

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

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



September 6, 2002

LCSA LETTER: 02-30

ALL IV-D DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE
IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

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

As you are aware, the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) has been developing the Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) concept in cooperation with representatives from the Child Support Directors Association (CSDA) during the past year. We are preparing to kickoff program implementation with a presentation and discussion at the CSDA Retreat in October. This update on the current status of the QAPI program development, together with our implementation plan, is provided to permit local child support agencies (LCSAs) to further refine their QA program structure and approach.

During recent months, several program development activities have been carried out including the following:

- A workgroup comprised of DCSS, LCSA, CSDA and California Child Support Automation System (CCSAS) staff was assembled to formulate and present recommendations to the DCSS Director regarding its vision for the structure, performance indicators and measures, an ongoing process for continual refinement, and a child support program quality assurance and performance improvement process. The workgroup proposed a QAPI structure for implementation at the State and LCSA level, identified some "high reward" performance indicators, and developed the following definition for quality assurance and performance improvement:

"Quality Assurance is evaluating overall program performance on a regular basis to demonstrate that the program satisfies the relevant standards. The outcome of quality assurance is Performance Improvement."



- A manual was drafted providing a QAPI framework within which the essential business processes of the child support program are identified, defined and grouped. More specifically, the QAPI manual provides a structured approach to assessing LCSA performance in key business areas such as: federal performance measures (including data reliability); customer service; automation; case processing; administrative functions; and the LCSA's current quality assurance activities. Included within the manual are four performance areas: 1) leadership and organization; 2) business process and services; 3) support of the business process; and 4) improving organizational performance. Each of these is more specifically defined in terms of levels of the work structure, including performance category; function; and element. Included in the manual are authority citations and information regarding best practices that are implemented at the local level.
- An implementation plan was developed requiring State- and LCSA-level actions including: statewide training regarding the implementation of QAPI; development of LCSA QAPI plans; establishment of an ongoing Quality Assurance Advisory Committee; designing and programming standard and ad hoc reporting capability; State/LCSA collaboration regarding local program performance issues; and implementation of State QAPI oversight and technical assistance activities.
- The DCSS Quality Assurance Branch was restructured to more effectively work with LCSAs in the implementation of the program. Branch staff will now serve as primary staff contact for the LCSAs and work closely with the DCSS' Regional Administrators and other staff throughout the Department to form multi-disciplinary teams that will assist LCSAs in their performance improvement efforts.
- An initial set of key data elements were identified as a starting point to assist DCSS and LCSAs in assessing levels of performance and providing a road map to target improvement efforts. These performance indicators will be uniform, thereby ensuring comparisons are accurate, relevant and meaningful.

While QAPI implementation will formally begin in October, LCSAs are encouraged to take a comprehensive look at their program's current performance on federal measures (particularly Current Support Collections), and areas where efforts should be focused to bring about performance improvements during FFY 2003. Specifically, LCSA's shall consider and refine, as appropriate, their local quality assurance structure, including staffing and processes, to meet the framework and structure of QAPI. As outlined in the State Fiscal Year 2001/02 Child Support Administrative Final Allocation, examples of activities that counties should be undertaking include: establishment of the local QAPI structure and function; addition of staffing resources; definition of a strategic and organization-wide approach to managing the federal performance measures; and obtaining skill building or consulting support.

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We are very excited about the quality assurance and performance improvement structure and the invaluable assistance it will provide in focusing our attentions on child support program performance improvement. Through the implementation of QAPI, the Department and LCSAs have the opportunity to work together to improve California's child support program. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact Victor Rea, Quality Assurance Branch Chief, at (916) 464-5464 or e-mail victor.rea@dcss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

CURTIS L. CHILD
Director