

## New Jersey Qualitative Review

The Qualitative Review (QR) process assesses system performance and identifies strengths and areas for improvements to support positive outcomes for children and families. The QR is managed through Office of Quality (OQ) within the Office of Performance Management and Accountability (OPMA). QRs are conducted in all of New Jersey's twenty-one (21) counties over a two year period. Ten counties will be reviewed starting in 2016; the eleven subsequent counties will be reviewed in 2017, with this pattern remaining the same over subsequent years.

**Sample:** Each review will include a minimum of 10 cases and a maximum of 30 cases depending on the percentage of children and youth served in the county under review. Three lists will be generated for the county under review determined by the office size. The sample will consist of Placement, or "out-of-home" (OOH) (Age 0-17) cases; In-Home (INH) (Age 0-17) cases; and Adolescent (ADO) (Age 18-21) cases.

**Evaluation Instrument:** The QR examines the status of the child and family in several important areas of life, e.g. safety, stability, health, and family resourcefulness. Key practice performance areas, e.g. engagement, family teamwork, functional assessment, service effectiveness are also examined.

**Method:** Review teams review select documents in the case record as well as interview parents, child, caseworker, and others who are important to the family, e.g. schools, service providers, and other caregivers. Reviewers assign a 'score' for each indicator based on guidance provided in the QR protocol.

**Review Team:** Each QR Review Team consists of the Local Site Coordinator (LSC) who prepares the county and cases for review; the Team Lead, who manages the review process; and Reviewers who are teamed in pairs, with each pair evaluating two cases over the course of the week. Reviewers are experienced staff at the administrative level and participate in at least two reviews annually.

**Team Selection and Preparation:** Review Team members include staff from across the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as well as stakeholders from the community. Reviewers participate in at least two reviews per year in order to continually build their skills. Experienced reviewers will be paired with newer reviewers to build capacity. Reviewers do not participate in QRs in Areas in which they work.

**Review Prep:** Prior to the review week, staff validate the sample, obtain family agreements to participate, create the master schedule of interviews, and secure team space to operate. Reviewers also participate in a conference call prior to the review so logistical information can be shared and questions answered.

**Review Week:** The review lasts an entire week with opportunities for team debriefing of each case reviewed, as well as an exit conference on Friday where all the results are shared in real time.

**Reporting:** Final Reports are issued by OQ which outline key themes from the review, and noting the specific strengths, and areas needing improvement that were identified in the review process. All data is maintained by the OQ and submitted as part of New Jersey's Child and Family Services Review, Program Improvement Plan and the Modified Settlement Agreement.

**Follow-up:** After the review, an improvement plan to address areas needing improvement, and building on strengths, is developed locally for each county and subsequently tracked for implementation.