

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

P.O. Box 419064, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9064



November 19, 2003

CSS LETTER: 03-24

ALL IV-D DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS
ALL BOARDS OF SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
REQUIREMENTS FOR FFY 2004

In striving for continued performance improvement in California's child support program, the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), in consultation with local child support agencies (LCSAs), is in the process of establishing Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2004 LCSA-specific performance targets. To facilitate the achievement of these targets, LCSAs will again be asked to prepare plans which identify specific actions to be taken to support improved program performance.

The LCSA FFY 2003 QAPI plans will serve as the basis for all future QAPI planning efforts. That is, each LCSA should be making an ongoing effort to continually identify new activities, projects and approaches which, when implemented, will result in performance improvement. DCSS anticipates that, during FFY 2004, LCSAs will continue activities that were successful in improving performance during FFY 2003, and consider new activities not considered previously as part of their performance improvement planning process for the coming year.

Consistent with this approach, LCSAs are only being asked to submit updates to their original QAPI plans. These updates will identify FFY 2004 performance targets and performance improvement activities which will be implemented during the coming year. Updates will focus only on the actions that will be taken by each LCSA to achieve its FFY 2004 performance targets and will not include a requirement that the LCSA discuss the local QAPI structure and processes, unless changes have been made to either the local QAPI team structure or processes they employ.

Reason for this Transmittal

- State Law or Regulation Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order or Settlement Change
- Clarification requested by One or More Counties
- Initiated by DCSS

To assist LCSAs, a template and two action plan samples have been included for your reference. The template, which should be used when preparing the update, is entitled the "2004 QAPI Plan Template" and is included as an attachment to this letter. LCSAs should copy the template and insert their plan update information onto the copied document. LCSAs can also access, for reference, select previously approved QAPI plans for FFY 2003 on the DCSS LCSA website by going to the "LCSA QAPI Plan Samples" link, located behind the "Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI)" link.

This letter serves as general guidance for each LCSA's use in the preparation of its FFY 2004 QAPI plan update. The update must address all of the points discussed below.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

The update must identify the local performance targets for FFY 2004. This includes those established through discussion with your DCSS Regional Administrator as well as any additional county-specific targets established for your program.

ACTION PLAN

Separate action plans must be prepared for the Collections on Current Support and Collections on Arrears performance measures. It is recognized that at the time the LCSA's update is developed, action plans addressing performance improvement may already be in progress. Because of this, the update should include these activities as well as other action plans for activities yet to be implemented for known problems and possible solutions. The update should also address problems identified for which the LCSA has not yet determined possible solutions and the action to be taken to discover and/or develop solutions. Also, in cases where a performance improvement activity will impact both collections on current support and arrears, the description of the activity should be included under only one of the action plans, with a statement of expected impact for both measures.

At a minimum, each action plan must include the following components:

❖ Problem Statement

A description of the program areas (i.e., actual functions or work activities) where improvement is needed in order to meet performance targets. The analysis should include a review of available data and a discussion of the areas of the local program which are contributing to identified performance issues, including a discussion of the root causes of the problem.

❖ Workplan

A description of the specific actions the LCSA will take to ensure that the targets are achieved during FFY 2004. These actions must be measurable, achievable and time-limited, including a beginning and end date, as well as milestones by which expected performance results will be achieved. This includes an implementation plan with timelines (indicating specific actions to be taken, which staff will be involved in those actions, and when the activities

will be completed). In addition, the analysis should include a discussion of the manner in which identified barriers will be addressed.

❖ Expected Outcomes

A discussion of the expected outcome of each action. The outcomes should be specific and quantitative (e.g., number of orders modified, number of cases closed, projected increase in current collections, etc.), and provide an estimate as to the impact on the relevant federal measure.

Detailed workplans are not needed for performance improvement activities which were described in the FFY 2003 QAPI plan and implemented last year if those activities will be continued in FFY 2004. In these cases, the action plan should simply note that these activities will be continued and include information regarding the expected outcome of the continuation of these activities. Also, as noted above, the update should include a brief description of any changes that have been made to the LCSA's QAPI structure or processes. This information should focus on any changes that have been made, and may be included as a separate document. No discussion of the structure or processes is needed if they will remain the same as those employed last year.

As LCSAs continue with the implementation of the QAPI process, it is expected that they will monitor their progress in accomplishing tasks outlined in their updates. The submission of written progress reports by the LCSA is not required; however, DCSS Quality Assurance Branch (QAB) analysts will monitor each LCSA's progress through ongoing contacts with local QAPI staff. In most cases, this monitoring process will consist of QAB analysts contacting each LCSA's QAPI staff by phone at least once a quarter to discuss the status of their performance and QAPI plan implementation efforts, as well as to discuss any other issues or technical assistance needs which the LCSA have. In some cases, DCSS staff may conduct more intensive monitoring activities (such as site visits); however, this would only be done in response to specific performance issues, or at the LCSA's request. In addition, DCSS Quality Assurance Branch analysts will be working directly with Regional Administrators in monitoring performance improvement efforts.

DCSS is aware that LCSAs may wish to include additional information regarding county-specific issues which may affect performance, performance trends, the implementation of the QAPI program during the coming year, or program issues or activities not specifically related to QAPI. The inclusion of this information in the QAPI plan update is not required; however, LCSAs may choose to address any such issues as part of the update. Any information related to these topics should be included as an attachment to the update template when the update is submitted to DCSS.

Once the LCSA-specific performance targets have been established, LCSAs will be notified of the date by which their updates are due. All QAPI plan updates will be due on the same date (as opposed to the phased submission schedule which was used for the

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FFY 2003 plans), and LCSAs will be given a reasonable amount of time after their targets have been established to allow for preparation of their updates.

Your QAB analyst will be contacting your QAPI staff to provide any assistance that may be needed with the preparation of your QAPI plan update. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need assistance regarding any issue associated with QAPI, please contact your QAB Analyst.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna S. Hershkowitz", written over a horizontal line.

DONNA S. HERSHKOWITZ
Deputy Director
Child Support Services Division

Enclosures

**Federal Fiscal Year 2004 Quality Assurance and
Performance Improvement Plan Update
(Template)**

_____ County Department of Child Support Services

LCSA FFY 2004 PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Federal Performance Measures:
(targeted percentage increase)

Collections on Current Support: _____ Percent
Cases with Arrears Collections: _____ Percent

Additional LCSA-Specific Targets:

ACTION PLAN

CASES WITH A SUPPORT ORDER ESTABLISHED

- ❖ Problem Statement

- ❖ Workplan

- ❖ Expected Outcomes

COLLECTIONS ON CURRENT SUPPORT

- ❖ Problem Statement

- ❖ Workplan

- ❖ Expected Outcomes

CASES WITH ARREARS COLLECTIONS

- ❖ Problem Statement
- ❖ Workplan
- ❖ Expected Outcomes

SAMPLE ACTION PLANS

ACTION PLAN - Increased Collections on Current Support

Problem Statement:

To meet its 2003 performance target for the Collections on Current Support measure, the LCSA must increase current collections by two percentage points. The LCSA has experienced a decrease in collections on support since the last FFY, but still maintains high performance at 61.8 percent. The LCSA will increase its current enforcement efforts, specifically it will ensure wage assignments are issued accurately and timely and will use the “driver’s license buy back program” as an enforcement tool in order to meet its performance target of 63.8%

The LCSA has identified 263 cases with a support order and no wage assignment and 108 cases in which the NCPs’ license has been revoked. The average monthly obligation of these cases is \$310. These cases will be targeted as specified below on the work plan.

Work Plan:

A workgroup of three staff, one supervisor and two child support officers will meet monthly to review reports and identify and work cases that meet the special enforcement criteria. The following actions will be taken:

- 1) Identify orders that do not have a wage assignment in place and take appropriate locate and/or enforcement action.
- 2) Monitor wage assignments to ensure payments are received, including following up with employers with any changes in the NCPs’ employment status, i.e. increase in pay, separation, bonus or lump sum payment, etc.
- 3) Dedicate a phone line for employers to call for any wage assignment inquiries, including to report any change(s) in NCP employment status.
- 4) Conduct outreach campaign to notify NCPs of license buy back program
- 5) Dedicate a phone line where NCPs can call for an appointment with the child support officer who will work with the NCP on the buy-back offer.
- 6) Train staff on specific parameters for license release and update customer service skills.

Expected Outcome:

It is anticipated that of the 263 cases with no wage assignment, 110 cases will be worked to produce a wage assignment, yielding an increase of \$34,100 in current support collections. Of the 108 cases in the license buy back program, it is anticipated that 60 cases will result in a child support payment for an increase of \$18,600 in current support. These two factors will culminate in an annualized increase of approximately \$53,000 in collections on current support which, assuming other factors remain generally the same, will allow the LCSA to achieve the 2 percentage point target.

ACTION PLAN – Increased Collections on Arrears

Problem Statement:

The LCSA is currently at 50 percent on the Cases with Arrears Collections measure. As of the end of the previous FFY, total cases with arrears due were 4,600, of which payments were made on approximately 2,300 cases. The FFY 2004 performance target equals an increase of three percentage points, which equates to an increase of 138 additional cases paying toward arrears, or an equivalent combination of an increase in paying cases and a decrease in the number of cases owing arrears.

Although the LCSA's focus has been on improving collections on current support, success in doing so will have a positive impact on arrears cases. In the action plan above addressing increased enforcement actions, success in collecting current support from a case in which no support had been collected would also mean a collection in an arrears case that previously had none. In addition the LCSA continues to address the closure of eligible cases, which is an area that has shown to inhibit the performance percentage in collections on arrears. Although this has been given attention in the past, it continues to be an area where performance can be improved through reducing the denominator in the arrears performance equation.

Under the current QAPI Plan, the LCSA has been involved in a case closure effort. Initially, 606 arrears-only cases were identified as potentially eligible to be closed because the NCP may either be disabled and receiving SSI/SSP benefits, deceased, not located in the last three years and/or contact has been lost with the CP. By the completion of the project in June 2003, 303 cases were closed, all of which received no payments on arrears in the prior FFY. This, along with other efforts, helped the LCSA achieve a five-percentage point increase in this performance measure. Through a review of system reports and the annual compliance review, the LCSA has identified a need to review an additional number of cases for closure. From these sources, it appears that as many as 300 cases could be considered for closure, for a variety of reasons.

Work Plan:

Between October 1 and December 31, 2003, case managers will be asked to survey their case files, using a set of questions to apply to eligibility for case closure. Cases meeting the criteria will be reviewed to determine if closure is appropriate and, if so, action will be initiated immediately.

Expected Outcomes:

It is expected that approximately the same percentage of cases will be closed in the upcoming project as in the one completed this year. Therefore, it is estimated that the number of cases owing arrears will be decreased by approximately 150 cases. This, combined with an increase of cases receiving at least one arrears payment resulting from the current support collection effort described in the first action plan, will ensure that the LCSA will meet its 3 percentage point target.