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Children & Families

Major Themes
Commissioner Susan Hamilton
10/5/26

Safety Practice

- Weekly Safety Practice Meetings commenced with the Commissioner, Executive Team and key Senior Leaders across practice areas.
- Training enhancements and coaching will reinforce and expand the knowledge and application of the ABCD Child Safety Practice Model and Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools.
- Further operationalize these Fundamental Safety Practice Principles in our practice:
  - Children's voices must be heard, believed and integrated into our assessments and decisions throughout our involvement with families and at all decision-making points.
  - Quality and timely visitation with children, parents, household members and caregivers is essential to the assessment process and our safety practice.
  - Quality and timely in-person supervision must be prioritized and include review and documentation of the ABCD Child Safety Practice Model, Structured Decision-Making tools and the Intake Practice Guide for intake cases.
  - Decisions and assessments must integrate all CT and out-of-state family history regardless of whether the information stems from an accepted or non-accepted report, a Family Assessment Response (FAR) or a substantiated or unsubstantiated investigation.
  - Ongoing review of our practice at all levels must be driven and informed by data during supervision to identify areas of strength that can be replicated and areas in need of targeted improvement at the individual, unit, office and agency-wide level.
  - A strategic and timely multidisciplinary and systemic approach to our work, including internal and external partners, is critical to accomplishing improved outcomes for the children and families we serve.

Safety Practice Continued…

- The Academy for Workforce Development (AWD) is finalizing the training requirements for all staff and developing a training series designed to enhance the application of the ABCD paradigm, use of discussion guides and practice profiles.
- For newly hired staff, an online simulated training course entitled "Little Steps Big Decisions" was developed. Staff will apply safety and risk concepts to a case scenario using the Structured Decision Making tools.
- Evident Change, the SDM model developers, has been engaged to review the current SDM tools and ensure fidelity to the model through training, validation and coaching.
- To increase system level accountability, Agency leaders are required to report quarterly progress on a set number of safety-related key performance indicators through the Quality Improvement Leadership Team (QuILT).

Supervision

- In-person supervision shall be required at all levels. Prioritizing in- person supervision is a fundamental step to improving safety practice.
- Supervisory expectations and templates for Intake assignments, commencement, and initial case assignments in Family Services have been developed and shall be used to provide clarity of focus and prioritize the safety factors that must be considered and documented as an integral component of a thorough assessment.
- Statewide Director of Child Safety Practice and Performance has implemented a coaching model to support staff and enhance supervisory oversight of our safety practice.
- The four functions of supervision must be incorporated as outlined in policy and the Supervision Practice Guide:
    - Ensuring the quality of services provided
    - Ensuring that administrative tasks are completed accurately and in a timely way
    - Providing support to employees in their jobs as they face work-related challenges
    - Helping employees to grow and develop their skills.
- Qualitative review processes have been enhanced and prioritized to assess the efficacy of these targeted strategies.

Foster Care

- The entire Foster Care Division was assessed leading to prioritization of messaging, structural realignments, performance expectations, provider contracts being amended and greater collaboration with community providers.
- Kinship remains the priority placement for youth in our care and custody. Supplies will be delivered to each Area Office in October, such as cribs, diapers, air mattresses and other items to facilitate the emergency placement of children into Kinship homes.
- Families will be provided a rate increase and new legislation will be implemented to provide families with an emergency stipend upon placement.
- The "Pipeline to Licensing" has been streamlined creating efficiencies with the goal of a family being licensed 90 days from attending an Informational Session.
- In partnership with the Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Connecticut DCF has engaged in the *"Home for Every Child"* Child Welfare initiative aimed at achieving a 1:1 ratio of licensed foster homes to children in foster care.
- Pre-licensing training has been made more efficient for Kin, CORE and FFT-FC families based on national standards.
- Consistent meetings have been held with all FFT-FC agencies, Clinical Behavioral Health staff and the Foster Care Division to realign the system.

Caseload Size and Workload

- New caseload sizes were implemented on 8/7/25, reducing the number of families that staff are expected to serve.
- Over the last six months, caseloads have started to be lowered, and it is believed that trend will continue with additional attention and support.
- Collaboration has taken place with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to obtain approval to refill 35 Social Worker hired vacancies this Fall, and more to come.
- A Workload Reduction Advisory Group has been established and DCF has agreed to become a pilot site for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) multi-state outcomes-based workload standards project. The goal of the project over the next three years is to develop a scalable national model to align workforce capacity with the complexity of each case, providing the worker with the tools and time they need to achieve desired outcomes.
- A commitment has been made, with actions already taking place, redirecting certain duties from Social Workers that can be done by other members of the team as efficiency across systems and divisions are being developed and implemented.

Staff Support and Retention

- A commitment has been made, with actions already taking place, redirecting certain duties from Social Workers that can be done by other members of the team.
- A statewide Recruitment and Retention Workgroup has been established to identify key strategies to reduce turnover and ensure sufficient staffing. The primary goal of the workgroup is to streamline the recruitment and onboarding process for frontline Social Workers and operationalize the workload reduction strategies identified by CPS staff and raised in the Town Halls.
- In an effort to increase the retention of newly hired Social Workers, the Trainees are participating in a support group entitled, "Resilient Beginnings."
- Collaboration is taking place with the Office of Policy and Management and Human Resources to revise the continuous hiring plan for Social Workers and Social Work Supervisors.
- Approval to refill of all vacant, allocated Social Work Case Aide positions has been achieved.
- Activities are underway to fill all Clerical vacancies. A comprehensive analysis of area office support staffing was conducted to develop a consistent plan for Clerical personnel at various levels—including Office Supervisor, Unit Supervisor, Secretaries, and Office Assistants.

Resources

- The service system infrastructure was revised to include a data-driven performance management process with emphasis on how DCF evaluates the quality of services and defines success. More specifically, the use of data has been enhanced to inform resource allocation decisions to address waitlist challenges and timely access to services.
- The Strategic Performance & Innovation (SPI) Division has been established to drive data-informed service delivery. The division collaborates closely with program leads, providers and partner agencies, and has plans to launch a new website that will include a Service Directory and the Mental Health Service | AIM Tool to ensure staff have easy access to service information, organized by Region and Provider.
- A long-term plan for the Provider Information Exchange (PIE) and accessible data dashboards to be established.
- Strengthened oversight has taken place of program expenditures and fluid slot allocations.
- Increased data driven support has informed procurement decisions.

Continued Assessment of and Enhancements to the Behavioral Health System

- Urgent Crisis Centers and the Sub-acute Stabilization Centers remain closely monitored as they addressed a glaring gap that existed in the crisis continuum.
- Plans are underway to open an Urgent Crisis Center in Stamford. A second Sub-Acute Stabilization Center was opened in Eastern Connecticut.
- The Department also supported 24/7 mobile crisis services using ARPA funds that are now budgeted with state funds.
- Youth in STTAR homes awaiting a higher level of care continue to benefit from a certain number of expedited Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) admission slots.
- Recently developed Intensive Transitional Treatment Centers (ITTC) now expedite a youth's access to a higher level of treatment support.
- An updated Connecticut Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)Plan to include additional Evidenced Based Programs will be submitted.
- The State transitioned the operations of the Albert J. Solnit Center- South Campus to UConn Health and it is now known as Solnit/John Dempsey Hospital.

CT-KIND

- Continued implementation of the new CCWIS database occurred throughout the year.
- Staff at all levels and across Divisions engaged in the new system, took part in additional training, provided feedback and supported each other to navigate the challenges the implementation presented, while at the same time, conducting their normal course of duties and responsibilities.
- Extensive collaboration occurred between DCF, DAS BITs and contracted providers to identify obstacles, provide systematic fixes and establish enhancements to the system.

Town Hall Feedback

- In-Person Town Hall meetings took place in each Area Office, Facility and Division within the Department.
- The following themes were expressed by staff and have already or are currently being addressed:
    - Workforce Wellbeing
    - Workload and Caseload Capacity
    - CT-KIND
    - Foster Care Resources
    - Services and Supports
    - Fiscal Support and Enhancements
    - Facilities and Work Environment

Updated Policies Developed Addressing Major Themes in Our Work

- August 2025 - Case Planning Overview
- February 2026 - Missing from Care Policy
- July 2026 - Purposeful Visitation and Contact Standards
- July - 2026 - Text Communication with Clients
- September 2026 - Notification to Court of Child's Placement Status
- October 2026 - Denial of Licensure
- October 2026 - 14 Day Out of State Notification
- October 2026 - Notification from Parole/Probation
- October 2026 - Assignment of Investigation Upon 3rd Report Within a Year

New Statutes Impacting DCF

- Foster Parent Stipend Increase.
- Foster Parent Emergency Placement Stipend.
- Establishment of the Child Welfare Oversight Committee.
- Collaborate with institutions of higher education to establish a prospective social worker internship program.
- Establish a postsecondary education grant program for identified youth.
- Establishment of a first-year Social Worker Mentorship program.
- Establishment of a public, online dashboard to provide real-time information on the Department's volume of work and performance.
- Conduct a joint study with the Office of the Child Advocate to ensure the immediate removal a child from an out-of-home placement made by DCF if they are victim of physical or sexual assault in that placement.
- Personal emergency communication devices for DCF staff.

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SAC 10/5/26
Data Collection and Utilization

Types of Data

Quantitative Data: How much did we do and did we do it on time.

CT KIND

Tableau Reports

Qualitative Data: How well did we do, how well are we adhering to agency policy and practice standards.

Various qualitative case reviews done in all four divisions under the bureau.

Four Quality Improvement Divisions, as well as quality improvement for systems

- Special Qualitative Review-critical case events
- Data and reporting-federal report and state reports, agency data
- Quality Improvement- qualitative reviews done for cases in the area office as well as oversees quality improvement within the office
- Administrative Case Reviews-treatment plan/permanency plan reviews for children in care.
- Systems Program Directors and Program Leads engaged in process of appraisal of programs.

Examples of Other types of Reviews

- Ad Hoc Reviews conducted at the request of the Commissioner or Executive Team
- Audits
- Child Advocate
- Child and Family Services, Children's Bureau Analysis

Qualitative Review levels

- Record Read only-In Home, DRS (Differential Response), Exceptional Circumstance
- Interview and record read, including internal and external –Administrative Case Review, Special Qualitative Review, Child and Family Services Review

Quality Improvement Division Report Dissemination Schedule- for Review & Follow up

Quarterly –Quantitative

- Quarterly Statewide QI Report

Bi-annually-Qualitative

- Differential Response (DRS) Case Review Report: Summary report based on review of 492 cases for 6-month PUR.
- In-Home Case Review Report: Summary report based on review of 312 cases for 6 month PUR.

The above reports are shared with QuILT, Executive Team, Careline, Foster Care Division, and Area Offices; the reports are also reviewed at local CQI meetings. During local CQI meetings, data specific to the office or region is reviewed and strengths and ANIs are discussed as well as strategies to improve performance as needed.

Statewide performance trends and strategy recommendations are discussed at the QuILT meetings.

Quality Improvement Division Data Dissemination Schedule- for Tracking the work

Weekly

- CT-KIND Reports:
  - CIP Missing from Care- NCMEC, CT-KIND and log
  - Case Weight Caseload report
- SharePoint Logs:
  - Safety Plan/ Alternative Caregiver Arrangement (ACA) log

Monthly

- CT-KIND Reports:
  - Monthly Supervisor Conference report- Ongoing services
  - Open DRS report
  - Current Children in Placement report
  - Data detail for IH and DRS case reviews (CQI raw data log)
- SharePoint Logs:
  - Completed DRS report.
  - Licensed Caregiver report- will transition to CT-KIND report

Case Alerts are sent to the CPS chain of command for cases with risk or safety concerns identified during the case review process.

All of the above are shared with CPS Chief and Area Office management; FCD receives reports as applicable.

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ACR (Administrative Case Review) Division Data/Report Dissemination Schedule

Review done at 60 days and every 180 to follow for children/youth in Department care.

Daily

- Administrative Case Review Instrument (ACRI) tools, emailed to Social Worker (SW) and Social Work Supervisor (SWS)
- Collaborative Team Meeting (CTM), emailed to SW, SWS and Program Supervisor (PS)
- Timely Case Plan need, emailed to SW, SWS and PS

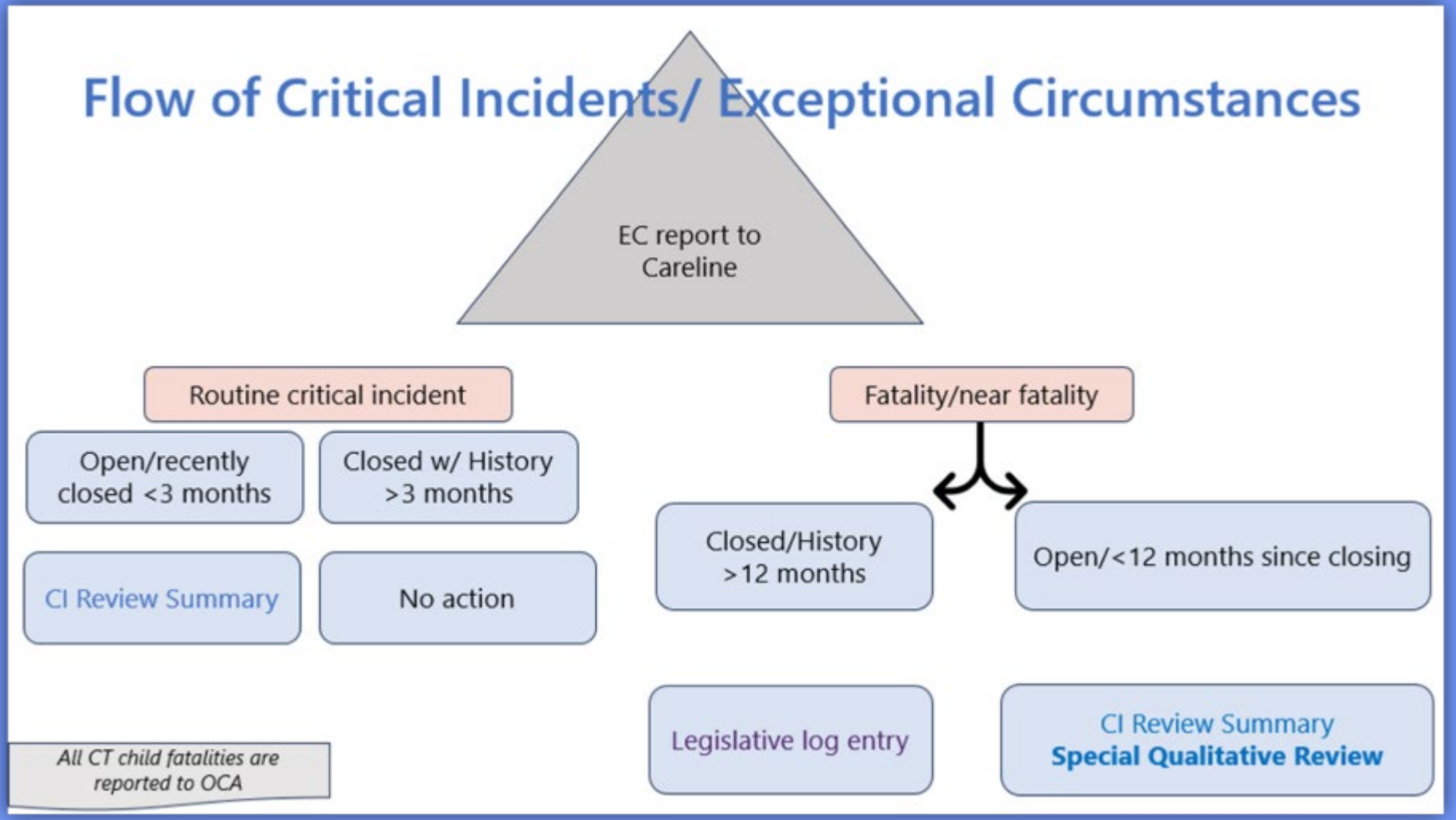
Monthly

- Timely Case Plan need data, to Office Director (OD)
- CTM Data, to OD
- Raw ACRI data detail, statewide
- Raw ACRI data summary, presentation at local CQI by ACR PS

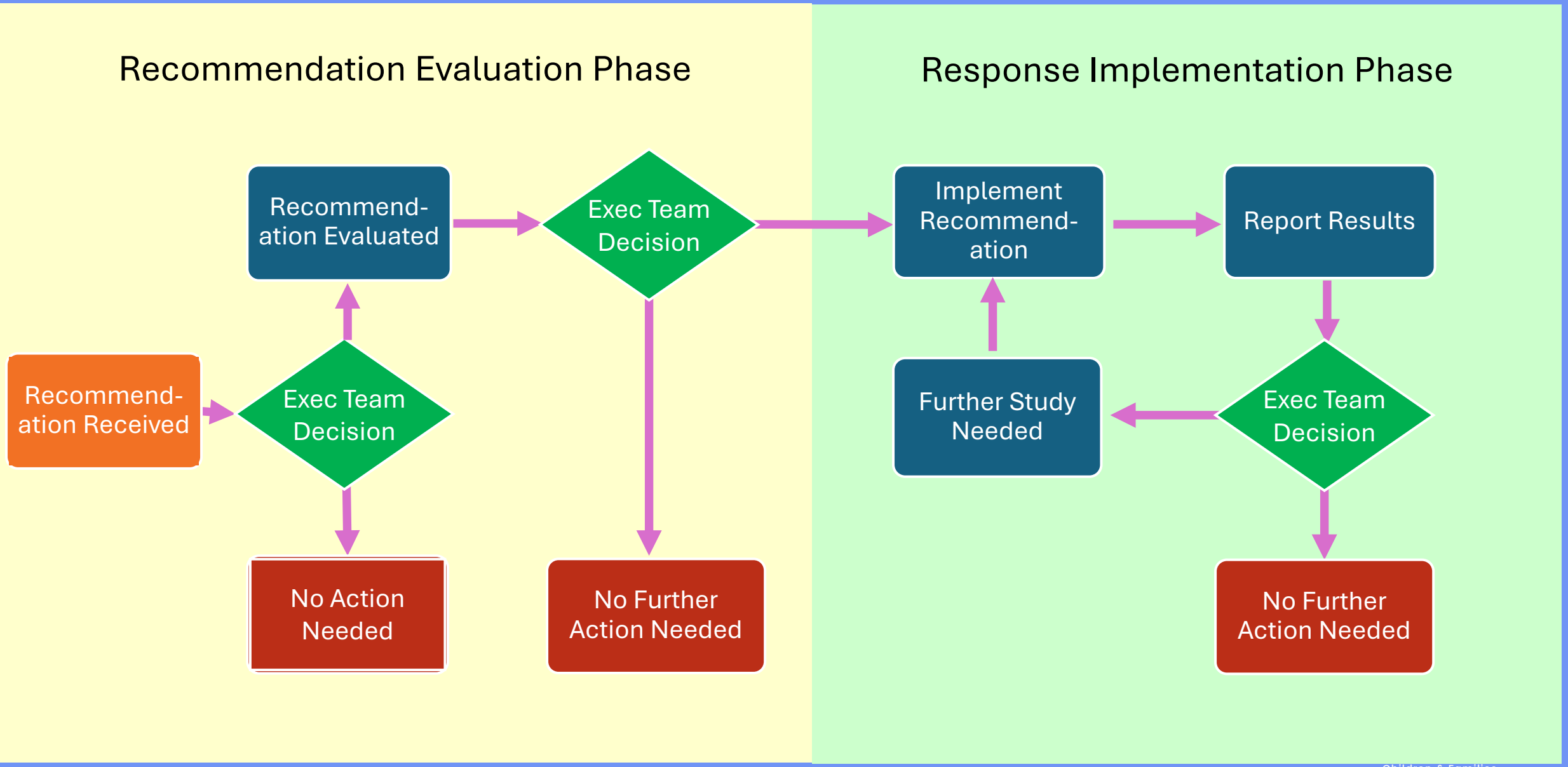
Quarterly

- Statewide Quarterly ACR report, to QuILT, Executive Team and Area Offices (AO's)
- Service Barriers by Region/AO report, to Systems Administrator
- Fatherhood Engagement Data, report, by Region/AO, to Director of Fatherhood Services

Exceptional Circumstances



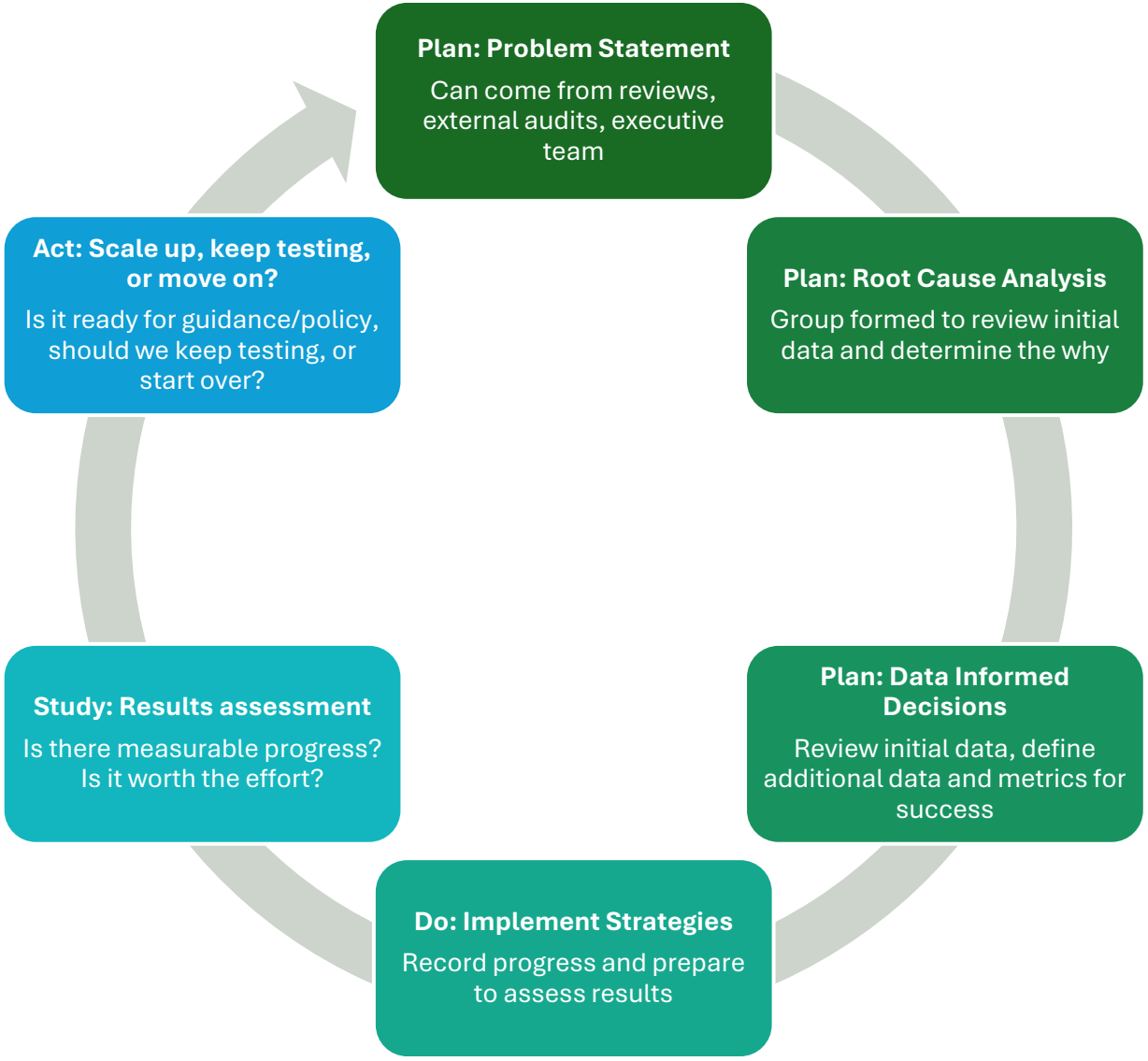
Recommendation Evaluation And Change Tracking (REACT) System

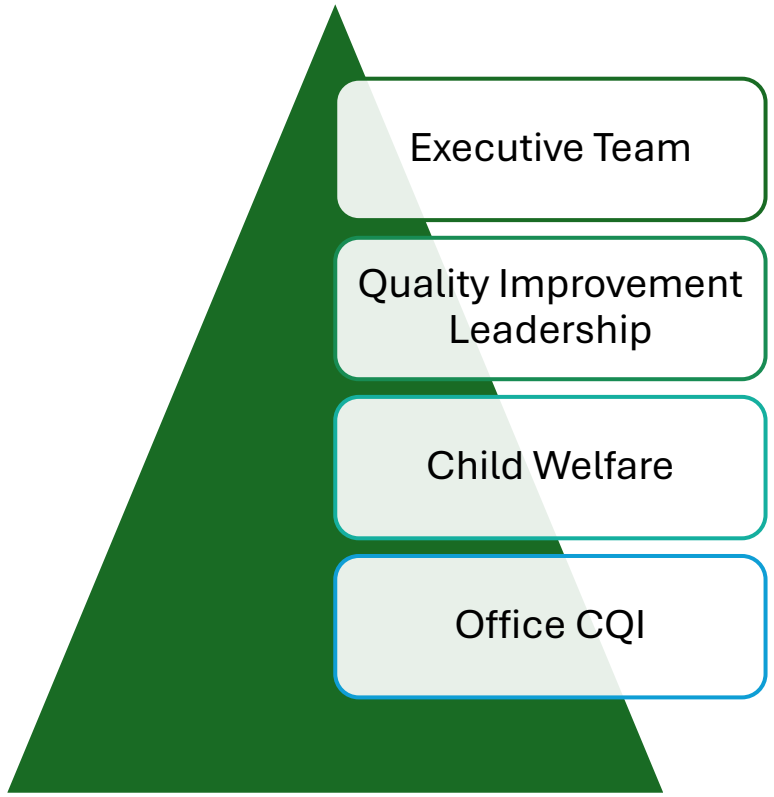


Recommendation Evaluation And Change Tracking (REACT) System

- Leadership
  - Executive Team identifies Recommendations that need evaluation and/or implementation activities begun
  - Executive Team reviews Recommendation evaluation decisions and approves proceeding with implementation when appropriate
  - Executive Team reviews implementation results and determines when to end tracking of the Recommendation
- Assigned Managers for Recommendation Evaluation
  - Evaluate the Recommendation for: alignment to mission/mandate, credibility, impact, cost/risk, equity, lived experience input, feasibility and sustainability
- Assigned Managers for Recommendation Implementation
  - Implement the Recommended change(s) and report back on progress, barriers and results
- Bureau of Continuous Quality Improvement
  - Maintains tracking documentation in the REACT system
  - Provides regular reports at QuILT and/or Executive Team meetings

STATEWIDE CQI CYCLE





Some Changes

We Prioritized Some Core Themes to develop additional strategies

- Supervision
- Quality Contact/Engagement/Safety Assessment
- Teaming
- Fatherhood data collection to improve transparency/engagement

Identification of Resource Needs

- Working to increase foster care resources
- Additional data collection on resource allocation/contracts

Additional Changes

Creating Consistency in Practice

- Identified Training gaps-increased mandatory training
- Communication/Memo's to provide clarification
- Policy bulletins updated and sent out

Transparency

- Public facing information/added multiple reports and merged pieces of the site
- Dashboard intentions-participated in workgroup and planning for build
- SQR Individual Reports

Current Reports Active in CT KIND

Working CT-KIND Reports:

Monthly Supervisor Case Conference Report: Statewide - Conference Held In Last 30 Days - Tableau Cloud (Ongoing-Family service)

Intake Supervisory Conference Report

Current Children in Placement Report | Salesforce

Open DRS Report | Salesforce

Work Load Report: Work Load Report - Tableau Cloud

Case Weight Caseload Report: Caseload Summary - Tableau Cloud

Caseload Utility Weighting Report: Caseload Utility Weighting Summary - Tableau Cloud

Licensed Caregivers Report: Licensed Caregivers Report Summary - Tableau Cloud

Released in process of testing:

Intake Summary Report: Intake Summary Report - Summary - Tableau Cloud

FAR Disposition Report: FAR Disposition - Tableau Cloud

Substantiation Rate Report | Salesforce

Reunification Report | Salesforce