2022 Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Collaborative on Identifying and Engaging Non-Custodial Parents Project Report

From September 2022 through April 2023, eight child welfare agencies sent teams comprised of child protective services (CPS) and/or youth justice (YJ) professionals and a supervisor(s) to use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model to design, test, and implement organizational changes to improve CPS and YJ practices in identifying and engaging non-custodial parents (NCPs). The PDSA Collaborative focuses change efforts by helping teams to define their goal(s), systematically plan a change, evaluate outcomes using qualitative and/or quantitative metrics, examine implementation lessons, and advance positive changes in a subsequent cycle. In addition, the collaborative format encourages idea-sharing between agency teams.

Sponsor Team

A state advisory committee, the Continuous Quality Improvement Advisory (CQI) Committee examined multiple data sources including Systems Change Reviews, Initial Assessment Case Reviews, and the Child and Family Services Reviews and completed root cause analysis and a causal chain exercise to choose the topic and develop the collaborative mission and goals.

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.

Mission

The mission of the 2022 Plan-Do-Study-Act Collaborative 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 to:

- increase natural supports and resources to children and families,
- benefit child and youth well-being in identity and moral development and cultural connections,
- provide resources for increased Child Protective Services in-home safety plans or Youth Justice evidence-based in-home services or interventions,
- increase likelihood that the child or youth remains with family through facilitating timely permanence with a custodial or non-custodial parent or placement with kin (congruent with Family First legislation),
- improve county and/or tribal agency outcomes by engaging the non-custodial parent in child(ren), youth, and/or families' lives.

Theory of Change

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MID-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	IMPACT
>Agencies identify, locate, contact & engage non-custodial parents (NCPs) at all stages of case process	>Improved information for assessment & decision-making at all stages of case process >Increased supports & resources from NCP & their extended family	>Improved safety decision-making >Increased use of NCP & their extended family for safety planning >Increased resources/supports from NCP & their extended family to protect against reoccurring maltreatment, inform case planning, & improve child-well being	>Increased use of NCP or their kin in placements >Increased protective factors for child/youth including financial support, more shared caregiving responsibilities, positive role models, emotional support, child knowing they are loved by more adults, improved self-esteem, improved identity, cultural, and moral development >Shorten time a case is open with the agency	>Higher likelihood of reunification outcomes for children in placement >Lower likelihood of subsequent maltreatment >Improved child well-being outcomes including lowering chances of 1) early sexual activity, 2) school failure, 3) juvenile delinquency, 4) adult criminality	Improved safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children/youth

OPI Organizational Process Improvement

WCWPDS Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

The 2022 PDSA Collaborative goals were:

Goal 1

PDSA teams will apply consistent, realistic expectations for Access, Initial Assessment, Ongoing, and Youth Justice Intake and Ongoing professionals on how and when to identify, locate, contact, and engage non-custodial parents. Child welfare professionals will have guidance and/or tools to assist in their efforts to identify and contact NCPs. Efforts will also demonstrate the importance of incorporating NCPs in assessment and planning efforts.

Goal 2

PDSA teams will use measurement systems to increase accountability for continual efforts to contact and engage non-custodial parents during the agency's involvement with the family. These measurements will improve child welfare professionals' communication, information-sharing, and decision-making when working with NCPs. Supervisors will consistently use data in supervision and training. Teams will gather measures that assess whether engaging NCPs improved child/family outcomes.

Goal 3

Child welfare professionals will increase confidence in navigating conflictual and/or complicated relationships for families with non-custodial parents and their relatives. Child welfare professionals will have guidance and support from supervisors/leadership in practice skills such as setting appropriate and beneficial boundaries and communicating about the child welfare role and case progress with all family members.

PDSA Team	PDSA Activities	Outcomes
Brown County Established 1818	- Initial assessment contacted non-custodial parents earlier (aimed for week 2 of IA) and more consistently. - Developed and distributed a laminated desk guide for IA professionals about meaningful conversations with NCPs. - Created a consistent practice for ongoing staff to utilize available and effective search tools for locating NCPs. - Created and implemented several tools including a letter, brochure, and definitional fact sheet for NCPs targeted at increasing clear communication about the child welfare and how NCPs can engage with their child(ren). - Developed clear direction for staff on the amount and level of information needed about NCPs/relatives to ensure a effective case transition process.	- Improved intentional engagement of NCPs at the point of transition between IA and ongoing. - Improved staff understanding of IA and ongoing standards requirements regarding NCPs. - Provided resources for case professionals to improve their efficiency.

PDSA Team	PDSA Activities	Outcomes
CHIPPEWA COUNTY Human Services	• Created a resource guide and helpful tips document related to non-custodial parents and made it accessible agency-wide. • Changed practice culture at their agency by increasing beliefs that engaging NCPs and their family is an important part in achieving permanency faster and increasing child/youth well-being. • Implemented a quality measurement system that kept staff accountable to making positive changes. • Engaged staff in providing project feedback and tailored their project to include that feedback so it would succeed.	• Better understanding of the standards and more consistent practice related to NCP contacts. • Increased the amount of upfront time identifying and locating the NCPs. Will be tracking to see if this decreases the length of time that a child is potentially placed out of the home.
Eau Claire COUNTY	• Created and implemented a review staffing process (and template) where all ongoing professionals bring their cases with NCPs to the staffing to mutually discuss and problem-solve strategies for engaging the NCP/relatives. • Added targeted information to their CPS case transfer meetings/documentation specific to NCP Information (identify, locate, contact, engage).	• Ongoing professionals experienced more intentional conversation and collaboration when engaging NCPs and their families. • Improved communication and momentum in their ongoing professionals work with Initial Assessment and Corporation Counsel as result of their work and advocacy.
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families **Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services**	• Compiled 'Dad Packets' containing well-rounded lists of community resources for non-custodial fathers in Milwaukee. • Shared learnings about community resources with agency supervisors, administrators, and professional development trainers so that learnings were spread.	• IA professionals learned about rich community resources in Milwaukee and that some programs had even more resources than what they were already using. • IA professionals discussed best approaches/timelines to engage NPC during the initial assessment process.
JEFFERSON COUNTY WI. ESTABLISHED 1836	• Examined agency practices across work functions (e.g., initial assessment, ongoing, and youth justice) related to identifying and engaging NCPs/relatives. • Used educational efforts such as videos, visual materials, and facilitated discussions increase staff beliefs about the importance of NCP/relatives engagement.	• Discovered barriers in implementing an agency-wide process as child welfare work functions varied in their definition of NCP engagement. • Used data-informed decision-making as results of staff training efforts were assessed through surveys.

PDSA Team	PDSA Activities	Outcomes
MARATHON COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES	• Created a monthly check-list for ongoing professionals that provided a consistent procedure for updating contact information and making contact with non-custodial parents (NCPs), when possible. • CPS ongoing professionals implemented solution-focused questions (following motivational interviewing principles) to improve engagement of NCPs.	• The ongoing unit increased the amount of new contact information found for NCPs using the new procedure and more contacts were attempted with that new information. • Able to report a success story where a NCP began visitation with child as result of increased contact efforts. • CPS ongoing professionals reported that using solution-focused questions with NCPs contributed to better engagement.
SHEBOYGAN COUNTY WISCONSIN	• Used focus groups to gather information on current practices and barriers to identifying and engaging non-custodial parents. • Delivered a comprehensive training that shared both research evidence and testimonies/stories to highlight importance of identifying and engaging NCPs throughout child welfare practice. • Created a resource folder with letter templates and conversation guides. • Formed a group that will maintain focus on NCPs going forward using strategies such as mentoring/onboarding new staff, re-training, and periodic conversations at staff meetings.	• Staff surveys found that post-training there was increased knowledge and motivation to identify and engage NCPs. • Increased conversations at staff meetings and during supervision about NCPs were observed.
WOOD COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES	• Created a non-custodial parent search resource guide and an Access and Initial Assessment practice guide to improve consistency of contact with NCPs in access and initial assessment. • Developed a letter and parent engagement brochure to promote NCP/relatives engaging in children's lives and to explain how the agency can partner with families. Made available for use in both CPS ongoing and youth justice. • Implemented a quality measurement system that kept staff accountable to making positive changes.	• Monthly measures of NCP contact reflected an increase in NCP contact by the agency. • Increased conversations regarding NCP contact and engagement observed. • Shared a success story that an out-of-state NCP was located and began contact with child.

Measuring Progress

Multiple evaluations were built into the 2022 PDSA Collaborative to measure the effectiveness of this experience on improving the identification, location, contact, and engagement of non-custodial parents. The four evaluations are described below.

NCP Pre / Post Eval	Agency Pre / Post Eval	Agency Pre / Post Self Assessment	Run Charts
The Non-Custodial Parent Survey measures direct practice staff and supervisor assessment of practice related to non-custodial parents.	The Agency Evaluation measures organizational challenges, health, and culture across six domains.	The Agency Self Assessment measures practice challenges and strengths as it relates to engagement with NCPs.	Run Charts collect monthly data from direct practice staff to measure the engagement of NCPs throughout the collaborative.

Example question:

In my regular practice, I attempt to engage non-custodial parents.
- On all cases
- On most cases
- On some cases
- On few to no cases

Example question:

Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Example question:

Does your agency create an organizational environment and climate that strongly emphasizes the value of NCPs in children's lives?

Example question:

Is the NCP included in the child(ren)'s case plan?

Measuring Progress: NCP Survey

The NCP Evaluation Survey was administered before the beginning of the collaborative (July 2022 through September 2022) and at the end (April 2023). This evaluation measured direct practice staff and supervisor thoughts and actions regarding non-custodial parents. Agencies were encouraged to solicit responses from their colleagues, including those not participating in the PDSA Collaborative, and all agencies chose to do so. A total of 178 CPS / YJ professionals and supervisors responded to the baseline survey and 150 responded to the post survey.

Questions asked respondents to assess practice items on a scale. The responses to the questions are shown below in stacked bar charts showing responses by percent. Most questions show improvement between the baseline and post surveys.
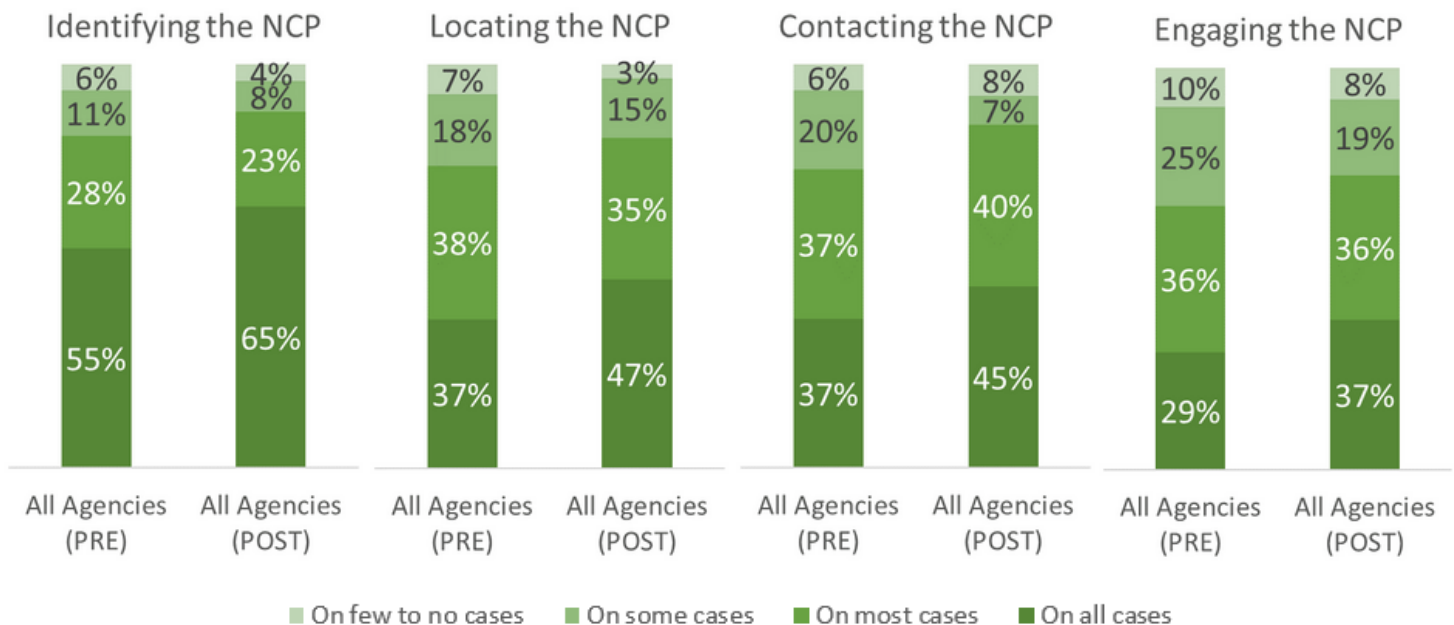
178

Respondents in the baseline survey

150

Respondents in the post survey

CPS / YJ Professional Expectations

Respondents were asked if they or their staff know what they are expected to do when it comes to identifying, locating, contacting, and engaging the NCP. Sixty-five percent understood expectations at the point of identification in all cases, 45-47 percent understood expectations in locating and contacting the NCP, and 37 percent understood expectations on all cases in engaging with the NCP. There was an eight to ten percent increase in those who stated they had this knowledge on all cases at the end of the PDSA Collaborative, showing improvement.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	6%	4%
On some cases	11%	8%
On most cases	28%	23%
On all cases	55%	65%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	7%	3%
On some cases	18%	15%
On most cases	38%	35%
On all cases	37%	47%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	6%	8%
On some cases	20%	7%
On most cases	37%	40%
On all cases	37%	45%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	10%	8%
On some cases	25%	19%
On most cases	36%	36%
On all cases	29%	37%

Legend: ■ On few to no cases   ■ On some cases   ■ On most cases   ■ On all cases

Expectations were best understood in identifying the NCP, and this understanding decreased through locating, contacting, and engagement. However, knowledge of expectations increased over the collaborative.

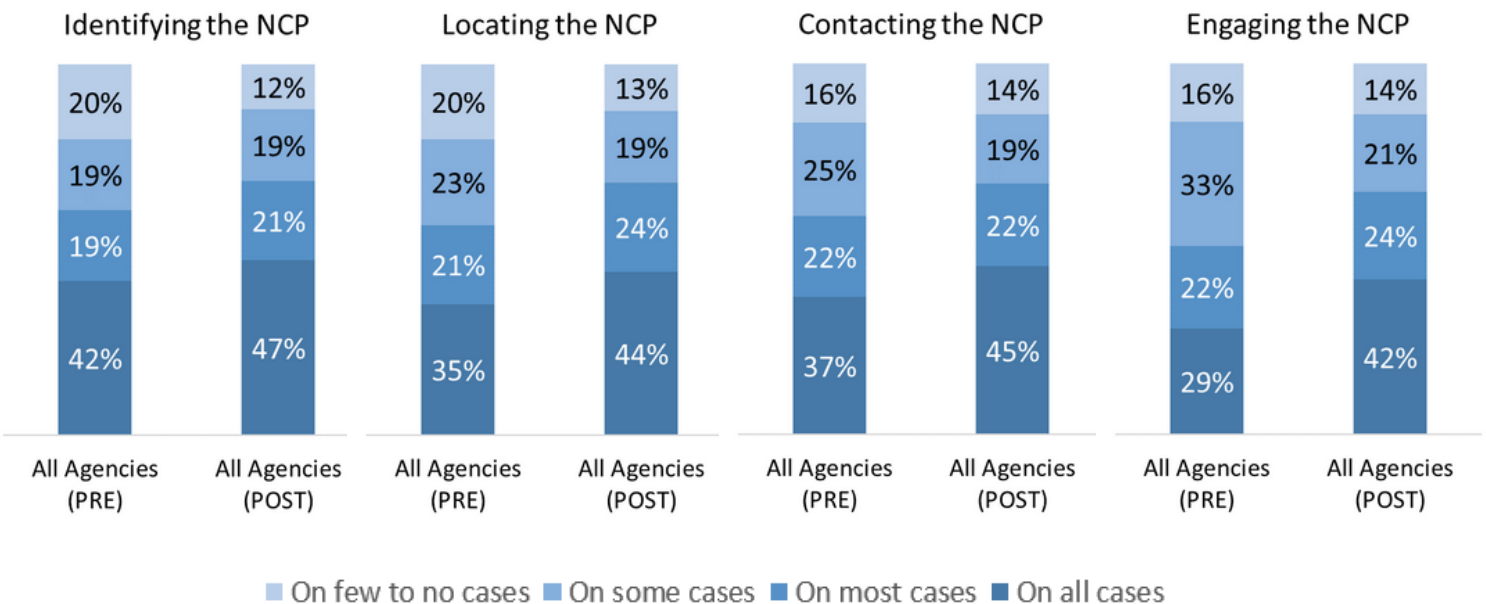# Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS / YJ Professional Confidence

Respondents were asked their confidence when it comes to identifying, locating, contacting, and engaging the NCP. There was a 14 percent confidence increase in identifying the NCP on all cases, a ten percent confidence increase in locating the NCP on all cases, and an eight percent confidence increase in NCP engagement on all cases.
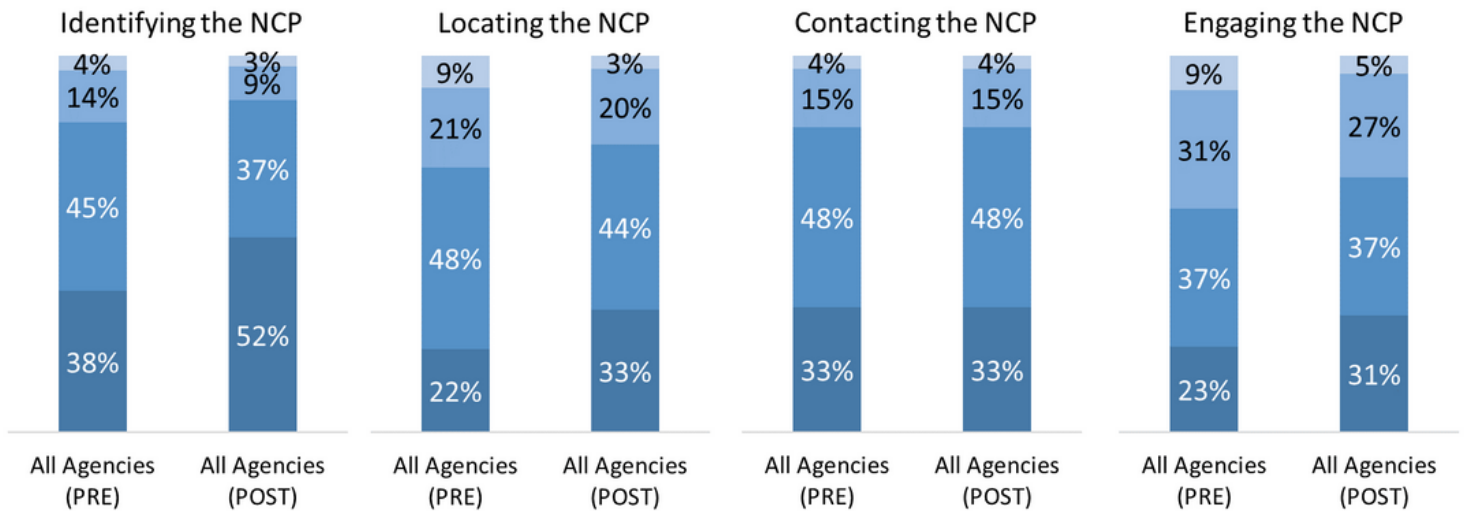
Supervision Discussions Regarding the NCP

Respondents were asked if their supervisor talks with them about identifying, locating, contacting, and engaging the NCP. There was a 13 percent reported increase in discussions of NCP engagement on all cases. Between 42 to 47 percent of respondents stated these discussions occur from identification through engagement, on all cases.
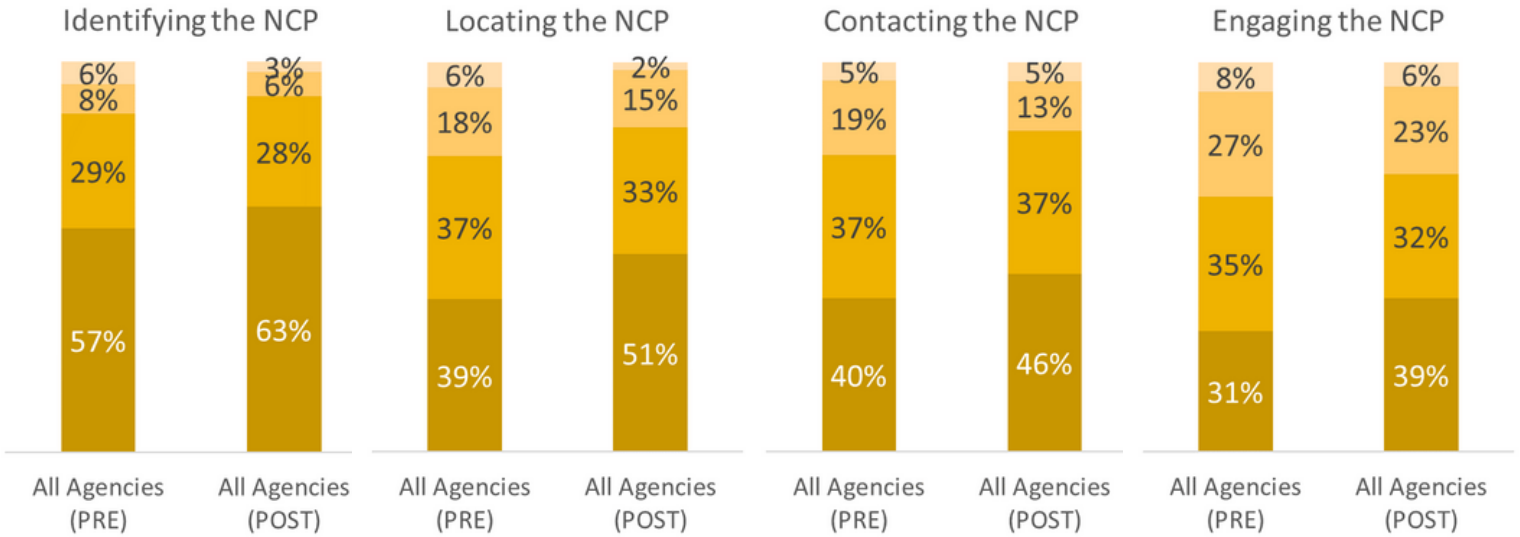

■ On few to no cases ■ On some cases ■ On most cases ■ On all cases

Direct practice staff confidence, and supervision discussions around the NCP, increased over the collaborative.

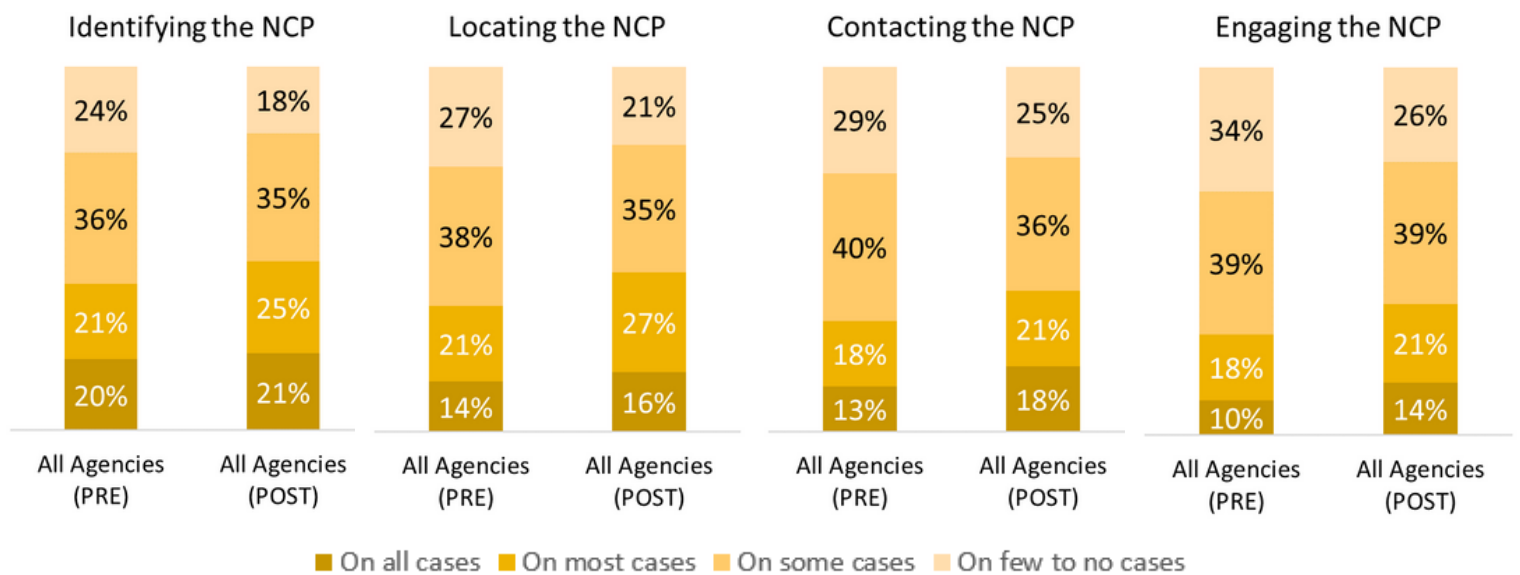# Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS / YJ Professional Engagement of NCP in Regular Practice

Respondents were asked to respond to how they identify, locate, contact, and engage NCPs in their regular practice. The greatest increase was seen in a 12 percent increase in those attempting to locate the NCP on all cases, and an eight percent increase in those attempting to engage the NCP on all cases. Whereas 63 percent attempt to identify the NCP all of the time, only 39 percent attempt to engage the NCP all of the time.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	6%	3%
On some cases	8%	6%
On most cases	29%	28%
On all cases	57%	63%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	6%	2%
On some cases	18%	15%
On most cases	37%	33%
On all cases	39%	51%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	5%	5%
On some cases	19%	13%
On most cases	37%	37%
On all cases	40%	46%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	8%	6%
On some cases	27%	23%
On most cases	35%	32%
On all cases	31%	39%

CPS / YJ Professional Engagement of NCP Relatives in Regular Practice

Respondents were asked to respond to how they identify, locate, contact, and engage with NCP relatives in their regular practice. Responses show that little changed over time and results are noticeably lower than efforts to identify and engage NCPs, as 14 percent attempt to engage NCP relatives all of the time, compared to 39 percent of those who attempt to engage the NCP all of the time.
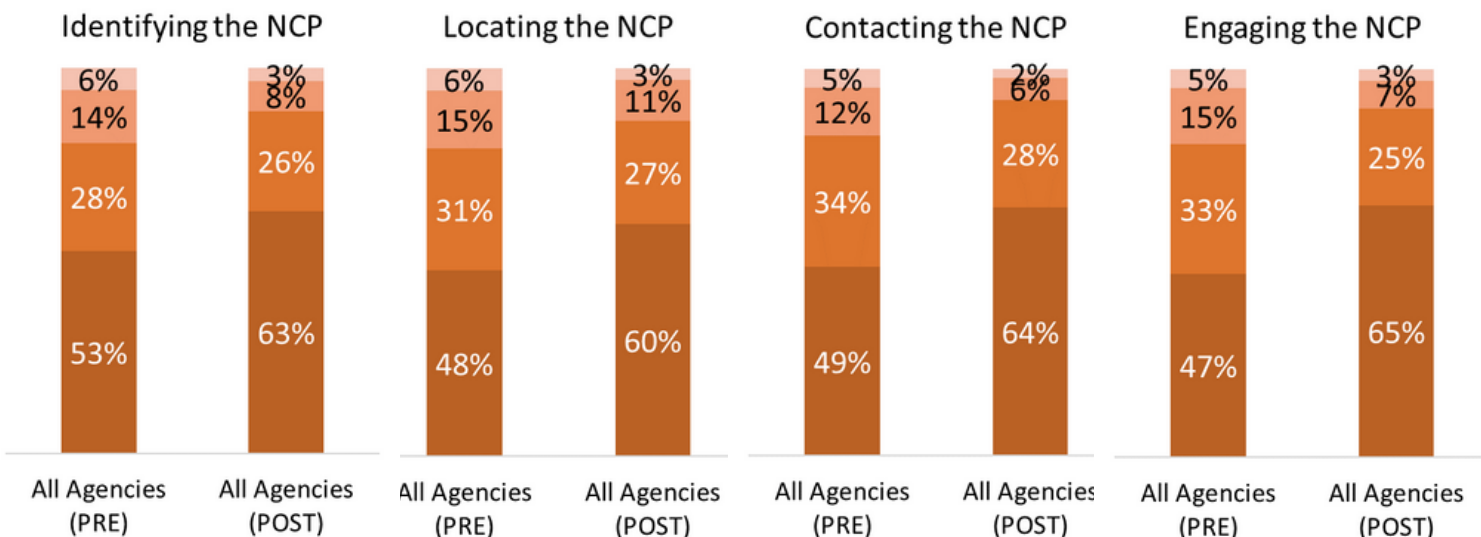
Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	24%	18%
On some cases	36%	35%
On most cases	21%	25%
On all cases	20%	21%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	27%	21%
On some cases	38%	35%
On most cases	21%	27%
On all cases	14%	16%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	29%	25%
On some cases	40%	36%
On most cases	18%	21%
On all cases	13%	18%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	34%	26%
On some cases	39%	39%
On most cases	18%	21%
On all cases	10%	14%

■ On all cases ■ On most cases ■ On some cases ■ On few to no cases

Direct practice staff efforts to identify, locate, contact, and engage the NCP is greater than efforts to do the same for NCP relatives.
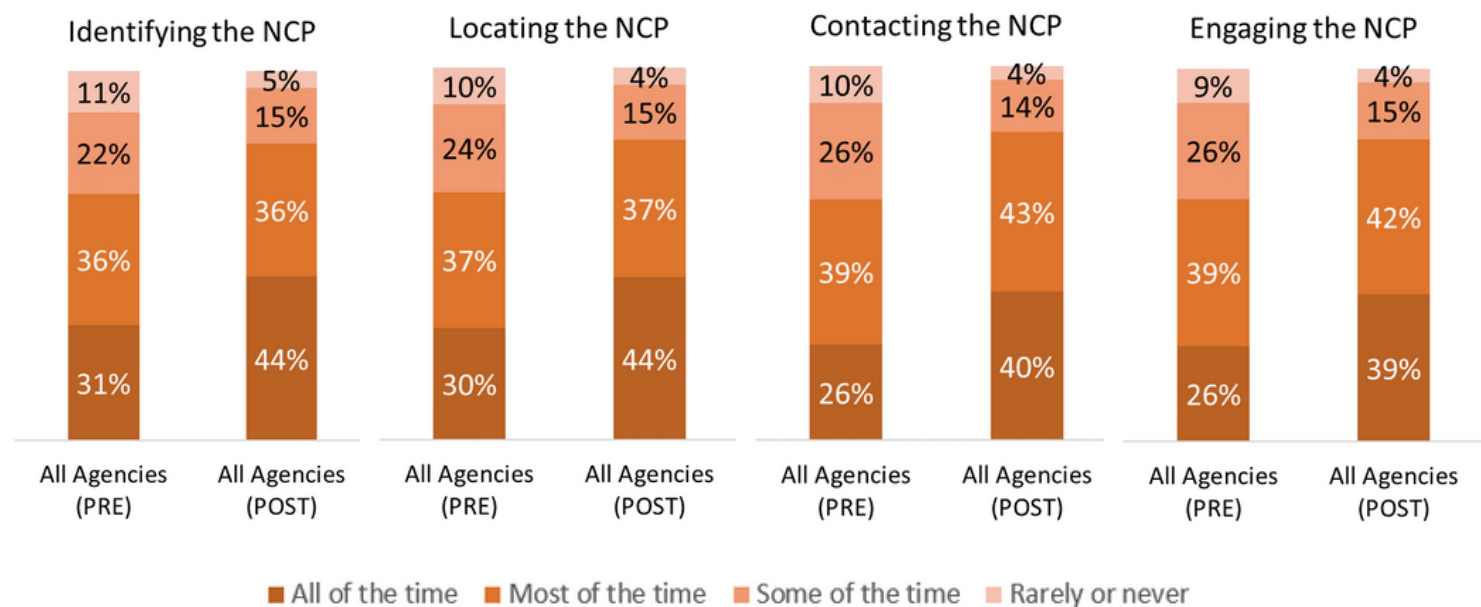
Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS / YJ Professional Documentation of NCP Identification, Contact, and Engagement
Respondents were asked if they know where and how to document all their efforts to identify, contact, locate, and engage NCPs. All areas increased by ten percent or more, with the largest increase of 18 percent in knowing where and how to document engagement with the NCP. Sixty-five percent of respondents stated that they have the knowledge to document engagement all of the time.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	6%	3%
Some of the time	14%	8%
Most of the time	28%	26%
All of the time	53%	63%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	6%	3%
Some of the time	15%	11%
Most of the time	31%	27%
All of the time	48%	60%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	5%	2%
Some of the time	12%	6%
Most of the time	34%	28%
All of the time	49%	64%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	5%	3%
Some of the time	15%	7%
Most of the time	33%	25%
All of the time	47%	65%

CPS / YJ Professional Determination of Appropriateness
Respondents were asked if they know how to determine if it is NOT appropriate to identify, contact, locate, and engage NCPs. All areas increased by 13-14 percent. Thirty-nine percent of respondents know how to determine the appropriateness of engaging the NCP all of the time.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	11%	5%
Some of the time	22%	15%
Most of the time	36%	36%
All of the time	31%	44%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	10%	4%
Some of the time	24%	15%
Most of the time	37%	37%
All of the time	30%	44%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	10%	4%
Some of the time	26%	14%
Most of the time	39%	43%
All of the time	26%	40%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or never	9%	4%
Some of the time	26%	15%
Most of the time	39%	42%
All of the time	26%	39%

Legend: ■ All of the time ■ Most of the time ■ Some of the time ■ Rarely or never

Approximately eighty percent of direct practice staff know how to determine the appropriateness of identifying through engaging the NCP all or most of the time.

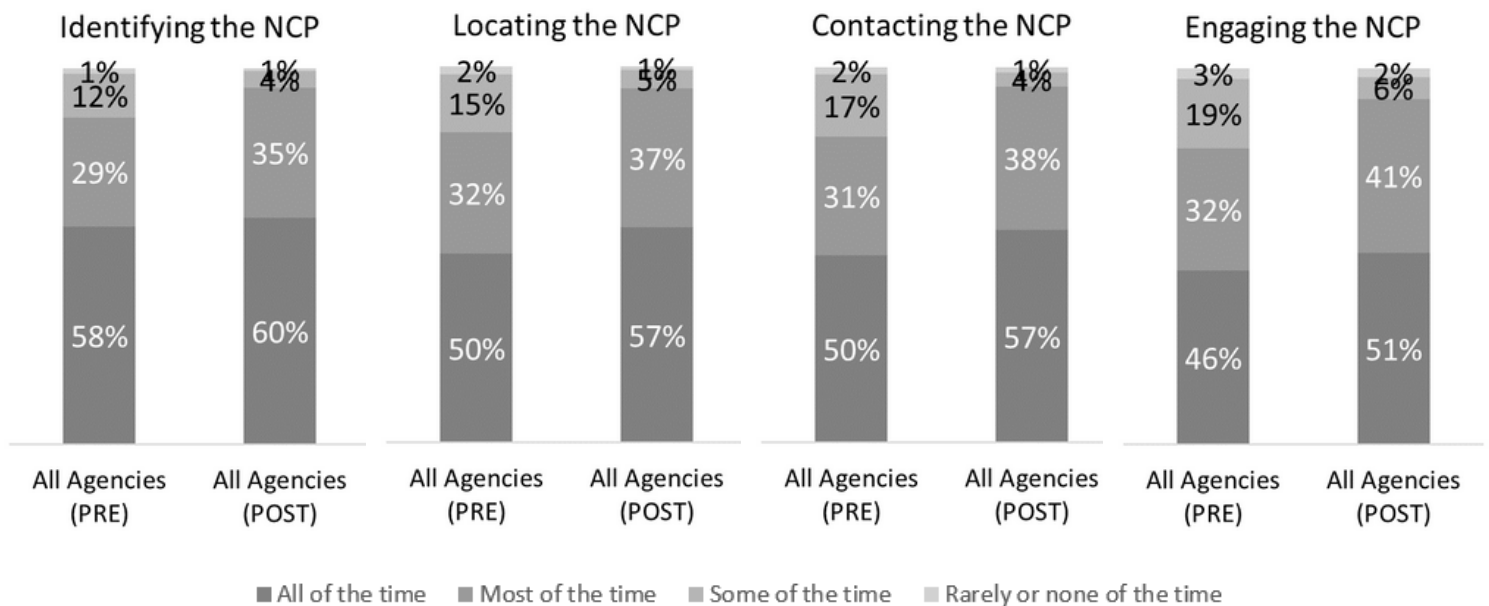# Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS / YJ Professional Receives Support from their Supervisor
Respondents were asked if they receive the support they need from their supervisor in identifying, contacting, locating, and engaging NCPs. All areas increased by 14–17 percent, and 62 percent stated that they feel supported in engaging with the NCP all of the time. This remained steady from identifying through engaging the NCP as well.
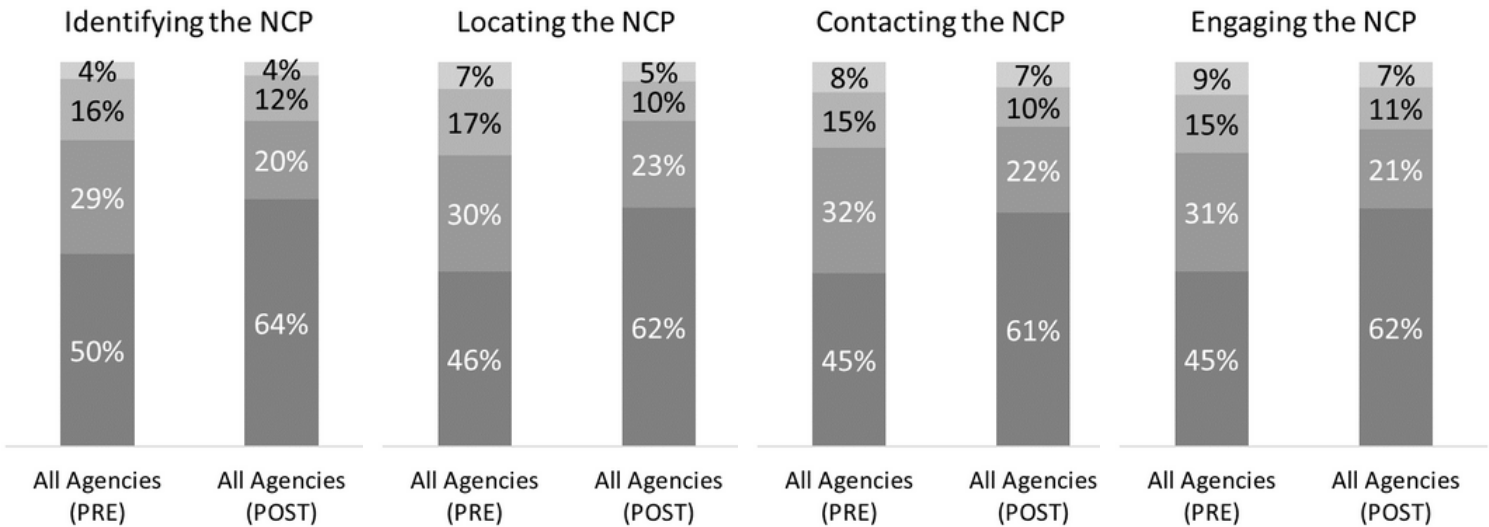
Identifying the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
4%	4%
16%	12%
29%	20%
50%	64%

Locating the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
7%	5%
17%	10%
30%	23%
46%	62%

Contacting the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
8%	7%
15%	10%
32%	22%
45%	61%

Engaging the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
9%	7%
15%	11%
31%	21%
45%	62%

CPS / YJ Professional Knowledge of Engaging a NCP of a Different Racial or Ethnic Background
Respondents were asked if they are confident in their ability to identify, locate, contact, and engage with NCPs of a different racial or ethnic background than their own. All areas increased modestly or remained the same, with a two to seven percent increase across categories. A total of 51 percent of respondents expressed confidence in engagement all of the time.

Identifying the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
1%	1%
12%	4%
29%	35%
58%	60%

Locating the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
2%	1%
15%	5%
32%	37%
50%	57%

Contacting the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
2%	1%
17%	4%
31%	38%
50%	57%

Engaging the NCP

All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
3%	2%
19%	6%
32%	41%
46%	51%

■ All of the time   ■ Most of the time   ■ Some of the time   ■ Rarely or none of the time

Across the collaborative, respondents reported an increase in supervision support. An increase in knowledge of how to identify through engage a NCP of a different racial background was modest or absent.

Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS / YJ Professional Knowledge of Engaging a NCP of a Different Gender Identity
Respondents were asked if they are confident in their ability to identify, locate, contact, and engage with NCPs of a different gender identity than their own. All areas increased between 6-11 percent. A total of 57 percent of respondents expressed confidence in engagement all of the time.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	2%	1%
On some cases	8%	3%
On most cases	31%	32%
On all cases	59%	65%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	3%	1%
On some cases	12%	4%
On most cases	35%	33%
On all cases	51%	62%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	2%	1%
On some cases	15%	4%
On most cases	31%	35%
On all cases	51%	61%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	3%	1%
On some cases	15%	5%
On most cases	32%	36%
On all cases	49%	57%

CPS / YJ Professional Opinion that the NCP Engagement is Important
Respondents were asked if they think it is important and in the best interest of the child / youth to identify, locate, contact, and engage with NCPs. All areas remained consistent and did not change. It also appears that the opinion of the importance of identifying the NCP all of the time is highest at 64 percent, and steadily declines to 54 percent believing it is important of locate the NCP, 42 percent believing the importance of contacting the NCP, and 38 percent believing the importance of engaging the NCP, on all cases.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	1%	1%
On some cases	8%	6%
On most cases	28%	29%
On all cases	63%	64%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	1%	1%
On some cases	14%	9%
On most cases	32%	36%
On all cases	53%	54%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	1%	1%
On some cases	16%	13%
On most cases	41%	45%
On all cases	42%	42%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	1%	1%
On some cases	18%	16%
On most cases	45%	46%
On all cases	36%	38%

■ On few to no cases ■ On some cases ■ On most cases ■ On all cases

Across the collaborative timeframe, CPS / YJ professional opinion of the importance of NCP identification through engagement did not change.

Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS / YJ Professional Opinion that the NCP Relative Engagement is Important
Respondents were asked if they think it is important and in the best interest of the child / youth to identify, locate, contact, and engage with NCP relatives. All areas remained consistent and did not change. Also, compared to the results for NCP engagement directly above, respondents do not find engagement with the NCP relative to be as important. The importance of identifying the NCP relative all of the time was highest at 38 percent, and declines progressively to 25 percent believing the importance of engaging the NCP relative all of the time.

Identifying the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
	3%	3%
	22%	26%
	33%	33%
	43%	38%

Locating the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
	3%	4%
	27%	31%
	34%	33%
	36%	32%

Contacting the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
	4%	5%
	29%	34%
	37%	34%
	30%	26%

Engaging the NCP

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
	5%	4%
	29%	38%
	38%	34%
	28%	25%
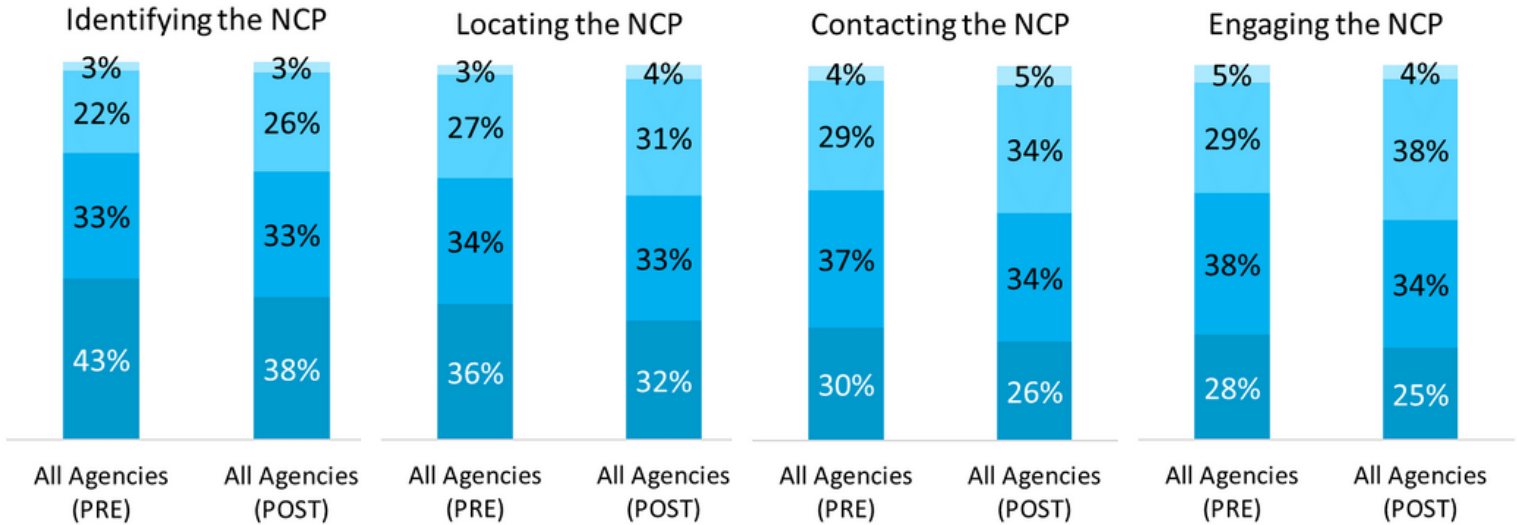
CPS / YJ Professional Confidence in the Ability to Set Boundaries with the Parents
Respondents were asked about their confidence setting boundaries with the custodial and non-custodial parents. Results indicate a small increase in confidence across both groups. Overall, direct practice staff indicated strong confidence, with 98 percent feeling confident in setting boundaries with custodial parents all or most of the time, and 94 percent feeling capable of setting boundaries with non-custodial parents all or most of the time.

I am Confident in my Ability to Set Boundaries with the Custodial Parent

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
	4%	1% 1%
	40%	36%
	56%	62%

I am Confident in my Ability to Set Boundaries with the Non-Custodial Parent

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
	1% 7%	1% 5%
	40%	33%
	52%	62%
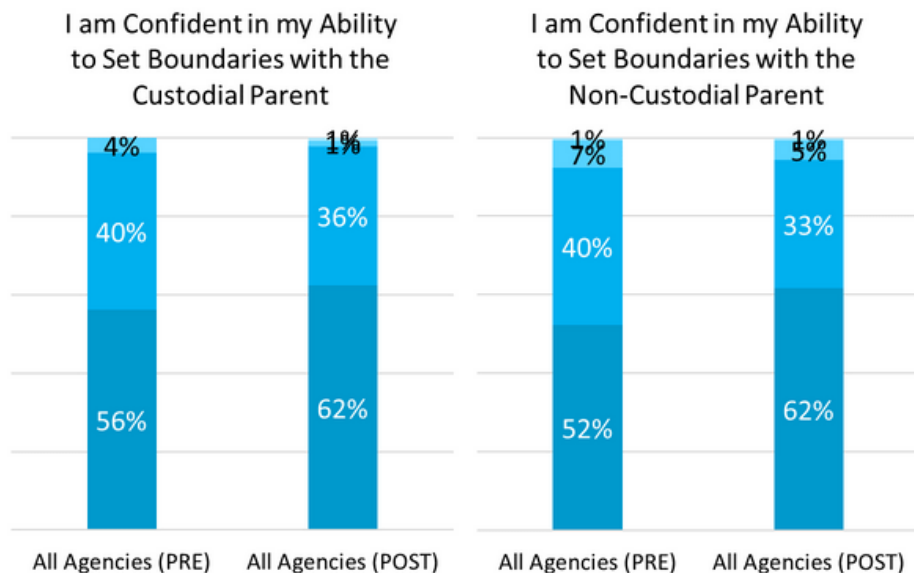
■ On few to no cases   ■ On some cases   ■ On most cases   ■ On all cases

CPS / YJ professional opinion of the importance of NCP relative identification through engagement did not change, and was lower than the same measure for the NCP. Staff also had strong confidence in their ability to set boundaries with parents.

Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS/YJ Professional Confidence in Ability to Navigate Conflictual Relationships with the Parents
Respondents were asked about their confidence in their ability to navigate any conflictual relationships between custodial and non-custodial parents. There was an 11 percent increase in the respondents who stated they were confident in their abilities in all cases. While only a quarter felt confident in all cases, staff overall do seem fairly confident in that over 70 percent stated confidence in all or most cases.

I am confident in my ability to navigate conflictual relationships between custodial and non-custodial parents.

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
On few to no cases	1%	1%
On some cases	26%	15%
On most cases	56%	56%
On all cases	17%	28%
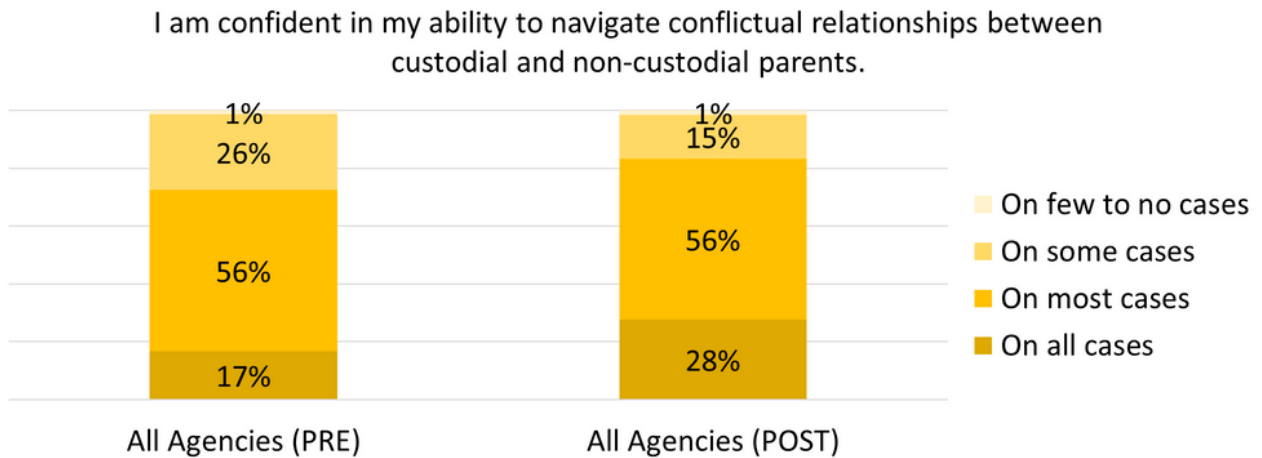
CPS/YJ Professional Ability to Connect Non-Custodial Parents to Appropriate Resources
Respondents were asked about their confidence in their ability to connect NCPs to appropriate resources. While only 16 percent stated they could connect NCPs to resources all of the time, staff overall feel fairly confident in that approximately 70 percent stated they had the ability to connect resources all or most of the time.

I am able to connect non-custodial parents to appropriate resources

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or none of the time.	1%	1%
Some of the time.	26%	26%
Most of the time.	56%	58%
All of the time.	17%	16%
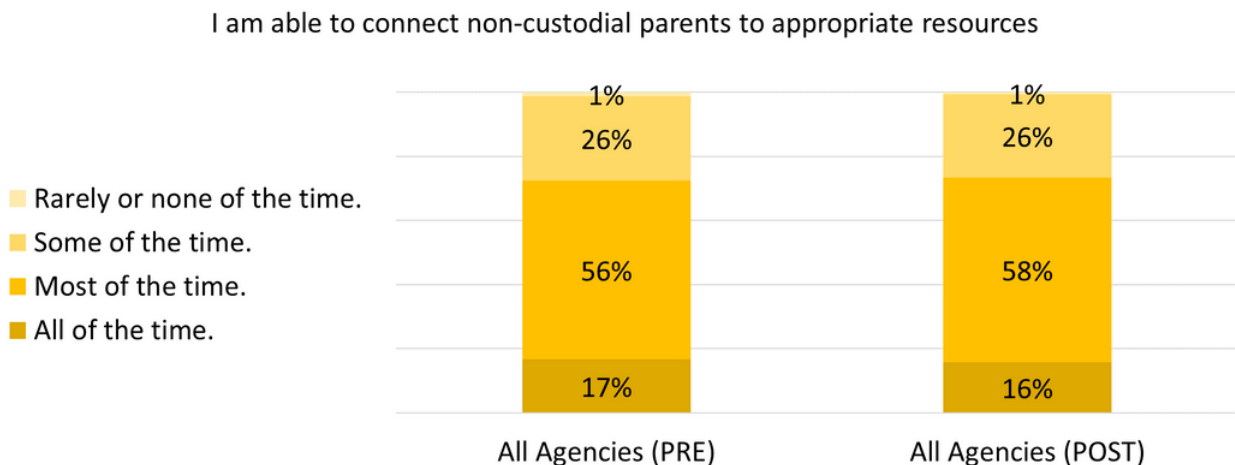
Both staff confidence in the ability to navigate conflictual parent relationships, and ability to connect them with resources <u>all of the time</u>, was low. However, the majority of respondents stated they had this ability <u>most of the time</u>.

Measuring Progress: NCP Evaluation Survey

CPS/YJ Professional Confidence in Ability to Communicate with the Custodial Parent as to Why it is Necessary to Contact and Engage the NCP

Respondents were asked about their ability to communicate with the custodial parent as to why it is necessary to contact and engage the NCP. There was an increase in confidence over the course of the collaborative, and 91 percent now state they are confident in this communication all or most of the time.

I am confident in my ability to communicate with the custodial parent as to why it is necessary to contact and engage the NCP.

	All Agencies (PRE)	All Agencies (POST)
Rarely or none of the time.	3%	
Some of the time.	21%	9%
Most of the time.	49%	54%
All of the time.	28%	37%
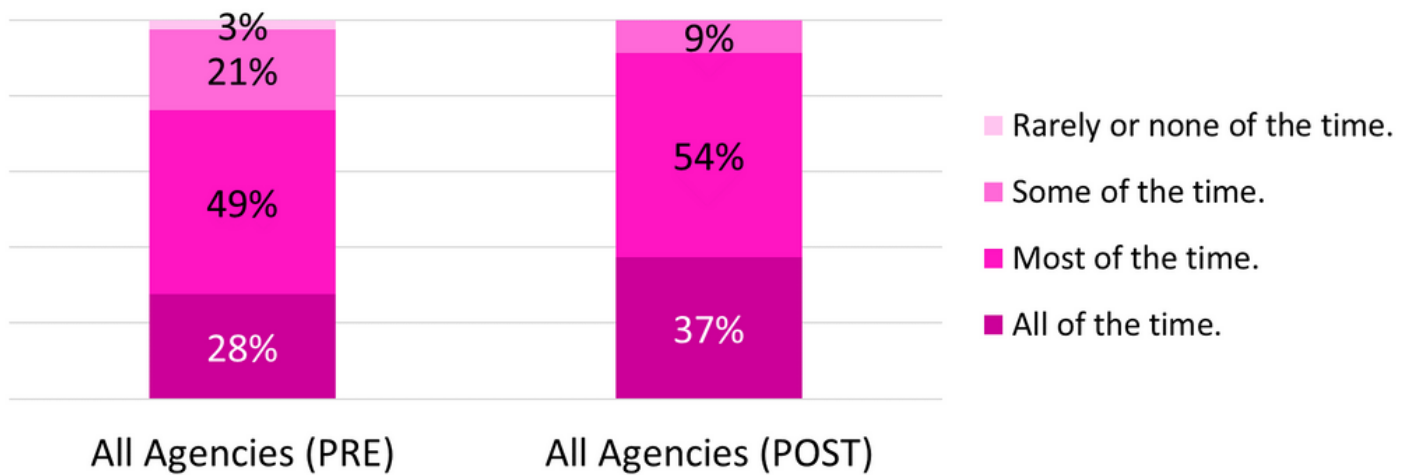
Direct practice staff confidence in their ability to communicate with the custodial parent as to why it is necessary to contact and engage the NCP is high at 91 percent confidence all or most of the time.

Measuring Progress: Agency Evaluation

The Agency Survey was administered to the 2022 PDSA Collaborative agencies before the beginning of the collaborative (July 2022 through September 2022) and at the end (April 2023). Ten CPS / YJ supervisors and 32 professionals answered the baseline survey. Seven CPS / YJ supervisors and 13 professionals answered the post survey. This evaluation measured organizational challenges, health, and culture across the following six themes:

- Organizational Readiness for Change
- PDSA Team Readiness
- Learning Culture
- Organizational Climate
- Psychological Safety
- Peer relationships

Overall, the results in the before and after Agency Survey were positive. The areas of greatest strength for both direct practice professionals and supervisors were Organizational Climate, Psychological Safety, and Peer Relationships. Each of these themes averaged 4.0 to 4.5 out of 5 across both the before and after surveys.

42

Respondents in the baseline survey

With agencies starting at a point of strength, there was little room for advancement. Indeed, there was little difference between the before and after results across all six themes, indicating that the PDSA Collaborative had little effect on agency culture.

20

Respondents in the post survey

Organizational culture and processes remained consistent, and overall positive, throughout the collaborative.

Measuring Progress: Agency Self-Assessment

The Agency Self-Assessment measures practice challenges and strengths as it relates to engagement with NCPs. Items are measured on a four-point scale, and assessments were taken at the beginning and end of the PDSA Collaborative. All items were improved upon, as seen below.

All eleven questions averaged across the agencies indicated agency practice improvement.

Agency Self-Assessment Question	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.	53%
Promotes the documentation of the NCP identity and/or involvement in consistent areas of eWiSACWIS.	47%
Has provided specific professional development or learning opportunities to staff to discuss or practice how to address navigating conflictual and/or complicated relationships, including with NCPs.	40%
Develops an atmosphere where the voice and active engagement of NCPs is included.	38%
Creates an organizational environment & climate that strongly emphasizes the value of NCPs in children's lives.	36%
Promotes personal awareness among staff to acknowledge implicit gender bias and implement practices that improve the NCP and family outcomes.	35%
Consistently discusses the identification, location, contact and/or engagement of the NCP and NCP relatives in supervision.	31%
Identifies, locates, contacts, and / or engages the NCP throughout involvement in CPS and / or YJ.	30%
Promotes the documentation of the NCP identity and/or involvement in eWiSACWIS.	21%
Identifies and locates the NCP from the first point of contact with the family.	21%
Promotes personal awareness among staff to acknowledge implicit racial bias and implement practices that improve the NCP and family outcomes.	11%

"There is not a specific place to enter NCP data in eWiSACWIS. We do communicate to document in case notes, but it may not be consistent."

"This [identification and location of the NCP from the first point of contact with the family] is one area that has greatly improved with NCP information identified on access reports or YJ intakes."

"Consistent expectations regarding contact and engagement with NCPs [are] discussed during weekly / bi-weekly supervision and during unit meetings."

Measuring Progress: Run Charts

Run charts are a means of collecting and presenting data over time to determine potential changes in practice. All direct practice staff involved in the PDSA Collaborative were asked to report data about their caseload's involvement with NCPs, including the extent to which they identified, located, contacted, and engaged with them every month. Individual CPS / YJ professional data collection was necessary to capture this information as eWiSACWIS does not contain a means to track non-custodial parent data. The other purpose in using run charts was as a means of encouraging accountability in focusing on NCPs in practice.

The practice areas that PDSA Collaborative members work within include Initial Assessment, Ongoing, and Youth Justice. Some teams focused entirely on one practice area, whereas other teams sent a multidisciplinary team that included one or two individuals from each practice area. Each individual with a caseload was given an Excel spreadsheet tracking tool specific to their practice area with which they could track NCP data each month. Direct practice staff were also provided a guide that included definitions of terms, including who is considered a NCP and what constitutes contact with a NCP, as well as guidance on how to fill in the sheet.

Agencies routinely provided run chart data to allow for analysis in real time, but some caveats should be noted. First, some agencies and some staff did not send data every month. Second, some agencies decided to expand the use of the data tracking outside of their PDSA members, but there were occasional months where they were unable to gather data from the additional staff. Finally, as some teams sent multidisciplinary teams with one or two members per practice area, their monthly data represents a very small number of cases. When needed, the data results below include an explanation of these caveats to assist with interpreting results.

At the end of the collaborative, agencies were asked their opinions on the use of the run charts. For limitations, some felt it was not representative of their practice due to the small sample size in their county, noted above. Positives include two counties who felt it did lead to greater accountability and encouraged non-PDSA Collaborative staff to use the tools. Another county stated that the use and review of the tools did highlight practice differences between professionals that had been previously unknown. Finally, some used it as a goal to push staff to have 100 percent success on every question. Multiple teams added that run charts may be most successful if the team fills in the run charts together during team meetings when they can also discuss any questions or concerns they had on their cases.

Run charts did lead some agencies to greater accountability, NCP goal-setting, and highlighted inconsistencies in practice across teammates.

Measuring Progress: IA Run Charts

Initial Assessment professionals provided monthly data on their completed Initial Assessments, and the run charts evaluate those IAs that contain a NCP. Within the six months of assessment, the total number of completed Initial Assessments that contained a NCP ranged from 49 to 68 each month. It should be noted that four of the six counties that provided IA data only reported the results of one IA professional. Therefore, the results below are best considered when looking at the red line displaying the average of all counties as compared to individual results.

The graph below displays the percent of Initial Assessments where the NCP identity was documented at or before the Initial Assessment was completed. As can be seen here, the average percent across all completed IAs began at 90 percent in October 2022, peaked at 97 percent in January 2023, and ended at 92 percent in March 2023. While this run chart does not show steady movement across these months, it is clear that there is a very high percentage of IAs that document the NCP identity.

Percent of IAs Where the NCP Identity was Documented at IA
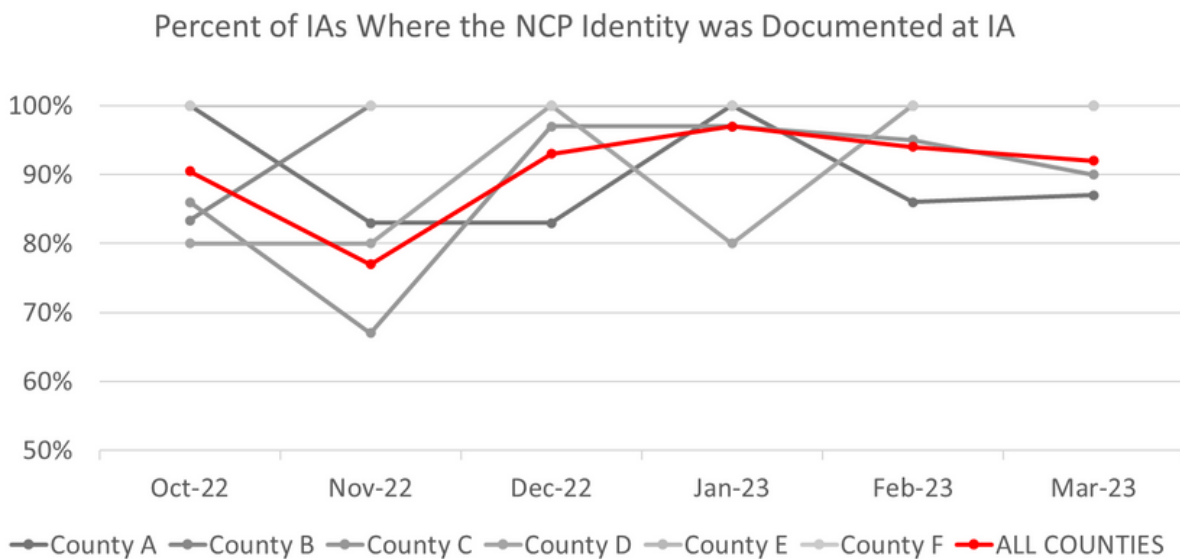
**In March 2023, 92 percent of assessed IAs
had the identity of the non-custodial
parent documented.**

18

Measuring Progress: IA Run Charts

Initial Assessment professionals were also asked to document both the extent to which IAs with NCPs had the NCP contacted during the IA, and also the extent of IAs where the NCP was not contacted due to a documented justifiable reason. These results were combined, and are seen below. Here, we see the all-county average begins at 86 percent, peaks at 97 percent in November 2022, and plateaus the last three months of the collaborative at 93 percent. While this measure would ideally be at 100 percent, it is clear that at the point of Initial Assessment, these counties had strong practice in contacting the majority of NCPs, or not contacting them for a justifiable reason.

Percent of IAs with NCP Contact or no Contact with a Documented Justifiable Reason
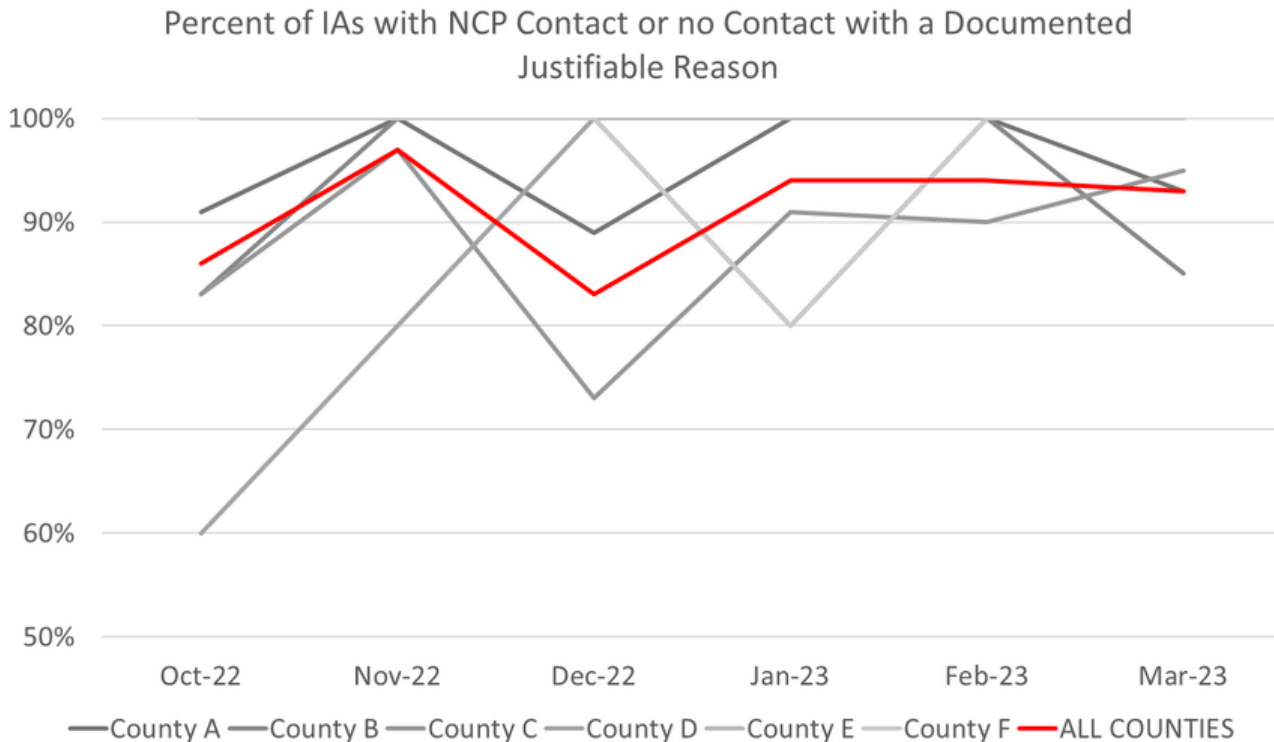
In March 2023, 93 percent of assessed IAs contacted the non-custodial parent, or did not contact due to a justified reason.

Measuring Progress: Ongoing Run Charts

Ongoing professionals provided monthly data on their open ongoing caseload. Within the six months of assessment, the total number of cases open in ongoing that contained a NCP ranged from 127 to 169 each month, within seven agencies. Within these agencies, three counties sent one Ongoing Professional, and one county did not send data for the month of November 2022. Therefore, the results below are best considered when looking at the red line displaying the average of all counties as compared to individual results. Please also note that as many professionals maintain their caseload across multiple months, many cases are counted in multiple months.

As seen in the chart below, there were modest fluctuations across the months, again likely due to the fact cases remain fairly constant over time. This chart displays the percent of Ongoing Professionals who maintain contact with the NCP and we see that professionals maintained contact with 71 percent of applicable cases in October 2022, and 76 percent in March 2023.

Percent of Ongoing Professionals Who Maintain Contact with the NCP
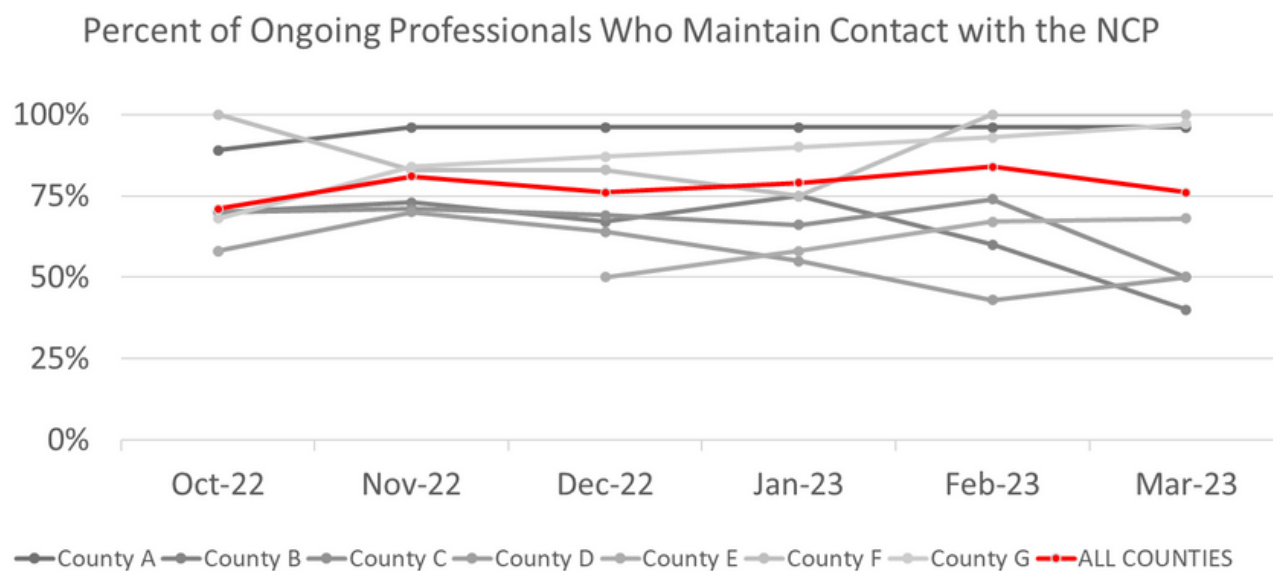
The majority of assessed cases in ongoing showed that the Ongoing Professional is in contact with the NCP, at 76 percent of cases in March 2023.

Measuring Progress: Ongoing Run Charts

Similar to the chart above looking to determine <u>Ongoing Professional</u> contact with the NCP, respondents were also asked to document the percent of <u>families</u> who maintain contact with the NCP. A smaller percent of families maintained contact with the NCP over time, as seen below. Whereas March 2023 results showed 76 percent of ongoing professionals maintain contact with the NCP, only 55 percent of families maintained contact with the NCP. This did not change greatly over time. Of the families who do maintain contact, the majority have that contact once or more each month.
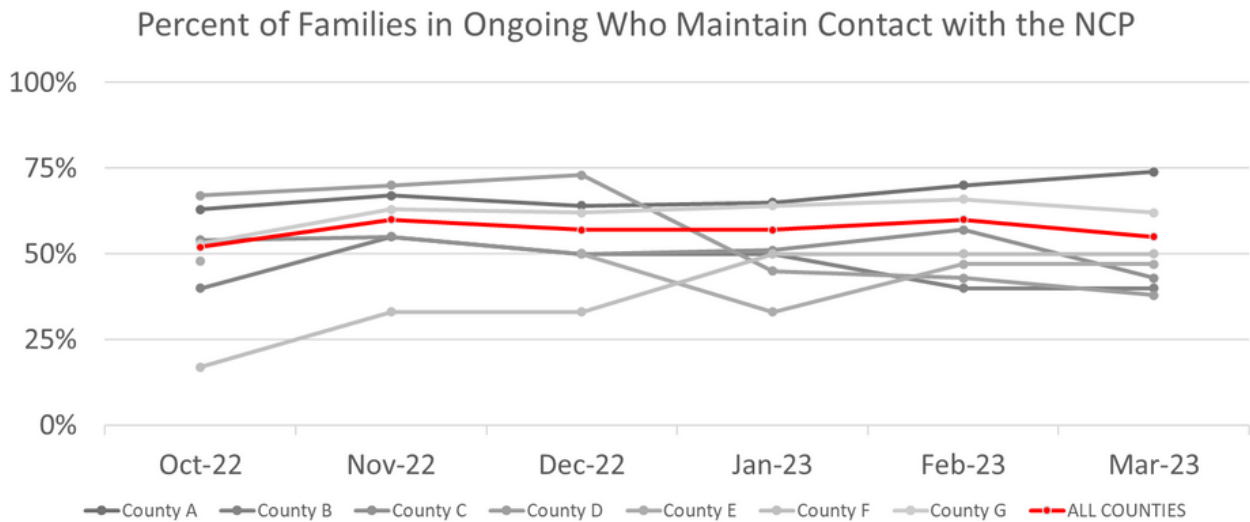
Percent of Families in Ongoing Who Maintain Contact with the NCP

In an attempt to understand if perhaps contact with the NCP was not occurring due to a documented justifiable reason, ongoing professionals tracked the extent to which they could not make contact with the NCP by cause. The results below show that as of March 2023, just under half of all cases involved families or the ongoing professional not having contact with the NCP due to a documented justifiable reason. This percent stayed the same over the collaborative. These figures documenting a rationale for not contacting the NCP helps explain why there is not greater contact with the NCP.

Percent of Families Where the Ongoing Professional and/or Family do not have Contact with the NCP and there is a Documented Justifiable Rationale Explaining the Lack of Contact
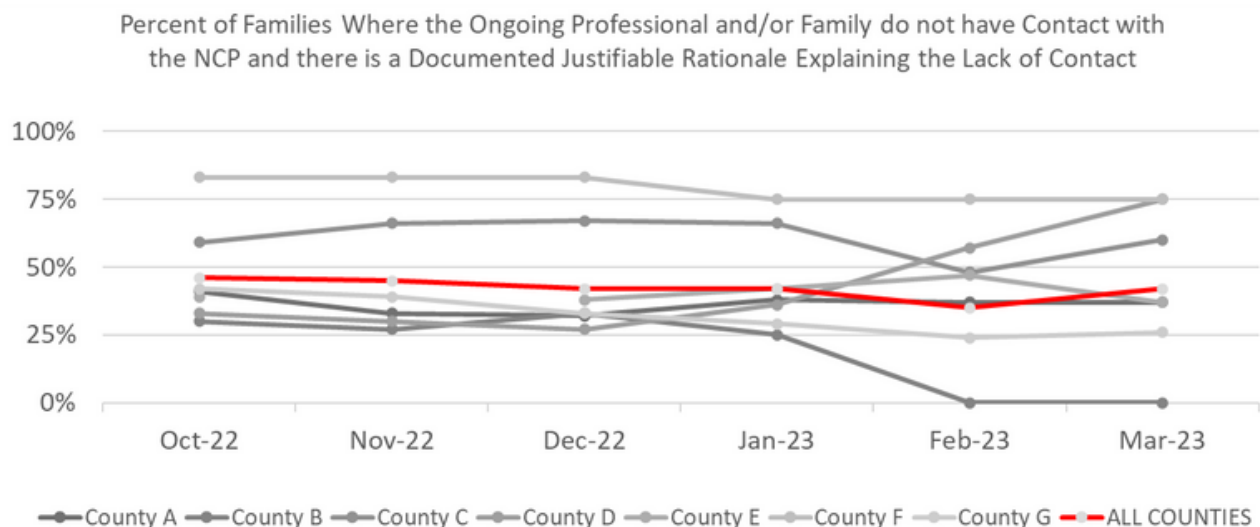
Measuring Progress: Ongoing Run Charts

Ongoing professionals also tracked the extent to which NCPs may be involved in their child(ren)'s case plan. As seen in the graph below, two thirds of cases with an NCP are involved in their child or children's case plan, and this stayed steady over time.

Percent of NCPs Involved in the Child(ren)'s Case Plan

Legend: County A, County B, County C, County D, County E, County F, County G, ALL COUNTIES
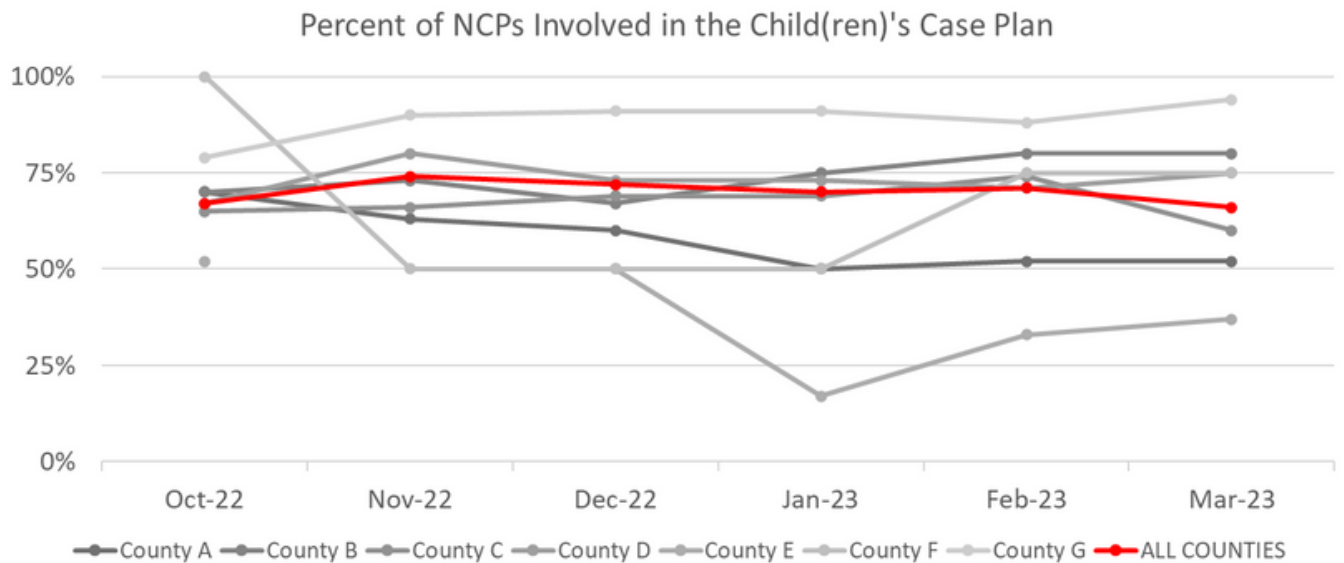
Finally, Ongoing professionals also tracked the number of unique cases where a child or children exited ongoing out-of-home care into the home of either a NCP or a NCP relative. Over the six months, the seven agencies reported that there were 44 unique cases of a child or children exiting ongoing OHC into a NCP or NCP relative home.

44

Unique cases where the child(ren) exited OHC into the NCP or NCP Relative Home.

Measuring Progress: Youth Justice Run Charts

Youth Justice professionals provided monthly data on their open YJ caseload. Within the six months of assessment, the total number of reported cases open in YJ that contained a NCP ranged from 46 to 104 each month. This wide range is due to an agency with one PDSA Collaborative YJ professional later invited other YJ professionals to provide data. This additional data was received in November, January and February. While this agency's results look very different when comparing the months with a large and small sample size, the average across all counties was not greatly affected. As with the IA and Ongoing caseload, it is best to consider the YJ data as a whole and review the red line displaying the average of all counties as compared to individual results. Please also note that as many professionals maintain their caseload across multiple months, many cases are counted in multiple months.

As seen in the chart below, there were modest fluctuations across the months, again likely due to cases remaining fairly constant over time. This chart displays the percent of YJ Professionals who maintain contact with the NCP and we see that professionals maintained contact with 54 percent of applicable cases in October 2022, and 60 percent in March 2023. This is a lower amount as compared to the Ongoing Professionals above who maintain contact with the NCP (76 percent of cases in March 2023).

Percent of Youth Justice Professionals Who Maintain Contact with the NCP
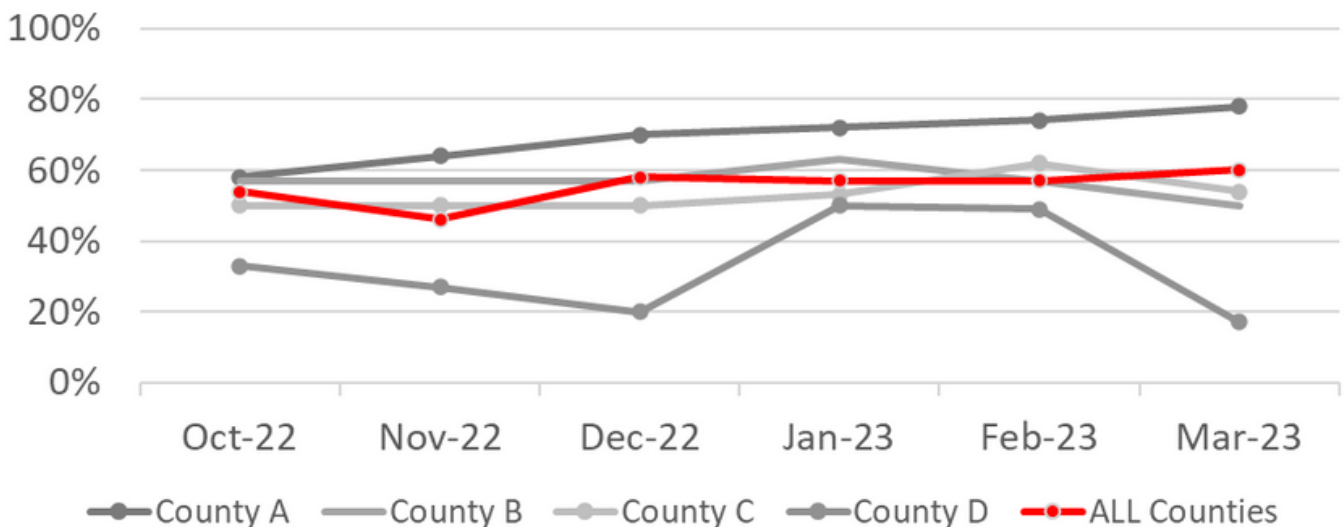
Measuring Progress: Youth Justice Run Charts

Similar to the chart above looking to determine <u>YJ professional</u> contact with the NCP, respondents were also asked to document the percent of <u>families</u> who maintain contact with the NCP. A roughly similar percent of families maintained contact with the NCP over time, as seen in the results below. Whereas March 2023 results showed 60 percent of YJ professionals maintaining contact with the NCP, 66 percent of families maintained contact with the NCP. This did not change greatly over time.
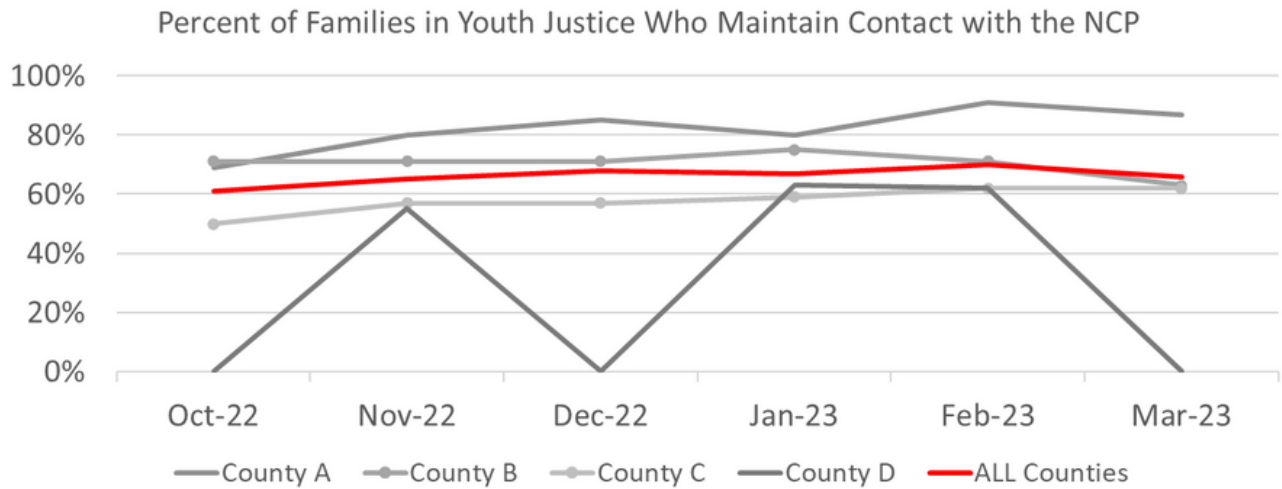
Percent of Families in Youth Justice Who Maintain Contact with the NCP

In an attempt to understand if perhaps contact with the NCP was not occurring due to a documented justifiable reason, YJ professionals tracked the extent to which they could not make contact with the NCP. As of March 2023, just under half of all cases involved families or the YJ professional not having contact with the NCP due to a documented justifiable reason. This percent stayed the same over the collaborative. These figures documenting a rationale for not contacting the NCP helps explain why there is not greater contact with the NCP.

~2/3
Percent of cases that had YJ Professional or family NCP contact.

Measuring Progress: Youth Justice Run Charts

Finally, Youth Justice professionals also tracked the number of unique cases where a youth exited youth justice out-of-home care into the home of either a NCP or a NCP relative. Over the six months, the four agencies that tracked youth justice results reported that there were eleven unique cases of a youth exiting youth justice OHC into a NCP or NCP relative home. A total of ten out of the eleven youth exited into a NCP relative home, highlighting the potential importance of NCP relatives in youth justice cases.

11

Unique cases where the youth exited youth justice OHC into the NCP or NCP relative home.

91%

Ten out of eleven youth in youth justice OHC exited OHC into a NCP relative home.

Agency Practice and Process Lessons Learned

Identifying, contacting, and engaging non-custodial parents required shared definitions, consistent efforts, and clear information-sharing strategies across all work functions. Teams had to address mindset and agency culture with multiple strategies to achieve practice changes regarding NCPs. Engagement efforts focused on practice strategies such as motivational interviewing questions and providing resource and educational materials to NCPs.

All Child Protective Services (CPS) and Youth Justice (YJ) functions:

- All teams started by <u>defining clearly</u> who is a non-custodial parent (NCP). For CPS work functions, this also included defining the justifiable reasons for not contacting the NCP.
- PDSA teams talked through whether or not child welfare responsibilities and approaches change in response to <u>difficult circumstances</u> with NCPs. For example, initial assessments (IAs) where the NCP is not involved and the case will close at the end of the IA, children in ongoing with NCPs living out of state, and youth in YJ services who do not want to engage with their NCP.

<u>Strategies</u>: access and initial assessment practice guides, child welfare cross-unit training, facilitated discussions at staff meetings.

- Teams used strategies to <u>change professionals' mindset</u> by raising awareness. NCPs are highly represented in families involved in child welfare. Most PDSA teams found at least one non-custodial parent in a moderate to high number of their families in initial assessment, ongoing, and youth justice.
- Professionals felt <u>supervision and discussion in team meetings</u> were important for raising awareness and maintain a focus on NCPs.

<u>Strategies</u>: tracking monthly counts of NCP parent contact and engagement in CPS and YJ using run charts, supervision, discussion at staff meetings and child welfare cross-unit trainings. Educational materials that engage the heart (i.e., videos and success stories) and head (i.e., agency and external data), and visual flyers posted in front-facing agency welcome areas and in staff areas.

ACCESS: Ask reporter, diligently search administrative sources, and document.

- Access aids in early identification of NCPs by asking the reporter targeted questions about who the non-custodial parent is and how to locate/contact them. Access can also perform a diligent search of CCAP and CARES to identify the NCP. Finally, document any NCP identity information gathered including name, phone, and address in eWiSACWIS.

<u>Strategies</u>: access and initial assessment guide, child welfare cross-unit training, facilitated discussions at staff meetings.

Agency Practice and Process Lessons Learned (CONT.)

INITIAL ASSESSMENT (IA): Identify and contact non-custodial parents earlier. Provide supports to IA professionals on how to make initial contact and engagement resources for non-custodial parents.

Before projects were implemented, IA professionals reported often working on identification and contact of NCPs toward the conclusion of the initial assessment. IA practice shifts included:

- Focus on asking NCP identity, location, and engagement information at <u>initial contact</u>.
- If identity and/or contact information is incomplete after initial contact, complete a <u>diligent search</u> using a customized list of search tools (for some teams in the second week of the IA process).
- <u>Professional information sources</u> such as child support, probation officers, and court reports often yielded helpful contact information. Agencies benefit from <u>maintaining good working relationships</u> with other professionals in timely response and helpfulness.
- Professionals benefitted from a <u>curated list of search engines</u> to use. Seneca search was effective.
- Bottlenecks can occur with paid search engines if agencies only have one or a few licenses that can be used by limited staff.
- IA professionals used practice guides, team discussions and supervisory support to <u>build skills in having the initial conversation</u> with a non-custodial parent including explaining their role and asking exploratory questions. Focus was made on initial contact being made in-person or over the phone when possible and letters used as a secondary option.
- If contact was made by IA, professionals appreciated having <u>engagement strategies</u> at the ready like a child welfare brochure on ways non-custodial parents can engage with the agency and with their children, co-parenting resources, family court contact information, and/or community resources for referral.

<u>Strategies</u>: initial assessment guide, search procedure/guide, training and facilitated discussions at staff meetings, supervision, brochures, community resource lists.

CASE TRANSITION (CPS and YJ): Implement a standard practice to share information about non-custodial parents at every case transition.

- Agencies added information to their <u>case transition worksheet and process</u> about: identity (who is the NCP), locate (contact information and source), contact (attempts/efforts to reach them), and engagement (their extent of involvement) allowing CPS and YJ professionals to engage NCPs more efficiently. IA professionals reported increased focus on identifying and engaging the NCP as they knew they would be asked at transition.

<u>Strategies</u>: amended case transfer checklist and staffing process.

Agency Practice and Process Lessons Learned (CONT.)

Ongoing (CPS and YJ): Practices to cue repeated search are needed. Ongoing professionals prioritized developing quality engagement strategies with non-custodial parents and supports to problem-solve barriers to engagement.

- Similar to IA, ongoing professionals developed a <u>curated list of effective search strategies</u>(both professional sources and administrative search engines) that made search efforts more manageable.
- Celebrating the small wins, ongoing professionals encouraged each other when new information was found even if it didn't lead to successful engagement. They also found that contact information for <u>NCPs changed more frequentl</u>y than expected.
- Ongoing professionals still sent <u>letters</u> to NCP via mail (if other methods were not fruitful) to engage in <u>continual efforts</u>. Agencies added information gathering questions to these letters such as if you don't want contact with the child, why is this the case, and do you have a preferred contact method we should use.
- Promising strategies for increasing quality engagement and problem-solving barriers included <u>monthly team meetings</u> focused on cases with a NCP, and preparing solution-focused questions, getting feedback on them in supervision, and using those <u>solution-focused questions</u> during contacts with NCPs.
- <u>Engagement brochures, educational materials, and community resource guides</u> that could be supplied to NCPs were developed and direct service professionals felt they helped with NCP engagement.
- CPS and YJ professionals had to address situations where youth do not want to engage with the NCP. professionals engaged in frank conversations with youth and custodial parents about the positives and negatives of relationships with non-custodial parents/relatives and shared information with youth about understanding their own boundaries and different ways they could re-engage with a NCP if they chose to in the future.

<u>Strategies</u>: search procedure/guide, amended NCP letters, unit case staffings, facilitated discussion at unit meetings, supervision, training on motivational interviewing practices, NCP brochures and community resource lists.

System Considerations

Staff Supports

Focused conversation in **supervision** and **unit meetings** that highlight the importance of NCP identification/engagement while providing training/brainstorming on concrete practice strategies were the learning venues most valued by direct service professionals.

Celebrate Wins

A direct service professional who experienced successful engagement of a NCP (i.e., times when a child/youth's well-being improved due to increased support or placement with a NCP or NCP relative occurred) can experience ripple effects in improving that **professional's practice long-term** and **encourages other staff in their practice** when successes are highlighted/shared through agency avenues.

Search Strategies

Consider developing a curated list of search procedures to save professionals' time. Provide funding for one or a few of the most successful search engines to locate people.

Keep the Focus

Supervisors benefit from administrative methods that keep NCP identification and engagement as a **recurring, standard agenda item** in supervision and staff meetings.

Highlight NCP Information-Sharing at Transitions

Agencies and families benefit from examining **case transition practices (checklists)** to ensure NCP information is discussed and shared at every applicable transition.

Measurement Brings Consistency

Teams that implemented agency-wide data measurement systems (like run charts) found that changes were **implemented more consistently across all staff**. To use systems effectively, several staff members needed to be able to answer detailed questions about measure definitions and logistics and distributed a measurement guide. PDSA teams also reported out to staff and leadership using the data. Measurement systems were used in implementation roll-out and phased out after a couple months.

Inspire with the 'Why'

Teams benefitted from having access to **videos, educational materials, and success stories** specifically related to non-custodial parents and child/youth outcomes to increase motivation and address mindset/culture.

eWiSACWIS Challenges

Teams noted that NCP contact and engagement efforts are not easy to locate in eWISACWIS as information is usually contained in narrative case notes. eWiSACWIS does not have a clear way of identifying non-custodial parents in person mangement. There is not a method of keeping track of contact information attempted by date.

Resources

Want to try these changes at your agency?

Resources, tools, and examples from 2022 PDSA Collaborative teams are available to encourage statewide sharing of practice ideas.

Looking for state & national resources on best practices for engaging non-custodial parents/relatives?

The PDSA Collaborative Change Package contains a list of best practice resources and ideas based on a literature search of national and state child welfare resources.

Want to implement organizational improvement methods at your agency?

WCWPDS hosts a website called the PDSA toolkit with videos, worksheets, and resources to learn and apply organizational improvement methods including plan, do, study, act cycles at your agency.

Find more tools, ideas, and resources (including those linked above) at:

PDSA Collaborative homepage: https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/organizational-development/organizational-process-improvement/plan-do-study-act-pdsa-collaborative/

PDSA Toolkit homepage: https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/organizational-development/organizational-process-improvement/plan-do-study-act-pdsa-collaborative/pdsa-toolkit-welcome/

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