

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Collaboratives in Identifying and Engaging Non-custodial Parents



BACKGROUND

Fourteen child welfare agencies sent teams comprised of child protective services (CPS) and/or youth justice professionals (YJ) and at least one supervisor to use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model to design and test changes to improve identifying, locating, contacting, and engaging non-custodial parents (NCPs) and/or non-custodial relatives during the agency's involvement with the family.

The benefits of identifying and engaging NCPs and NCP relatives include:

- improved information and/or resources for assessment, decision-making, and planning,
- increased natural supports for children/youth and families,
- enhanced child/youth well-being in identity and moral development and cultural connections, and
- increased likelihood that children/youth remain with family through facilitating timely permanence or placement with kin.

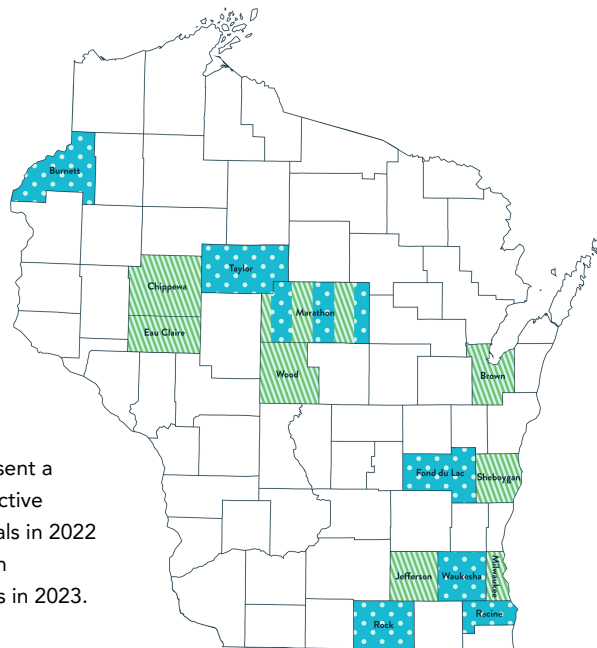
Participating agencies

Key

 2022 PDSA Teams

 2023 PDSA Teams

***NOTE:** Marathon sent a team of child protective services professionals in 2022 and a team of youth justice professionals in 2023.



MISSION



The mission of the PDSA Collaboratives on Identifying and Engaging Non-custodial Parents is to transform agency culture and practices to prioritize early, persistent, and continual efforts to identify, locate, contact, and engage non-custodial parents during the agency's involvement with the family.

Collaborative definition of non-custodial parent:

A parent who does not have placement of, live in the home with, or have legal physical custody of their child(ren)/youth.

2022-2023 PDSA COLLABORATIVE GOALS

The following practice changes were implemented by PDSA teams shown by goal area.



Goal 1: Clear Guidance and Tools

PDSA teams will apply consistent, realistic expectations on how and when to identify, locate, contact, and engage non-custodial parents.

Change Implemented	# of Participating Agency PDSA Teams
Hosted trainings on importance of and procedures for NCP identification/engagement	5 ●●●●●
Clarified CPS Access/YJ Intake processes for information gathering and documentation	4 ●●●●
Initial Assessment search for and contacted NCP earlier (before day 30)	4 ●●●●
NCP communication tools (letter, brochure, facts sheets)	4 ●●●●
NCP location search engines guide	3 ●●●
Updated case transfer procedure to highlight NCP information	3 ●●●
Use YASI assessment (YJ) procedure to consistently ask about NCP contact/involvement	1 ●
Trained mandated reporters that NCP information would be gathered	1 ●



Goal 2: Measurement Systems & Accountability

PDSA teams will use measurement systems to increase accountability and improve communication while making continual efforts to contact and engage NCPs.

Change Implemented	# of Participating Agency PDSA Teams
Implemented a data tracking system to identify NCPs and track contact and engagement (*required for all PDSA teams)	14 ●●●●● ●●●●● ●●●●●
Surveyed professionals to assess knowledge, strengths, and gaps related to NCPs	5 ●●●●●
Create a consistent tracking/accountability system for documentation of NCP information	2 ●●
Supervision used to regularly assess for NCP engagement	2 ●●
Created agency NCP contact standards for YJ	1 ●



Goal 3: Practice Skills

Child welfare professionals will increase confidence in navigating conflictual and/or complicated relationships for families with non-custodial parents and their relatives.

Change Implemented	# of Participating Agency PDSA Teams
Developed a conversation guide and helpful tips guide for professionals	6
Created peer mentors for training other staff on this topic	2
Implemented internal team staffing for families with NCPs	1
Created resource packets for NCP/NCP relatives	1
Practiced using solution-focused questions with NCPs to improve engagement	1

SYSTEM AND PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

Culture change

Changing culture to prioritize the importance of identifying and engaging NCPs was the most effective system-wide change strategy. Effective strategies to increase motivation included:

- Tracking the number of families with an NCP as well as contact and engagement efforts. Child Welfare (CW) professionals found families with an NCP was generally 60-70% of families they are supporting.
- Experiencing practice successes such as increased NCP engagement with child, more efficient Initial Assessment (IA), or placement with NCP/NCP relatives.
- Increasing discussion of importance of engaging NCPs using trainings, peer mentorship, unit meetings, and supervision.

Standards guidance

Professionals reported they would like additional guidance in the Standards on the definition of a NCP, justifiable reasons for not contacting an NCP (and addressing biases), and best practice guidance for how professionals should search, contact, and engage NCPs.

Statewide tools

While some resources need to be agency-specific, the following tools and resources were rated by professionals as helpful and could be distributed statewide: an eWiSACWIS report identifying NCPs, NCP location, and contacts; a reference sheet that includes when and what questions to ask to seek information about NCP/NCP relatives; an updated list of best on-line person search procedures, and genograms.

Early and Often

Most teams focused efforts on CPS Access, Youth Justice (YJ) Intake, and CPS Initial Assessment to ensure early and consistent efforts to identify and contact NCPs with the belief that this would help downstream processes.

SYSTEM AND PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS (CONT.)

On-line search strategies

Professionals rated the following search strategies as most helpful (in descending order): CCAP, CARES/KIDS, eWiSACWIS historical case notes/reports, offender locator search, google search, social media (Facebook, others), economic support, Seneca, and True People.

eWiSACWIS challenges

Teams noted that NCP contact and engagement efforts are not easy to locate in eWiSACWIS. eWiSACWIS also does not clearly identify non-custodial parents in person management. Teams did use agency-specific documentation strategies to standardize where NCP information is documented in Access reports, in person management, case notes, and in case transfer documentation.

Informed partners

Training external organizational partners on the reasons that CW professionals are seeking information on NCPs and NCP relatives, particularly legal partners, schools, child support, and economic support would assist CW professionals.

OUTCOMES

PDSA participants measured the effectiveness of their efforts through before and after surveys and through tracking internal data. The short-term outcomes of the PDSA Collaborative follow:

Direct practice and supervisor knowledge and engagement

With regard to identifying, locating, contacting, and engaging the NCP, the before/after NCP survey results show:

- Agencies experienced improvement in direct practice staff knowledge of what is expected of them.
- Direct practice staff increased confidence.
- Supervisors and staff had more conversations about the NCP.
- Respondents reported strong supervision support.
- Direct practice staff looked to increase engagement of the NCP in their regular practice.
- Direct practice staff efforts to identify through engage the NCP is greater than efforts to do the same for NCP relatives. That said, efforts for identifying and engaging the NCP relatives did increase.
- Members of the PDSA Collaborative had their knowledge of making sufficient effort to identify through engage the NCP increased over the collaborative.

Internal NCP data tracking

Agencies tracked their own data on NCP engagement as this data was not able to be measured in eWiSACWIS. Results here include:

- Internal data tracking led some agencies to greater accountability, NCP goal-setting, and highlighted inconsistencies in practice across teammates.

OUTCOMES (CONT.)

- At the end of both collaboratives, agencies averaged above 90 percent in Initial Assessments with NCP(s) successfully contacting the NCP, or not contacting the NCP due to a documented, justifiable reason.
- Agencies that included Ongoing direct practice staff documented 51 unique instances where the child(ren) exited out-of-home care into the NCP or NCP relative home during the collaborative.
- Agencies that included Youth Justice direct practice staff documented 14 unique instances where the youth exited youth justice out-of-home care into the NCP or NCP relative home.

Agency Practice

PDSA Collaborative groups also assessed their agency's practice challenges and strengths before and after the collaborative across eleven categories. Predictably, agencies improved most in areas they specifically focused on. For example, the 2022 groups largely focused on improving staff understanding of how to make decisions on NCP engagement as well as documentation consistency, whereas the 2023 groups focused to a greater extent on identifying the NCP from the first point of contact with the family. The top areas improved are seen here:

2022 Agencies

Percent Improvement

Promotes communication between units and between staff within units to improve information sharing and decision-making regarding the NCP identification and / or involvement.	30%
Promotes the documentation of the NCP identity and/or involvement in consistent areas of eWiSACWIS.	25%
Creates an organizational environment and climate that strongly emphasizes the value of NCPs in children's lives.	21%

2023 Agencies

Percent Improvement

Identifies and locates the NCP from the first point of contact with the family.	38%
Creates an organizational environment and climate that strongly emphasizes the value of NCPs in children's lives.	16%
Develops an atmosphere where the voice and active engagement of NCPs is included.	14%

Questions?

Contact us at: Organizational Process Improvement Unit at the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System at 608-263-6115 or jlfahy@wisc.edu

Detailed Project Reports found here:

<https://wcpds.wisc.edu/organizational-development/organizational-process-improvement/plan-do-study-act-pdsa-collaborative/>