

Researchers develop tool to help child welfare providers analyze data

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University of Kansas researchers have developed a web-based tool that will help child welfare agencies across the country meet periodic federal case level reviews and collect other qualitative data that will help improve services to children and families.

The Case Review Tool is an outgrowth of the Results Oriented Management, known as ROM, reporting system developed by the Center for Children & Families in the School of Social Welfare, now in use in a dozen states. This new tool being made available will enable agencies to collect and analyze qualitative data to ensure they are achieving quality improvement goals.

"There's not always an easy yes-or-no answer to questions on achieving outcomes or meeting practice objectives in [child welfare](#)," said Terry Moore, project director in the Center for Children & Families. "Through a rigorous case review process, agencies can obtain more in-depth answers to these questions by reading case files and interviewing persons involved in a child's case. We've developed a tool that helps with recording and analyzing these data. It will enable states to gather the data federal reviewers are looking for, but it's not just limited to those areas."

The Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducts the Child and Family Services Review every three to five years. Child welfare agencies are required to provide data in a number of areas to ensure they are properly providing safety, permanency and well-being for children and families. However, agencies

often want to perform self-reviews on a more frequent basis to determine their strengths and weaknesses as well as gain insight on the children they serve.

The ROM Case Review Tool incorporates questions from the federal review process and automates scoring. More importantly, the new tool is adaptable so that states can add review questions or conduct separate reviews on other outcomes or practices specific to that agency. For example, the state of New York had reviewers answer questions about the use of family meetings to learn more about this practice area. For the formal federal review, states are now allowed to upload their data directly to the federal system.

At the start of a review process, data can be uploaded into the tool from an agency's database to avoid double entry and conflicting data. Then staff conduct reviews and enter case-specific information remotely in the web-based application. Such information can include, for example, whether children in foster care are placed with siblings if possible. Other features of the software help state agencies manage the review process from sample selection to tracking the progress of reviews underway.

When a review cycle is completed, reports are provided to appropriate parties and stakeholders using the ROM Reports online reporting system. Data are provided in graphs and tables that enable the user to view data dynamically such as looking at trends over time and comparing results of administrative regions or other variables such as child characteristics such as age, race and others.

Child welfare agencies interested in using the Case Review Tool can contact Terry Moore at 785-864-8938.

The project was a combination of the research interest in analyzing data and allowing states to continually improve their services.

"We always knew, from a research perspective, that it's best to have both quantitative and qualitative data available," Moore said. "It's always been our goal to provide the best data possible to support continuous quality improvement efforts for achieving better outcomes for children and families."

Provided by University of Kansas

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