



**SUMMARY RESULTS**  
of  
**THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY OF STATE LIAISON**  
**OFFICERS**

*Background*

The National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS), a service of the Children's Bureau (CB), is assisting the CB with its responsibilities for supporting YOU, the State Liaison Officers (SLOs) for Child Protective Services. The SLOs are those staff persons identified by the 52 jurisdictions as having responsibilities for their respective jurisdiction's CAPTA grant.

To help inform, shape and guide the support given to the SLOs, an electronic survey was distributed in February to the 52 of you who had been identified as your jurisdiction's SLO. The survey's intent was to help learn from you what you need and prefer regarding information and methods for communicating in order to truly support your responsibilities.

Thirty of the 52 jurisdictions responded to the survey and the information that follows serves to summarize the responses received.

Because of the importance of this direct feedback from you, the SLO, in shaping and guiding how we can be useful to you, *it is not too late to participate in this survey*. As the summarized responses below will demonstrate, the SLO group is diverse and subject to changing work assignments. If you are your jurisdiction's SLO and did not receive a survey or did not have time to complete a survey earlier but would like to register your thoughts and preferences now, we believe it will only be of help to us to learn if these results should be refined/revised by hearing from more of you.

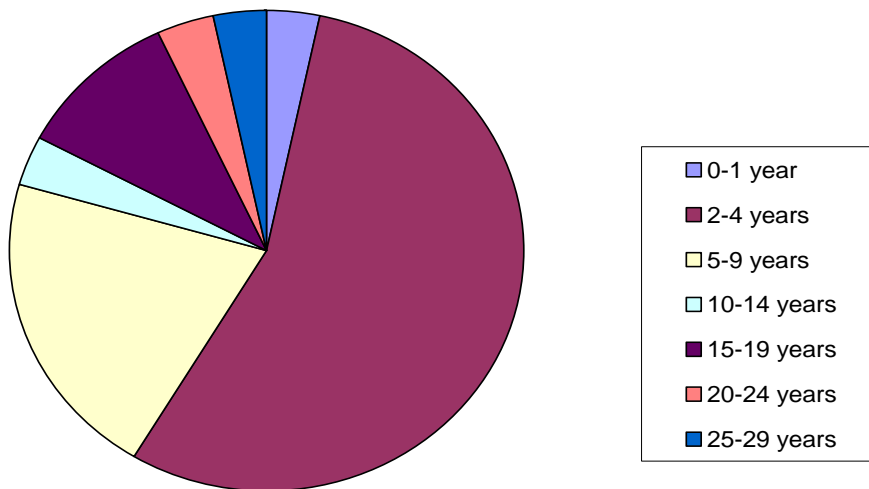
*If you would like to have an electronic survey sent to you, please send an email with this request to: [lindsey.cline@actionchildprotection.org](mailto:lindsey.cline@actionchildprotection.org)*

## WHO ARE THE SLOs?

### *Tenure*

**40% of the respondents of the survey have been serving as their jurisdiction's SLO for two years or less. While other respondents had more tenure, interesting results regarding the greater clarity many of you wish you had regarding your SLO responsibilities are summarized later. Greater tenure does not appear to change your need for greater clarity regarding your SLO responsibilities.**

How long have you had the responsibilities of an SLO?



**Further informing us regarding the responsibilities carried out by SLOs was the fact that only slightly over half of the respondents told us that SLO responsibilities are carried out solely by themselves. Instead, of those who said you do not solely carry out these responsibilities, 69% said you delegate some or all of these responsibilities to others, while the other respondents indicated that SLO responsibilities are shared with others in your respective agencies.**

### *Job Responsibilities*

**SLOs won't be surprised by survey results that showed that a great many job responsibilities are assigned to you besides your SLO responsibilities.**

**The survey respondents represent supervisors, managers and administrators of direct service agencies as well as state (central office) agency specialists and managers with program, policy, training and legislative liaison responsibilities. All aspects of the direct and indirect functions of overseeing and delivering child welfare services are reflected in the survey respondents' answers. The group has a variety of expertise in the above areas as well as data (i.e., SACWIS), quality assurance, contract administration, community development, and cross-coordination with the court system.**

**One third of the respondents have job responsibilities that extend beyond Child Protective Services programs. These include Independent Living, Adult services, Probate, Adoption and Juvenile Justice program responsibilities.**

### *CFSR/PIP Involvement*

**Your involvement in your respective states' Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) processes has been considerable and consistent with the expertise and the significant responsibilities you have regarding not just SLO and Child Protection requirements but all aspects of child welfare services.**

**Approximately 90% of the respondents have been involved with their state's self-assessment process, the subsequent CFSR process, the development of their state's PIP and the monitoring of their state's progress with the PIP. 100% of you report that you receive regular updates on your state's CFSR/PIP process. In fact, many of you report that you have the responsibility for initiating these updates, by having direct and/or oversight responsibility for monitoring and writing the reports regarding your PIP's progress.**

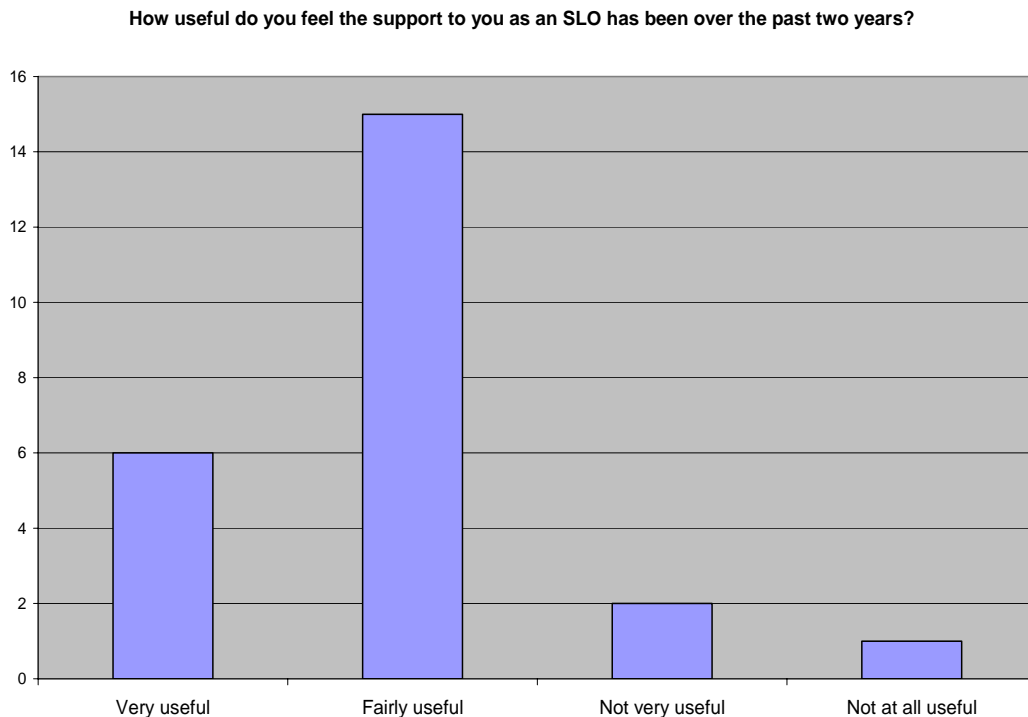
### **CLARITY REGARDING THE SLO RESPONSIBILITY**

**Over half of the respondents told us that the purpose and expectations of the SLO have not been communicated or explained by the Children's Bureau. Common themes reflected in comments were uncertainty about expectations, a desire for more information and an opportunity to hear and discuss the role expectations.**

Of those who told us they felt the purpose of the SLO has been explained, their subsequent comments reflected a variety of ideas about their understanding of the role. The themes included PIP involvement, giving CB staff information, managing the CAPTA grant, implementing Federal mandates and responding to requests for information from other states.

As one respondent commented, there was “*never any specific discussion on the actual responsibilities but after several years of participating and working with SLOs, you get the picture.*” And perhaps reflective of the average workload of SLOs, one respondent commented, “*Not sure I want expectations communicated.*”

## **WHAT HAS WORKED FOR SLOs IN THE PAST**



### ***Support***

A little over half of the respondents felt that support received over the past two years has been “fairly useful,” while approximately 20% of the respondents felt the

support received has been “very useful.” One comment indicated that support seems to have increased in the past two years.

### *Participation in Activities*

56% of the respondents have attended SLO meetings over the past two years and three quarters of the respondents have used information from, provided information to, and asked a question via the SLO listserv. Comments revealed that agency budget problems prevent many of you from regularly attending meetings but the listserv has been a great help to support you.

### *Information that has been Helpful*

SLOs were asked on what topics or issues over the past two years have they received helpful information from the CB and Resource Centers regarding aspects of their SLO responsibilities and needs. 45% of the respondents included receiving information about CAPTA requirements as part of their answer.

Other frequently mentioned issues included risk and safety assessment, CFSR findings among the states, citizen review panels, PIP development, referral processes to IDEA programs, and information on current trends, practice and research.

A clear message from the comments is that you value hearing from and about each other, whether it occurs in meetings, through email, the listserv, or by way of updates from the Resource Centers.

### *Methods Used to get Helpful Information*

Related to the above question, SLOs were asked how they obtained the information that was helpful to them over the past two years. A variety of methods were used, including the following, which is are listed in order of the frequency identified:

- SLO listserv
- SLO meetings
- Written communication
- Email
- Teleconference
- Site visits by Resource Centers and/or Federal Regional staff
- Websites
- Conferences

**Multiple methods were used by all the respondents to obtain helpful information. On the average, each respondent identified 3 methods they had used to obtain helpful information.**

## **WHAT DO SLOs WANT FOR FUTURE SUPPORT?**

### *Information*

**The survey asked SLOs an open ended question regarding what topics/issues are most important to hear about and discuss. 29 respondents listed almost 100 duplicated topics, which could be categorized into 26 unduplicated topics.**

**The most frequently cited topics, in order of frequency, included:**

- **Workload (54%)**
- **CAPTA (46%)**
- **Supervision (31%)**
- **Citizen Review Panels (27%)**
- **Safety decision making throughout the case (23%)**
- **Differential Response (23%)**
- **CFSR/PIP issues (19%)**
- **Promising practices in other states (12%)**
- **Working with the court (12%)**

### *Activities and Methods*

**Almost 80% of you who completed the SLO survey said you were fairly to very likely going to attend the SLO CAPTA grantee meeting in Boston. Of those who were not very or not at all likely to attend, comments included conflicts with vacation, legislative session, or having some representative there, but perhaps not the designated SLO.**

**Regarding the methods for information sharing at face to face meetings, such as the SLO annual meeting, a mix of expert presentations with time for group discussion and questions was mentioned as a preference from all respondents.**

**When face to face meetings are not available as a method, you stated that using email and/or the SLO Listserv, teleconferencing and video conferencing (including webcasts) as the next preferred methods to discuss topics and receive updates.**

**Further exploration of methods to best communicate about important issues and in general offer support revealed the following:**

- **99% of you would be fairly likely to very likely to read an electronically distributed newsletter on SLO news**
- **89% of you would be fairly likely to very likely to participate in a teleconference call on a topic specific to SLO needs**
- **75% of you would be fairly likely to very likely to access news specific to SLOs on the NRCCPS website**

**Comments made regarding the above methods included:**

- *“As long as the letter was very brief, specific, bullet points, I would be more likely to read it.”*
- *(Regarding website news) “If I were prompted...;” “I would like...to have an alert that the most recent news was posted...;” “It’s more efficient for me to have the news sent....than for me to seek it out.” and “I would delegate this..”*

## **IF SLOs WERE IN CHARGE OF THE SUPPORT EFFORT**

**Asking essentially if you ruled the world and were going to start up a new approach to supporting SLOs, what is something you would do differently, the following comments were made:**

- **more frequent updates**
- **more targeted communication**
- **more information from the CB**
- **semi annual regional meetings in addition to the national annual meeting**
- **provide an overview of the responsibility of SLOs; clear orientation session**
- **more Resource Center involvement in the Listserv in response to questions**
- **more personalized follow-up**
- **better availability to answer questions**
- **assure a meeting every year for 2 to 2 ½ days**
- **CB should use the Listserv more to GET information**
- **ask SLOs for questions regarding a topic and answer all in one email**
- **quarterly teleconferences**
- **provide guide of duties, responsibilities, rights, and regularly send updates on current topics, policy changes, etc. to SLO**
- **structuring things so SLOs have plenty of advance notice, agendas, and what is expected**
- **more in-depth information**

- more TA days to the states
- look at whether SLOs are still needed
- more teamwork and child advocacy
- publish something that talks about the responsibilities of an SLO and give direction to the Regional Offices to support states in fulfilling that role

### **OTHER COMMENTS TO HELP SHAPE THE SUPPORT TO SLOs**

- newsletters regarding PIP progress and hot topics would be great on Listserv
- this survey is a great step
- CB and NRCCPS have some great people that can help with improving CPS, so the more dialogue with SLOs the better
- discuss CAPTA assurances
- annual SLO meetings are the most helpful meetings I attend all year
- staff turnover is in crisis; attention needs to be given to this
- would like to know how many states put a lot of importance in assigning a position to SLO responsibilities

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The information gathered in this survey has already helped guide CB and NRCCPS activities in considering SLO needs and how best to support them. Further support efforts will use these responses as an essential route to follow. As a reminder, if you are an SLO and would still like to complete a survey, email your request for the survey to: [lindsey.cline@actionchildprotection.org](mailto:lindsey.cline@actionchildprotection.org)