

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

June 2, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND CHILDREN'S DIVISION

FROM: FREDERIC M. SIMMENS, DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S DIVISION

SUBJECT: CIRCUIT SELF-ASSESSMENT ACCREDITATION PROCESS

I am writing to provide additional information on the Governor's and legislature's inclusion of resources in the SFY-05 budget proposal to support our agency's movement toward statewide accreditation.

As you know, our organization has undergone numerous audits and reviews in recent years, including a Council on Accreditation for Children and Families (COA) Self Study and preliminary COA site visit as well as our recent federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). These reviews have revealed consistent themes, and we know what we do well and where we need to improve.

The work we do is among the most important and rewarding in public service. While I champion our efforts, I feel strongly our organization must be a learning organization continuously striving to improve. Over the last few years, many policies and programs have been implemented, improving the way we do business. The ongoing challenge is the consistent implementation of best practice in our day-to-day work with children and their families.

The state's fiscal crisis over the last few years has impeded our ability to function optimally, and yet, our staff have performed above and beyond the call of duty in serving Missouri's children and families. The creation of the Children's Division represented a clear recognition that children must be a priority for the state. Now, there is recognition that our division needs additional resources to effectively discharge our duty to protect children and support families along with our partners and other community stakeholders. Regardless of our financial situation, we have goals and benchmarks, which our agency will achieve.

National accreditation is not our only goal, but it is a laudable one and an important step for our organization. National accreditation is a process wherein an external, independent organization, which has established standards on the basis of best practice, assesses our policy and practice for compliance. It is important that we meet these nationally recognized standards of best practice, and with the support of the Governor, legislature and communities, we can achieve this goal circuit by circuit and ultimately as a state organization.

How Do We Begin? As most of you probably know, there are many areas which have been assessed in both the past COA and recent CFSR processes. Both of these processes began with a written self-assessment. Therefore, there is a need to have every circuit complete a preliminary self-assessment of their readiness to meet accreditation standards, PIP benchmarks and Division goals. This self assessment process will be included in our Program Improvement Plan (PIP) as a mechanism to attain program improvements and monitor results. While the PIP covers a two-year period, **Missouri will enter into a five-year process toward state accreditation.** Circuits are, most likely, in many different places along a continuum of preparedness based on many different factors. Therefore, we need to determine where circuits are on the continuum of readiness and to provide the technical assistance, support and resources circuits need to move forward.

My goal for the Children's Division is for every circuit to become accredited. **I am, therefore, requesting each circuit begin the self-assessment process.** This process begins with each circuit identifying their strengths and areas needing improvement. The self-assessment will be used to determine the circuit's ability to achieve readiness in the four phases of the accreditation process. For example, first phase circuits would need to be ready to meet accreditation standards within 12-14 months. The responsibility and lead for this process in each circuit will be the Circuit Managers/Metro Manager's designee. We encourage each Circuit Manager to engage all levels of staff and community partners to participate in the self-assessment process. The self-assessments will be reviewed by a team of central office, regional and field staff using additional criteria. A preliminary rollout plan for the next five years will then be developed.

There are three items you need to begin the self-assessment process: The Circuit Self-Assessment Instruction Sheet , Outcome and Demographic Information, the Circuit Self-Assessment Template and the Self-Scoring Tool. The Outcome and Demographic Information will be sent to each Circuit Manager. **The completed self assessment must be submitted to your Regional Manager/Metro Directors by August 5th, 2004.**

Technical Assistance will be provided in two manners, conference calls and email. The first conference call will be held June 14th, 2004. Circuit managers and regional administrators for Circuits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 43, and 45 will call (573) 751-9631 at 1:30 p.m. Circuits 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44 will call (573) 751-9631 at 3:30 p.m. The above schedule will be repeated on July 7th with the same time periods and call number. Technical assistance will also be available during the self assessment process. At any time you need assistance, you may email your requests to Ask.CD@dss.mo.gov. For example, if you are struggling with evaluating your circuit's data and you request technical assistance, someone who has particular expertise in this area will respond to you either by email or phone. Priority will be given to these email questions.

I commend each of you for your dedication, your daily commitment and your passion to do the very best work you can on behalf of Missouri's children and families. Thank you for your willingness to engage in this important endeavor and taking the next crucial step towards improving child welfare practice in Missouri.

NECESSARY ACTIONS:

Review memorandum with all Children's Division staff.

Circuit Managers/Metro Program Managers develop a work plan that engages all levels of staff along with appropriate community partners to complete the Circuit Self-Assessment.

Download the Circuit Self-Assessment Instruction Sheet , the Circuit Self-Assessment Template and the Self-Scoring Tool.

Mark your calendars with the appropriate time for your circuit to participate in the conference calls on June 14th and July 7th 2004.

Circuits Managers/Metro Program Managers submit self-assessment draft to your Regional Directors/Metro Directors by August 5, 2004.

Regional Directors/Metro Directors submit self assessment to State Office by August 9, 2004.

FS/RLP