

INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Introduced by the Secretary of Public Welfare in a bulletin dated May 21, 2004, the Integrated Children's Services Plan is a joint collaboration between the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs. The intent is that all child-serving systems will plan together to create a system that allows children to access all appropriate services regardless of what "door" the child may initially enter. In order to achieve this collaboration, counties were to submit an integrated children's services plan in conjunction with the Needs-Based Plan and Budget process.

With a priority on integrating children's services, this planning effort provides counties with an opportunity to take a comprehensive approach to serving children, birth to twenty-one years of age, and their families, through programs that focus on long term prevention, early intervention, and services that support family stability, child safety, and healthy child development. Counties are given the opportunity to

- establish a local vision for children and family services and supports;
- identify planning partners, including families and adolescents engaged in the system;
- highlight current strengths of the local system; and
- identify local, state, or federal regulatory or fiscal barriers that limit the ability to operationalize the vision.

The Commonwealth intends for counties to move to a process of targeting and tracking desired outcomes and appropriate performance measures that are also consistent with federal and state outcome measures. The motivation for tracking outcomes is to evaluate the result of programs to ensure that services produce better results for children and their families.

The approach recommended is for counties to develop a planning team which is composed of representatives of the community who reflect the populations served, including the following: Children and Youth, MH/MR and D&A advisory committees; school districts and Intermediate Units; Juvenile and Family Court Judges and local law enforcement; juvenile probation offices and juvenile detention center directors; agency caseworkers and supervisors; private agencies under contract with the county; child and family advocates; foster and adoptive parents; and families, children and adolescents receiving services from all of the agencies whose services are covered by the plan. The planning team was to be involved from the outset in the identification of the needs for service, in reviewing the systems' capacity to deliver the needed services, and in determining the needs for fiscal resources.

The submission date for the first county integrated services plans was August 15, 2004. The plans were intended to meet the requirement of the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, the Office of Mental Retardation and the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs. The Office of Children, Youth and Families also recognized the integrated plans, but also required additional information to meet their legally mandated Children and Youth Needs Based Plan commitments. Counties were to provide the level of detailed information necessary to

demonstrate that an initial plan has begun the process of informing the development of a seamless service system for children.

The coordination of integrated planning is being led by the Department of Public Welfare's Deputy Secretaries from the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse and the Office of Children, Youth and Families. Deputy Secretaries and staff from the Office of Mental Retardation, the Office of Medical Assistance, the Office of Income Maintenance, and the Department of Health are also integrally involved.