

Referral Process:

Any child to be referred should have a Change Of Placement referral form completed and submitted to Alex Logie at the Franklin County Courthouse. A sample referral form is attached to this policy. Referrals should be submitted as early as possible so that an agenda may be developed. When an agenda is developed, Alex will notify those involved so that any parties who are not able to attend may provide input and feedback to the representatives of their agency who will attend the meeting. In the event that no representative of an involved agency is available to attend the information and input may be either submitted in written form, given orally to Alex Logie, or at least presented by a worker from another agency who shares the case in common. The agenda will also give notification and time to prepare for those agencies who may have a common case on that particular individual, but are not the agency presenting the change of placement concern.

A child may be referred more than one time. As situations change and plans are tried, a child may be re-referred multiple times for an updated review by the group. In submitting a child for an update review, a referral source may check update on the review form and omit having to duplicate much of the demographic data. Any notable changes however should be documented on the referral form. The group encourages multiple referrals and would like referrals at the earliest appropriate time so that a proactive, preventive plan may be developed rather than a reactive one.

Meeting Time and Place:

The subcommittee meets every two weeks on Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 PM. Other times and days have been tried, but the majority of the group agrees upon this schedule. The group meets in the third floor “fishbowl” conference room of the Franklin County Courthouse.

The Review Process:

The Change of Placement Referral Form has been redesigned several times in order to attempt to highlight the relevant issues for presentation. One should remember however that each family or case reviewed is highly individualized and no standardized form can adequately capture all of the subtleties and nuances that need to be shared. The Change of Placement facilitator will review the referral form out loud for the group and then the referral source will fill any additional information which may have bearing upon the reasons behind the need for a change of placement. The other members of the committee will provide additional information from their own experience in working with the individual or information as a representative from their agency. The group will explore any and all options available and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Plans of Action and Accountability:

Upon a thorough review of all of the relevant details and options, the group may render one or more recommendations. The facilitator will document any recommendations as well as the rationale behind such recommendations. In addition, the group will clarify which party will be responsible for acting upon each part of any plan and document on the Change of Placement referral sheet who that party is. When a referral source presents a recommendation which is supported by the other agencies, additional supports and rationales for the recommendation will be noted and documented. Although unusual, if a consensus on a recommendation cannot be met, the impasse will be noted and those involved will “agree to disagree”. Additionally, any barriers to services will be identified, explored, documented and passed on for review by the CCSI Tier II.

It should be pointed out that any authority the subcommittee may have is derived from those supervisors and administrators present to represent and supervise their own agencies, not inherent in the subcommittee itself. Another point to remember is that the Change of Placement Subcommittee **makes recommendations, not decisions!** Final authority on any decision remains with those agencies or courts originally charged with making such a decision. The subcommittee’s purpose is for those involved in having to make placement decisions to make better, more informed decisions through collaboration.

Confidentiality:

The members of this committee are bound to maintain the highest standards of confidentiality defined by law (HIPAA 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164; and 42 CFR, Section 2), and are not to disclose information that identifies me, my child or my family personally, outside of the Change of Placement Committee review process. Each referral will be accompanied by a signed copy of the Release Authorization to the Franklin County Change of Placement Committee (see attached).

Recommendations to the Court:

In the event that the group feels strongly enough about a recommendation, the Change of Placement Committee can and has made recommendations to several judges and justices as a body. Such recommendations have been very well received and offer a judge a recommendation which is supported by a wide array of community services, not just one agency. The process for making a recommendation to the court will be that the COP facilitator will draw up a letter to the judge/justice that outlines the groups recommendation with a detailed explanation of the rationale behind this particular recommendation. The recommendation will be noted to be either a unanimous or majority opinion of the group. In the event that it represents a majority opinion, any opposing views will also be documented in the letter to the court with the rationale and agency presenting the minority, dissenting opinion. The facilitator will have the letter reviewed and signed off on by as many members present at the Change of Placement Committee as is possible in the time constraints available prior to the court date.

Oversight and Accountability of the Subcommittee:

The Subcommittee facilitator will prepare a summary of each child reviewed at each meeting and submit a copy to the SPOA/CCSI Coordinator. The original referrals and documentation of each case review will be maintained in the office of the Subcommittee facilitator. The CCSI Tier II reviews all activity and recommendations of the COP Subcommittee and can offer additional recommendations. Any barriers to services which are identified will be specifically addressed by CCSI TIER II, with referral on to TIER III as appropriate.

Prepared by: Alexander H. Logie on 11/5/02, revised 7/9/03