

Introduction to North Carolina's Interdisciplinary Representation Program


September 2021


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About this webinar

This webinar is made possible by funding from the NC's Court Improvement Program, part of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Developed and presented by NC's Office of the Parent Defender and the Family and Children's Resource Program at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

 NORTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of the COURTS

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SOCIAL WORK

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Goals

By the end of this webinar, we hope you will know:

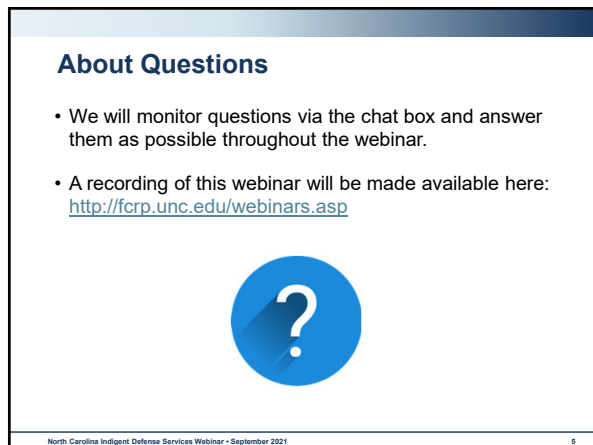
- What the IRP is
- How it benefits families and children involved with the child welfare system and those who work with them
 - Including attorneys, courts, child welfare agencies, GALs, and other stakeholders
- How the IRP will be launched and expand in NC
- What to do if you want to know more

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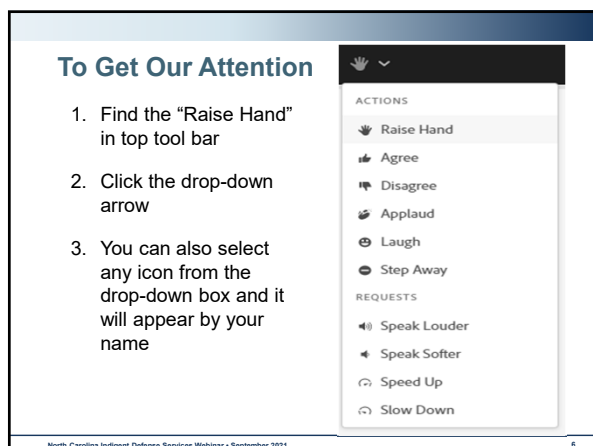
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|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Presenter | |  |
| Wendy Sotolongo, JD <i>Parent Defender at NC Indigent Defense Services</i> | | |
| Moderator | Tech Support | |
| Rick Zechman, MSW <i>UNC School of Social Work FCRP Training Specialist</i> | Phillip Armfield John McMahon | |

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NC Office of the Parent Defender

Mission
 To assist attorneys representing indigent parents in abuse, neglect, dependency (A/N/D) and termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings.
 We accomplish this goal through training programs and resources, providing consultation to attorneys and maintaining listservs.

<https://www.ncids.org/parent-representation/>

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Interdisciplinary Representation

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What Is Interdisciplinary Parent Representation?

Adding social workers to legal teams of parents involved with child welfare

- Attorneys lead legal teams
- Social worker is an agent of the attorney: extension of attorney-client privilege and client confidentiality to both team members
- Shared responsibilities and division of tasks
- Ongoing team communication
- Team members don't testify or put themselves in a position to be a potential witness
- Social workers don't replace the agency caseworker

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Why Are IRPs Needed?

- Many parent attorneys lack the time or training to be an effective advocate outside the courtroom
- Child welfare agency caseworkers have high caseloads, with a high turnover rate
- Without adequate assistance, parents are hindered from reunifying with their child in a timely fashion, if at all

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"Unlike the child welfare caseworker, a social worker teamed with a parent's attorney can look beyond the usual resources of the child welfare agency, tailor services for an individual parent, and conduct the necessary follow up to ensure the service provider is meeting the parent's needs. The social worker will have more time to spend with the parent, helping them understand the child welfare process."

— Diane Boyd Rauber

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IRPs Make an Impact

Research indicates such interdisciplinary teams can:

- Shorten lengths of stay for children in foster care
- Promote creative arrangements for visiting/family time between children and their parents
- Ensure families receive meaningful services that lead to lasting reunifications

Research from states using this approach has shown improvement in high-quality parent legal representation, reduced time in foster care for children, and expedited reunifications and permanency

(Darnel & Bassett, 2019)

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We Know this Approach Works

2011 WA study. Interdisciplinary model cut time to permanency: reunification occurs 1 month sooner (average) and adoptions/guardianship occur 1 year sooner (average).

2019 NYC study. Examined 28,000 NYC child welfare cases 2007-2014. Interdisciplinary model returned children to families 43% more often in their first year vs. solo practitioners, and 25% more often in the second year. Released children to relatives more than 2x as often in first year of case and 67% more often in the second. Studied recidivism – kids remained home safely at higher rates.

2019 CO program evaluation. Children of parents represented by interdisciplinary team averaged 141 days in out-of-home care vs. the same county's average of 172 days (returned home 1 mo. sooner); reunification rates were nearly 22% higher. In El Paso County, children reunified 2x the state rate in 2017 and 2018 in pilot cases.

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American Bar Association Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases


Engage in case planning and advocate for appropriate social services using a multidisciplinary approach to representation when available.

- Whenever possible, the parent's attorney should engage or involve a social worker as part of the parent's "team" to help determine an appropriate case plan, evaluate social services suggested for the client, and act as a liaison and advocate for the client with the service providers.

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NACC
National Association
of Counsel for Children


**National Association of
Counsel of Children**

Recognizes use of social workers as a
best practice in child welfare cases.

- NACC's Vision is that every child and family involved with the court system is well-represented by a lawyer who works to ensure that every child is raised by a nurturing family and has positive life opportunities.
- The child welfare court system works best when all parties – children, parents, and social service agencies – are represented by high-quality, well-trained lawyers who advocate for their client's interests, working together to find appropriate solutions. NACC is committed to ensuring that all parties have access to high-quality, well-resourced legal counsel.

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FJI
Family
Justice
Initiative

The Family Justice Initiative

The FJI "Attributes of High-Quality Legal Representation" identify the fundamental attributes of high-quality legal representation for parents and children in child welfare proceedings.

System attributes needed to ensure parents' and children's attorneys are properly supported to meet their individual obligations to clients address:


- Attribute 1: Caseload and Compensation
- Attribute 2: Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Practice Model
- Attribute 3: Diversity/Cultural Humility
- Attribute 4: Timing of Appointment
- Attribute 5: Support and Oversight
- Attribute 6: Accountability/Use of Data

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Who Is Using These Teams?

- NY, WA, VT, FL, CA, NM, OR, NC, CT, IL, MA, MI, NJ, PA, TX, CO
- In NC:
 - Durham and Hoke County Public Defender Offices



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Bringing the Model to NC

North Carolina's Office of the Parent Defender is conducting a formative evaluation of an interdisciplinary parent representation program

Experienced social workers will be paired with parent attorneys

Phased Implementation

Phase 1: Oct. 1, 2021 – Sept. 30, 2022

- Parent attorneys from between 3 to 6 North Carolina legal organizations will participate in Phase 1

Phase 2: Oct. 1, 2022 – Sept. 30, 2023

- Expansion

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What Will Team Social Workers Do?

Parent Support

- Encourage/motivate parents to participate in case plan;
- Provide information to parents about court proceedings and agency procedures;
- Help find court-ordered services;
- Help find concrete resources (furniture, rent money, clothing, etc.)

Interviewing and Investigation

- Interview parents to assess overall family and individual functioning;
- Help attorney find and assess alternative placement options, if necessary;
- Conduct home studies;
- Observe visits. *Does not include supervising visits. Does include preparing parents prior to visits and debriefing afterwards*
- Review case files/discovery;
- Assist the attorney in contacting service providers; and
- Research agency policies and procedures.

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What Will Team Social Workers Do? (2)

Parent Advocate

- Advocate for parent in community (e.g., agency meetings);
- Maintain contact with parent and reassess service needs throughout the case;
- Maintain contact with agency social worker to ensure services and referrals are being provided;
- Maintain contact with GAL regarding the parent's progress;
- Gain comprehensive knowledge of resources from private and public services systems (e.g., programs dealing with parenting, mental health, substance use, public assistance, housing, etc.);
- Help attorneys understand mental health and other social service aspects of the case;
- Collaborate with community and state agencies to help clients achieve their goals.

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Families Served in Phase 1

Preference will be given to cases in which:

- Neglect and dependency is alleged
- The plan is reunification; and
- The request is made within 90 days of the filing of the petition.

Only neglect and dependency cases will be considered.

Cases involving allegations of abuse will not be served by this program in Phase 1.

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Phase 1 Next Steps

- Webinar for interested attorneys (9/23 & 9/24)
- Select Phase 1 counties
- Phase 1 counties recruit social workers
- Attorney/social worker teams attend fall 2021 training aimed at supporting the successful collaboration
- Social workers attend fall 2021 training
- Social workers participate in an ongoing learning community



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Phase 1: Evaluation

Will measure differences between IRP and traditional representation in terms of:

- case outcomes
- case costs

Other process information to be collected:

- staffing levels
- activities performed
- time and resource allocation



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Upcoming Event for Parent Attorneys


Interested parent attorneys need to:

- Be present for this introductory webinar or listen to the recording **and**
- Attend **one** of the following attorneys-only webinars:
 - September 23, 9:00 - 10:00 am
 - September 24, 1:00 - 2:00 pm
- During the 9/23 & 9/24 events we will cover
 - Requirements for participating in Phase 1
 - Expectations of participating attorneys
 - How to apply


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**Parent Attorneys,
If You Are Interested:**



Sign up for the mailing list



CLICK HERE:
<https://bit.ly/3hwr48D>



Express interest in participating in 2021

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Questions




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Type into Chat . . .


What is one thing you learned today that you
would like to hear more about?
OR
What questions do you have?



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Contact Information




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Thank you for your participation today.



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