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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |
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Transmittal No: 94 LCM-93

Date: August 2, 1994

Division: Services and
Community Development

Office of Housing and
Adult Services

Office of Field
Operations

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Consolidated Services Planning

ATTACHMENTS: None

The purpose of this LCM is to update Commissioners and their staff on Consolidated Services Planning for the multi-year cycle commencing in 1995. While the Consolidated Services Planning process has been an important component of ongoing agenda and strategy setting for over a decade, it was also apparent that the structure and purpose of the planning process required revisions if it were to continue to be a useful tool. Many of you and your staff have provided important insight and guidance through surveys, regional discussions and meetings sponsored by NYPWA as the Department reviewed current planning guidelines. What we heard can be easily summarized:

- o Simplify the paperwork;
- o Distinguish State/local planning partnership from State auditing;
- o Allow social services districts to plan around issues of importance;
- o Provide flexibility in encouraging public participation; and,
- o State leadership and priority setting must be proactive and forward thinking.

As you know, the Department proposed legislation that reflected these messages. That legislation was not acted upon this session. Nonetheless, we have addressed these goals to the greatest extent possible within current statutory constraints. We will soon be issuing planning guidelines. However, so as not to hinder local planning activities, this LCM outlines the major characteristics of the new planning process. We strongly encourage you to use this information to initiate or bolster your local efforts to develop a multi-year Consolidated Services Plan.

The feedback provided by districts resulted in the following guideposts for revising Consolidated Services Planning:

- o Elevate and simplify the purpose of the plan to being a broad direction setting process that brings together a cross section of the community.
- o Construct the Consolidated Services Planning process so that it serves as an integral component of New York State's planning efforts under Title IV-B of the Social Security Act.
- o Create links across other major aspects of the mission shared by the Department and its local partners.
- o A State supervised/ county administered system of services is only successful when there is a clarity of mission and desired statewide direction, and a shared commitment and understanding of this mission and direction at the State and county levels.

Goals and Outcomes:

These guideposts dictate a movement away from planning that centers around "process" and activities in discrete service areas and replaces it with a comprehensive assessment and a cohesive plan for how services and other State and local actions can further the shared State/ local mission. Therefore, the organizing feature of the Consolidated Services Planning process is no longer service types, but rather, a finite set of goal statements that offer a statewide vision and direction for family, children and adult services and the basis for the establishment of county-developed measurable outcomes. The goal statements provide a strong focus for planning, yet are purposely broad enough to encompass all of the services for which the district is responsible and, allow a county to define its unique issues/ challenges within the goals. The goal statements listed in this memo emerged from federal and State law and policy, the numerous voices heard through the community visioning process supported through Families for Kids ASAP and direct consultation with social services districts during the development of the planning guidelines.

Local goals and activities for each service type will not be required, as has been the case in previous years. Instead, the social services district will be required to decide how various services should be strengthened, developed or maintained in order to increase the county's ability to reach the goal and the county-developed outcome measure. These deliberations are to be conducted in consultation with the community and with the support of Department staff. Starting from goals and outcomes, the social services district has the challenge and flexibility to assess and build on its current capacity to achieve these outcomes for: the general population; specific sub-populations; ethnic and cultural groups; age groups; and/or, geographic communities.

The goal statements that will shape this planning cycle represent an interim stage in the development of a set of State-level measurable outcomes for assessing Statewide efforts to strengthen and support the families, children and adults of New York State. Over the next year, the Department will be developing a multi-year plan in accordance with the provisions of Title IV-B

of the Social Security Act. The Department, in describing to the federal Department of Health and Human Services its proposed approach to Title IV-B planning, highlighted the role of Consolidated Services Planning in refining the goals and establishing measurable outcomes to which New York State will commit itself in its Title IV-B plan. Therefore, the more detailed outcomes that counties develop in response to the State Goal Statements and present in their Consolidated Services Plans, along with input received through other State-level planning activities, will significantly shape New York State's Title IV-B Plan. This should not be interpreted to mean that counties will be required to amend their plans over the next year to reflect any refinements to the State goals and outcomes. Rather, at the State and county level, the refined goals and outcome statements will provide greater capacity to assess our progress.

The goal statements around which counties are asked to initiate their Consolidated Services Plan are as follows:

FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES

FAMILIES, INCLUDING NUCLEAR, EXTENDED AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES WILL BE STRENGTHENED AND SUPPORTED IN RAISING AND NURTURING THEIR CHILDREN, IN ENSURING THEIR CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS TO THEIR HERITAGE; AND IN PLANNING FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE.

CHILDREN WHO ARE REMOVED FROM THEIR BIRTH FAMILIES WILL BE ENSURED STABILITY, CONTINUITY AND AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE, BOTH CHILD AND ADULT, WILL BE AFFORDED THE SAFETY AND SUPPORT NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY (ADULT), AND/ OR TO ENSURE THEIR CONTINUED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (CHILD).

ADOLESCENTS IN FOSTER CARE AND PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENS IN RECEIPT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE WILL DEVELOP THE SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS NECESSARY FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

ADULT SERVICES

IMPAIRED ADULTS WHO ARE ABUSED, NEGLECTED OR EXPLOITED BY OTHERS, WILL BE IDENTIFIED, HAVE THEIR SITUATION THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED, AND BE PROTECTED.

IMPAIRED ADULTS WHO ARE AT RISK OF HARM; UNABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS ON THEIR OWN BEHALF; AND REFUSE NECESSARY SERVICES, WILL BE ASSESSED AND SERVED PURSUANT TO THE APPROPRIATE LEGAL INTERVENTION.

THE MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NEEDS OF IMPAIRED ADULTS WILL BE THOROUGHLY ASSESSED TO ASSURE THAT APPROPRIATE SERVICES PLANS ARE DEVELOPED.

ADULTS WHO ARE UNABLE TO LIVE ON THEIR OWN WILL BE PLACED IN APPROPRIATE RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES INCLUDING SMALL HOME-LIKE SETTINGS.

Assessing Community Strengths and Needs:

The planning guidelines will contain technical assistance on how a community might approach assessing its needs and service delivery system in relationship to each of the goal statements. Guidance will be offered on useful measures within Department-generated data, such as the Child Care Review System (CCRS) and Management and Analysis Profiles (MAPS). In addition, the guidelines will provide suggestions concerning locally derived statistical and anecdotal data, including consultation with clients, community members and service providers.

The written guidelines are only one aspect of State assistance in the planning process. The Services and Community Development Regional Offices and the Office of Housing and Adult Services are essential resources for local planning. Services and Community Development Regional staff will be contacting social services districts to provide assistance in analyzing State-generated data and clarifying other issues and concerns relevant to the Family and Children Services goals and planning process. Adult Services staff will be available to social services districts to provide similar supports related to the Adult Services goals.

Please note that these goal statements and data indicators that will be described in the guidelines are designed to spur broad assessments of progress. Through a shift towards goals and measurable outcomes, the Department is not seeking to diminish the importance of individual case decisions. For example, in articulating outcomes related to keeping families together, or lessening the length of foster care stays, the Department is NOT inferring that any and all decisions to remove a child from an unsafe environment, or to maintain a child in care beyond some average time period are inappropriate. To the contrary, the Department is seeking to provide direction and norms for our work, and thus move, over time, towards lessening the level of and emphasis on procedural mandates. Thus, the district, and ultimately, the case worker is empowered, and skilled enough to make the most appropriate decision in each case in front of him or her.

Development of a Plan of Action:

The social services district, based on its needs assessment, will develop: county-specific outcomes; measurable indicators that they will use to monitor their progress; and strategies that strengthen its ability to reach these outcomes. The county-specific outcomes, like the State goals, should not be organized along program lines. Rather, for a county to enhance outcomes in a particular area, it will need to link services into a meaningful strategy. For example, an outcome related to increasing the level of safety of children within their families might require strategies that crosswalk preventive, child protective, and domestic violence activities.

Shaping an Effective State Response:

For a social services district to commit to outcomes, it must have the necessary State support. Part of the plan must be dedicated to thinking through and requesting State support in the areas of technical assistance, waivers, training and other state interventions. Therefore, social services districts will be asked to address two new questions in describing their response to each outcome statement. First, the social services districts will be asked to identify specific State actions and/or support that will be necessary for the social services district to achieve its outcomes. For example, the district may request assistance in constructing the ability to track a particular indicator. Or, the social services district may require a regulatory waiver in order to establish a proposed program. Or, the social services district may need technical assistance or information on others who have already developed a particular program model. The information will shape regional and central office actions on behalf of the county. In addition, a state-wide analysis of these issues will figure prominently in the State's Title IV-B plan.

The second question will focus on training. Districts will be asked to provide the Department an assessment of the kinds and level of training support that will be needed to implement proposed strategies. For example, if the county is predicting a significant increase in youth coming into care who are HIV+, or is planning to merge the functions of currently distinct staff units over the next two years, the social services district may have related training needs which will need to be met. We seek to promote and strengthen the link between services planning and staff development planning. We strongly encourage the involvement of your staff development coordinator in this process. Department staff from the Office of Human Resource Development are available to assist social services districts in structuring an in-depth training needs assessment. This reference in the plan will not serve as an application for specific training programs, but rather, will give social services districts a more integrated mechanism for defining trends and shaping training priorities for subsequent year(s). It will augment information gathered by the Office of Human Resource Development through other aspects of the training needs assessment process.

Community Involvement:

The intent of community involvement or public participation is to provide broad-based information and perspective to the development of the plan. The public hearing continues to be a required part of the process. Social services districts are encouraged to structure and time the hearing to be of maximum benefit to planning. This might include structuring the public hearing as an opportunity for reviewing data during the initial stages of the needs assessment process, or as validly, using it as an opportunity to engage the community in a discussion on the local implications of the State Goal Statements. Districts are also encouraged to use alternative methods and structures for conducting the public hearing. For example, a radio call in show featuring the commissioner and key staff discussing the plan and taking phone calls might reach more community residents than a traditional public hearing.

Consultation and community involvement in the plan's development should not be limited to a single public hearing. Social services districts can gain much from the depth of knowledge available through consultation with all relevant constituents, including the public and private service provider community, other community representatives and the actual consumers of service. As you are aware, the community visioning process conducted as part of the Families for Kids ASAP initiative proved to be a powerful tool for gathering input from consumers and providers alike. Technical assistance on implementing such approaches locally will also be included in the guidelines. We encourage social services districts to tailor community involvement approaches to their local community. For example, developing a liaison with the Community Mental Health Board may be the most effective mechanism for ensuring an effective assessment of the mental health and substance abuse services available to the CPS and child welfare system. Similarly, focus groups or surveys of parents receiving preventive services may inform future program development efforts.

In addition to activities held during plan preparation, it is as important for social services districts to credit themselves for consultation and cross-agency involvement that occurs year-round. For example, if representatives of the social services district serve on an interagency task force on pre-schoolers with handicapping conditions, relevant discussions and recommendations of this group can and should be viewed as part of the needs assessment/ community involvement aspect of the Consolidated Services Plan. Similarly, if a Youth Bureau-sponsored survey of teens contains valuable information for a county looking to reduce the number of placements through the family court, reflecting these findings within the plan is not only appropriate, it strengthens the county's capacity to collaborate in identifying and solving problems. In the area of Protective Services for Adults and other Adult Services, social services districts are strongly encouraged to use information obtained at Inter-Agency Task Force or Advisory Committee meetings, as well as from other interagency consultation mechanisms, in the development of their plan objectives in response to the aforementioned Adult Services Goal Statements. The ongoing interagency consultation process should also be used in the implementation and evaluation of a district's outcomes and strategies.

The plan document must contain documentation of the public hearing and a brief summary of what other mechanisms were used for gathering public input. However, the major aspect of the community involvement section should be a description of activities the district is planning for the remainder of the planning cycle. Thus, the State's review of the plan can be prospective. Of even greater import, the emphasis on future opportunities for input allows the community stakeholders to anticipate and ready themselves for ways that they might have to continue to stay involved.

Clearly, removing the artificial structure around the planning process does not diminish the effort and commitment required for effective planning. It simply allows that effort to be targeted to meaningful activity rather than making sure that regulatory requirements and forms are properly adhered to. In that vein, you will note the following additional changes and/ or deletions in the planning guidelines:

- o The county may set the length of its multi-year cycle at 2, 3, or 4 years. For any number of reasons, a county may benefit from having flexibility in the time period for which the plan will be in effect.
- o The district may specify its submission and effective dates within a six month window. Historically, plans have been submitted in October to be effective the following January. Counties will now be able to submit plans anytime between October and March, with an effective date three months after submission. Districts will be required to notify the Department if they are electing a submission date other than October. You are strongly encouraged to consult with your Services and Community Development Regional Office in establishing an alternative submission date so that regional technical assistance resources can be maximized.
- o The Organizational Chart is not required. Instead, you must ensure that the organizational chart (Org-Plus) submitted to the Division of Quality Assurance and Audit for the Random Moment Survey process is current.
- o A district may seek a waiver pursuant to 18NYCRR407.11 to the requirement to submit estimates of clients to be served in each of the Title XX services. The planning guidelines will include a pre-print of a waiver request. It is expected that the counties will address assessment of service capacity and need within the context of the Outcome Statements. The detail called for in previous plan guidelines responded to the State's need to report such data to the federal Department of Health and Human Services. The Department is developing a more efficient mechanism for establishing Statewide estimate using automated data systems.
- o The district will be required to submit a simplified budget overview designed to focus on proposed increases and decreases in expenditures. The previous budget format required social services districts to estimate expenditures across numerous funding streams. Given the automated claiming procedures employed by the State, requiring the social services districts to engage in this process is unnecessary and often confusing.
- o The application for Enhanced Funding for Child Protective Pre-Determination Services has been separated from the planning process. A simple application form documenting the county's eligibility for these funds has been developed and will be included in the guidelines. However, the county will be free to submit this form at any point in the year that it seeks to document its compliance and establish funding eligibility. This precludes a delay in overall plan submission or approval while the county is making efforts to reach compliance. It also eliminates the need for a formal plan amendment procedure if you seek to establish compliance after your plan has been approved.
- o Appendix E, Program Assurances has been eliminated. Necessary Program Assurances not already addressed by the Legal Assurances have been added to the Legal Assurances. Unlike the Program Assurance form, the district need not sign nor provide any additional information on the legal assurance form. It need only be submitted with the plan.

- o Specific documentation and assurances are no longer required in the plan in order to enter into a Public Purchase contract for preventive services. If a county is planning to initiate such a contract, it should be reflected in its proposed strategies. Therefore, the only additional action the district must take will be to notify the Services and Community Development Regional Office in writing of its intent to enter into such a contract. It will be incumbent upon the Regional Office to notify the county of any concerns. However, the county will not be required to wait for formal State approval before executing the contract.

The planning guidelines will provide additional detail on these and other aspects of the planning process. However, we are hopeful that these highlights, along with consultation with staff from Services and Community Development Regional Offices and the Office of Housing and Adult Services, provide you with sufficient information and support to initiate a meaningful planning process. We ask you to share this memorandum with your Director of Services, Planning Coordinator and other personnel involved in the planning process. If you have specific questions about this issuance, you may also contact Suzanne Zafonte Sennett (AW1160) at 518-474-9574.

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