OPD OFFICE OF THE PARENT DEFENDER

Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program

The mission of the Office of the Parent Defender's Interdisciplinary Parent Representation (IPR) Program is to defend the rights of parents navigating the abuse, neglect, and dependency system in North Carolina by providing high quality, holistic representation through zealous legal advocacy in and out of court coupled with strengths-based, compassionate, and comprehensive social work services.

July-September 2023 Report

End of September, 2023	IPRP started 12/1/2022	IPRP started 10/1/2022	IPRP started 11/1/2022	IPRP started 2/1/2023	IPRP starts 10/1/2023
County	**Buncombe**	**Cleveland**	**Mecklenburg**	**New Hanover**	**Wake**
Assignments (from IPR program start)	82	38	24	39	0
Open (ACTIVE)	53	30	18	32	0
Open (INACTIVE)	7	1	1	2	0
Closed	22	7	5	5	0
Close Type - Client Declined Services	5	2	2	1	0
Close Type-Attorney Withdrew	7	0	0	1	0
Close Type-Case Resolved	10	5	2	3	0
Close Type-Other	0	0	1	0	0

News and Updates

County work:

- Buncombe-New contract SW hired to fill vacancy. She starts 10/16/2023.
- Site visits by Program Manager to Cleveland 8/31/2023 and New Hanover 9/29/2023.
- Wake: Attorneys and SW completed training on 7/21/2023. SWs will begin casework 10/1/2023.

Program Work:

Continued collaboration with UNC School of Social Work's Family and Children's Resource Program by:

- Creating an Executive Summary for the IPR Program
- Rewriting the IPR Program Guide
- Updating the IPR Program forms

Community Connections:

- IPR Program Manager met with the NC NASW Executive Director on 9/8/2023 to provide an orientation to the IPR Program.
- IPR Program Manager was a guest lecturer for a Duke Children and the Law class on 9/14/2023.

Meet the Team

Sharice Zachary, Interdisciplinary Program Manager, possesses a Master of Social Work, along with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. She has 5+ years of professional experience within the public and nonprofit sectors providing direct social work and supervision. She joined the Office of the Parent Defender in August 2022.

What do you find most rewarding about being the Program Manager for the IPR Program? Witnessing the direct positive changes to the lives of the parents who are receiving the services! I routinely receive emails from our social workers highlighting the successes parents are experiencing. Everything from obtaining housing and employment, being granted unsupervised visits with their children, and even getting text messages from their clients thanking them for just being there to listen. This program is amazing, and I am blessed to be a part of it.

Success Stories

I just wanted to share a story about one of my clients. In the last month, she has been able to get a job, set up transportation, start counseling, and move closer to obtaining housing. During a recent home visit, the DSS SW informed her they recommend changing the plan to adoption. And while she initially did get upset, she calmed down once I explained the process and encouraged her to keep making progress. Before leaving, she hugged me and told me she was so glad I was there and thanked me for helping her.

I just wanted to thank you and everyone at the Office of the Parent Defender for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. It is an honor to partner with all of you and come alongside these parents for support, even in the smallest ways.

Tieshia Bell
Interdisciplinary Representation Program
Contract Social Worker
New Hanover County, NC

OPD CONTACT INFORMATION 919-354-7230

Wendy Sotolongo, State Parent Defender
Wendy.C.Sotolongo@nccourts.org

Sharice Zachary, Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Program Manger
Sharice.J.Zachary@nccourts.org