

HUMAN SERVICES MODEL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE  
FOCUS GROUP REPORT

September 9, 2013

**Introduction**

On September 4-5, Task Force Facilitators Gail Nordheim and Gerry Born held stakeholder focus groups in Langlade, Lincoln, and Marathon Counties. In each county, separate focus groups were held for the following stakeholder groups:

- County Employees
- Legal and Law Enforcement
- Community Partner Agencies
- Consumers

The facilitators began each session by describing the Task Force, its charge, and the reasons it is considering increased human services collaboration. They described current system for providing Chapter 51 and Social Services in the 3-county area.

The three options under consideration by the Task Force were introduced:

- Option 1—Status Quo with efforts to increase collaboration
- Option 2—Human Services Collaboration Advisory Committee
- Option 3—Multi-County Human Services Department through NCHC

Focus group participants discussed each option, identifying advantages and disadvantages of each and providing comments and opinions.

A total of 105 people attended the focus groups, as follows:

County	Employees	Partner Agencies	Legal and Law Enforcement	Consumers
Langlade	14	24	8	2
Lincoln	9	2	5	7
Marathon	14	10	6	4

Stakeholder feedback from each session is summarized in this report.

Two additional focus groups will be held: Marathon County judges on September 17, and a focus group for anyone unable to attend an earlier focus group, on September 19 at 10:30, at 212 River Drive (Rooms 1 & 2), Wausau. Additional input from these sessions will be added to the final version of this report.

# Option 1—Status Quo with efforts to increase collaboration

---

## County Employees

What do you see as the most important advantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Langlade County programs work well together—Juvenile Court, Social Services, ADRC, and Income Maintenance. Their close physical proximity is a big advantage.</li> <li>• The experience working in the Central Income Maintenance Consortium has been positive.</li> <li>• Local access and consistent support from the same worker is important and beneficial for income maintenance customers. Approximately 80% of income maintenance applications are “walk-ins” (rather than applying via the Internet or phone).</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The county can work under its own philosophy.</li> <li>• Emphasize keeping children in their own home and providing services</li> <li>• Strong individual relationships with consumers and local agencies, and within the Social Services Department.</li> <li>• Employees can work in the community where they live.</li> <li>• See no advantage in joining with other counties.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marathon Social Services has a strong relationship with the DA’s office and judges.</li> <li>• There are many resources available for customers through Marathon DSS. Examples include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Intensive Supervision Services</li> <li>○ Residential Treatment</li> <li>○ Specialized Foster Homes</li> <li>○ Family Resource Center (Children’s Service for visitation; supervised / monitored visits)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There is good collaboration and coordination between Marathon DSS and NCHC Birth-to-Three.</li> </ul>

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?**

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see more services available to customers.</li> <li>• There are long waiting lists for NCHC services. This does not work for people experiencing mental health crises.</li> <li>• NCHC sometimes won't accept referrals from Juvenile Court, saying they don't meet criteria.</li> <li>• <u>Generally poor relationship with NCHC.</u> NCHC is unwilling to change despite ongoing discussions.</li> <li>• Income maintenance consortiums have resulted in reduced worker continuity for clients.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources in a small county.</li> <li>• Understaffed, lack of clerical support at times.</li> <li>• Could be more efficient.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little or no integration of Marathon child welfare with MH/AODA services provided by NCHC.</li> <li>• The NCHC crisis bed does not have consistent staffing available, so Marathon Child Welfare no longer asks to use it.</li> <li>• There is considerable variation among people on the Mobile Crisis team in terms of the quality of services provided.</li> <li>• NCHC does not have the capacity to meet child psychiatrist needs. Marathon had to contract with Ministry Health to provide psychiatric services for a new program since NCHC did not have capacity to support program needs.</li> <li>• NCHC has long waiting list for child assessments.</li> <li>• Confusion about billing responsibility for Comprehensive Community Services, Children's Long-term Support Waiver between county and NCHC. Children's Long-term Support Waiver could potentially be used to offset costs associated with children in Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice Programs, but this does not happen because the programs are administered separately.</li> <li>• Mobile Crisis team requires police to bring person in, rather than coming out and meeting with the person at their location.</li> <li>• NCHC frequently declines "51.15's" (Emergency Detention). Adults with serious mental health problems end up in jail where they are not given adequate care.</li> <li>• NCHC frequently responds to requests for assistance with a child by saying that the problem is "behavioral", not mental illness, and therefore not appropriate for NCHC involvement. Sometimes for children who are threatening harm or who are suicidal, they will try to evaluate them by phone rather than in person.</li> <li>• NCHC does not support foster parents of mentally ill children in developing crisis/safety plans.</li> <li>• Slow response time by NCHC.</li> <li>• Large geographic area to be served. Different resources are available in the western part of the county, where residents identify more with Wood County.</li> </ul>

**Other comments**

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The counties have different philosophies about services. Langlade is closer to Marathon than to Lincoln in philosophy (though Marathon has many more resources).</li> <li>• Langlade used to contract for Energy Assistance, but it now provides it directly. It is very important to keep this program local.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marathon Child Welfare does not generally use NCHC for mental health services for its customers, and it almost never uses it for AODA services. Marathon has contracted with other vendors to provide these services.</li> <li>• Marathon Child Welfare also has a separate provider to work in the schools.</li> </ul>

***Legal and Law Enforcement***

What do you see as the most important advantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langlade Juvenile Court system works very well. Don't change it. Juvenile Justice employees do an excellent job.</li> <li>• Social workers are always available to work with law enforcement.</li> <li>• Good relationship between public defender, police, sheriff.</li> <li>• In Langlade, similar situations are treated similarly. In other counties, there is inconsistency in treatment with very different outcomes for the same offense.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local control and ability to set priorities.</li> <li>• Unhindered access to providers.</li> <li>• More personalized service in a small county.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law enforcement has a good working relationship with Marathon Social Services.</li> <li>• Some participants indicate that NCHC provides successful counseling in the schools (see also disadvantages, below).</li> <li>• NCHC is doing a good job providing Adult Protective Services.</li> </ul>

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCHC has long waiting lists for counseling in schools. Can be a 3 ½ month wait, even with a suicidal child.</li> <li>• Having APS and Mobile Crisis team centralized in Wausau is a disadvantage in terms of accessibility of service.</li> <li>• NCHC service quality is poor.</li> <li>• "Jails are fallout for people who aren't served."</li> <li>• Mobile crisis team staff can be rude.</li> </ul>
---	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCHC sometimes refuses 51.15 emergency detention even when the person has received medical clearance.</li> <li>• Bath salts are a major problem in Langlade County. NCHC staff say that this is not treatable. They do basic treatment and release the people to jail. But these people are frequently suicidal. This is a huge burden to the jails.</li> <li>• Many meetings have been held to address problems between Langlade and NCHC but little progress is seen.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some services are lacking.</li> <li>• There is a disconnect between child welfare and mental health services for children. The schools don't know how to access services for children with mental health issues.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting services to keep people out of jail is a big problem.</li> <li>• Some participants indicate that NCHC is non-responsive in the schools (see also advantages above).</li> <li>• County funding for services to the indigent goes to NCHC, limiting choice for those people.</li> <li>• Mobile crisis is unresponsive.</li> <li>• Social Services cannot be involved in many police investigations because of screen-out criteria.</li> </ul>

**Other comments**

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past collaboration through NCHC should not be characterized as "successful".</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see NCHC dissolved and a Marathon County Human Service Department created in its place.</li> <li>• Marathon is "leaps and bounds" ahead of Langlade and Lincoln in its programming.</li> <li>• Concern that NCHC's dashboard employee compensation system may be a disincentive to authorizing readmissions.</li> </ul>

**Partner Agencies**

**What do you see as the most important advantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?**

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The county and its partner agencies generally work together very well. This includes schools, juvenile justice, social services, law enforcement, and the health department.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship with county staff.</li> </ul>

Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to contract with counties to be a provider.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to working locally.</li> <li>• Local relationships enhance services.</li> <li>• Great services, positive culture.</li> <li>• Localized response to client needs.</li> <li>• Upper management has clear idea of what these programs deliver.</li> </ul>

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?**

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can take NCHC 2-3 months to get into the schools to provide mental health services.</li> <li>• Income Maintenance services can be confusing if workers assigned to the person changes. This sometimes happens through the consortiums.</li> <li>• NCHC Mobile Crisis will not come to Antigo.</li> <li>• NCHC's service level in the schools is decreasing. They must rely more on the police.</li> <li>• Suicidal children are not addressed proactively.</li> <li>• There is routinely a 45 minute wait time when calling into the Central Income Maintenance Consortium on behalf of a consumer.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not much collaboration. Hard to obtain services from one county to the next. Not as many services available in smaller communities.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of some services due to not enough need or funds.</li> <li>• Generally, the current system has many more advantages than disadvantages.</li> </ul>

**Other comments**

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an extreme shortage of mental health services north of Highway 29. Mental health services should be doubled or tripled. Feel that mental health services have eroded; we can't afford more reductions. There is already too much reliance on law enforcement. (It was noted that NCHC is seeking to get more psychiatrists and mental health counselors.)</li> </ul>
----------------------------------	--

## **Consumers**

**What do you see as the most important advantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?**

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Langlade social workers are very accessible, and will come out and help quickly if there is a problem. Phone calls are returned promptly.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and director know the people and are able to call them by name.</li> <li>• Good relationships with staff.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advantages identified.</li> </ul>

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?**

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When Birth-to-Three is called, the foster parent has to wait until the worker is available in the county. This may take 2 weeks. When you need a rapid response, you can't wait that long.</li> <li>• Specialized counseling for children with Reactive Detachment Disorder (RAD) is very hard to find. Foster parent must drive 2 hours to Eagle River, without mileage compensation.</li> <li>• Foster parents need more education.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have to work through Lincoln County to get referrals for foster child placements. Would prefer being able to work directly with other counties.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is too much emphasis on business and money, not enough for kids.</li> <li>• Too much routine intervention for foster parents, but when we need social worker help they're not there.</li> </ul>

### **Other comments**

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For society in general, there is too much concern about rights of the parent, and not nearly enough about rights of the child. This foster parent recognizes that the county social service department does not have control over this, since this policy is set at state or federal level.</li> </ul>
---------------------------	---

# Option 2—Human Service Collaboration Advisory Committee

---

## County Employees

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 2?

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No advantages identified.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would allow for local control.</li> <li>May provide for additional services.</li> <li>Not much change from current system.</li> <li>Could allow for sharing of service opportunities and increased knowledge of each county's strengths and weaknesses in service provision.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would keep county autonomy. Would not have to blend cultures.</li> <li>Could be a forum for discussing major issues.</li> <li>Could help address issues of service duplication and provide for streamlining.</li> <li>Could help address crisis services.</li> <li>Could help understanding of the limitations and needs of each organization.</li> </ul>

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 2?

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk that people involved on the committee may not really understand the work. They would need to be truly invested.</li> <li>Given the very different ability to pay among the three counties, there is a question of how well collaborations could work.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is hard to expand services.</li> <li>Would not necessarily result in change. Collaboration is tough.</li> <li>Marathon County has more administrative staff and could dominate the committee.</li> <li>Counties won't collaborate if there is no perceived benefit.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern about decisions based on limited knowledge. There is a risk that the people on the committee will not understand the root causes of problems, and that they will make recommendations that will not be effective.</li> <li>Collaboration is not necessarily good. Like local autonomy.</li> <li>The three counties are very different. Marathon can do lots of things that the other counties cannot.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timing and logistics for a committee could be challenging.</li> </ul>
--	--

**Other comments**

Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that services be distributed equally to each county.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be very important to understand why things are not working well before coming up with solutions.</li> <li>• Committee membership is crucial. Turnover in membership could reduce effectiveness of the committee.</li> </ul>

**Legal and Law Enforcement**

**What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 2?**

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langlade could potentially purchase services from Marathon (on-call emergency team; intensive in-home services).</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a structure for considering collaboration.</li> <li>• Could potentially provide a range of treatment options.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advantages identified.</li> </ul>

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 2?**

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No disadvantages identified.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential gridlock.</li> <li>• Resistance of county employees to collaboration proposals.</li> <li>• Turf issues.</li> <li>• County Boards are not agents of change.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are already lots of meetings about issues of concerns.</li> <li>• Lincoln and Langlade would benefit more from collaboration than Marathon.</li> </ul>

**Partner Agencies**

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 2?

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This committee could be a “think tank of possibilities”, providing alternatives and fostering new thinking.</li> <li>• It is proactive rather than reactive.</li> <li>• The region is ready for this (but not ready for Option 3).</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More opportunity for collaboration to better serve clients.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear commitment to collaboration for the interest of children and families.</li> <li>• Clear route to begin to look at opportunities for shared services.</li> <li>• Can bring involved people to the table.</li> <li>• Able to test collaboration activities.</li> <li>• A way to explore service ideas and best practices.</li> <li>• Could lead to increased efficiency.</li> <li>• Can have innovation and collaboration without organizational change.</li> <li>• Would like to implement Option 2 even if the decision is to work towards Option 3 full integration.</li> </ul>

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 2?

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional bureaucracy can slow things down.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since collaboration would be optional, it may not take place.</li> <li>• Some members of some agencies may create obstacles to moving forward with new ideas.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should focus on collaboration within Marathon County.</li> <li>• There may not be motivation to change.</li> <li>• There may be reluctance to share data, information and outcomes of programs and services.</li> </ul>

**Other comments**

Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would things get done if the counties did not agree?</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep an open mind, let go of politics and work for better services.</li> </ul>

## **Consumers**

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 2?

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No advantages identified</li></ul>
Lincoln County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not much change.</li></ul>
Marathon County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No advantages identified.</li></ul>

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 2?

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No disadvantages identified.</li></ul>
Lincoln County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More people getting involved may confuse programs. Don't want more red tape.</li></ul>
Marathon County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There does not appear to be benefit to Marathon in collaborating with poorer counties. How can collaboration make things better? Marathon is likely to lose more than it will gain.</li></ul>

# Option 3: Multi-County Human Services Department through NCHC

---

## County Employees

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 3?

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would be able to capture additional funding through the Children’s Long-term Support Waiver if the Waiver and Child Welfare/Juvenile Justice services were in the same department.</li> <li>• Staff could be paid equally in each county when doing the same job.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamlined services</li> <li>• More benefits and services</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could increase opportunity for child welfare social workers to partner with mental health providers.</li> <li>• It is proactive.</li> <li>• Could be an opportunity to improve services—for example in the western part of Marathon County. Might be able to arrange for more geographic specialization.</li> </ul>

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 3?

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past experience with NCHC indicates that they are not skilled in dealing with difficult children.</li> <li>• Concern about losing “homegrown personal service” with easy access for customers.</li> <li>• A goal of a “common level of service” is not reasonable, since the counties are not the same.</li> <li>• Many case managers have had to find service providers other than NCHC because they haven’t been able to depend on NCHC in the past.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing Income Maintenance Consortium may be problematic.</li> <li>• Concern about why NCHC is so interested—what are the benefits to them?</li> <li>• Need to get state permission</li> <li>• Impact on employee salary and benefits, location, whether employees must reapply for job.</li> <li>• Impact on relations with consumers and service agencies.</li> <li>• No evidence that client services would improve under this option.</li> </ul>
Marathon County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern that the quality of services in Marathon County would deteriorate.</li> <li>• Current NCHC services are not viewed positively by many.</li> </ul>

Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties for social workers serving a tri-county area. It would be very difficult to be expert about available resources in this larger geographic region.</li> <li>• Any savings could be negated by higher transportation costs.</li> <li>• Different care management philosophies across the three counties.</li> </ul>
-----------	---

**Other comments**

Langlade County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counties grouping together to save money could be a fine idea. However, experience from the Income Support Consortiums show that like employees were not treated fairly across the board, creating poor attitudes and negatively impacting service. Remember that there must be open communication and employees must be treated fairly.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would be preferable to have a multi-county human services department without NCHC involvement.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just because NCHC has a “platform” with policies, etc., it doesn’t mean it is good.</li> <li>• The impact on Marathon’s contracted service agencies is unknown.</li> <li>• Marathon frequently pilots programs. (Examples include Alternative Response, Recidivism project, Community Response, Data Leadership Initiative.) Would it lose its ability to be in the forefront of these initiatives?</li> <li>• Would it be possible to maintain compliance with state and federal guidelines through this transition?</li> </ul>

**Legal and Law Enforcement**

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 3?

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advantages identified.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost savings.</li> <li>• Opportunity for expanded programs and services, including wraparound services for children and families, one-stop shopping for juvenile services, easier service access.</li> <li>• One person in attendance strongly supported this option.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No advantages identified.</li> </ul>

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 3?**

Langlade County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has not been a good working relationship with NCHC in the past. There is no reason to think there would be one now. Why build on the NCHC framework if we're not happy?</li> <li>• Langlade law enforcement and social workers work very closely together now. They know the kids and how to handle them. Why risk this relationship?</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of change and loss of control</li> <li>• Logistic concerns—how would this be structured and carried out?</li> <li>• Turf issues with employees and county boards.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Legal & Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Cringe” at idea of NCHC managing a multi-county department of human services, because of past problems.</li> </ul>

**Other comments**

Lincoln County Legal & Law Enforcement	Improved service provision should be the goal. Extremely important to maintain local access to services.
--	---

**Partner Agencies**

**What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 3?**

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidation could potentially increase availability of in-home services.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could make it easier to provide client services.</li> <li>• More resources available to more people.</li> <li>• More new ideas may become available to better help clients.</li> <li>• Would love to see this model work successfully and believe if it is done right, it can benefit clients as well as make it easier for community organizations that are referring people to human services programs.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combining administrative staff may result in cost savings. (Also see disadvantages)</li> <li>• Better services for Lincoln and Langlade Counties.</li> </ul>

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 3?**

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear how a consolidated programs, including Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice and Child Support could work, since it would be necessary to work with multiple judges.</li> <li>• Feeling that the region is not ready for full service consolidation, prefers option 2.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for clients to get lost in a larger system.</li> <li>• Belief that NCHC does not like to contract with private providers.</li> </ul>
Marathon County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Losing administrative staff may lead to loss of personal relationships with provider agencies. (Also see advantages)</li> <li>• Incompatible cultures.</li> <li>• Differences in defining quality services. Quality of services in Marathon may decrease.</li> <li>• Dilution of services in Marathon County. Marathon has more services now and is at risk of losing them.</li> <li>• If this does not go well, there is no possibility to go back to the county social services system.</li> <li>• Funding increases would be needed to bring equal levels of services in each county.</li> <li>• Challenge assumption that NCHC is the best organization to administer a three county system, without any experience in Child Welfare.</li> <li>• Bigger is not always better.</li> <li>• Feels like this would be a takeover by NCHC of DSS.</li> <li>• DSS already provides a high level of services.</li> <li>• A new, inexperienced oversight board may disrupt services.</li> </ul>

**Other comments**

Langlade County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be extremely important to have a local presence. We can't expect consumers to go to Wausau.</li> </ul>
Lincoln County Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that changes are best for clients, not just best for counties.</li> </ul>

## Consumers

### What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 3?

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No advantages identified.</li></ul>
Lincoln County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One participant advocated strongly for this option and presented many benefits.</li></ul>
Marathon County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It could be positive if instead of multiple case workers per child, there could be one caseworker.</li><li>• The experience of merging the Schoefield and Westin police departments resulted in hiring more detectives. Something similar could happen here, with the ability to increase resources.</li></ul>

### What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 3?

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't want to have to drive to Wausau for services.</li></ul>
Lincoln County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Important that staff be local.</li><li>• Lack of local control.</li></ul>
Marathon County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There does not appear to be benefit to Marathon in collaborating with poorer counties. How can collaboration make things better? Marathon is likely to lose more than it will gain.</li></ul>

### Other comments

Langlade County Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are major differences between the counties that must be understood. For example, Langlade has a huge bath salt problem while in Marathon the problem is heroin. These need to be treated very differently.</li><li>• Social workers must have good relationship and communication with the police.</li><li>• Whatever happens, don't want kids "falling through the cracks"</li></ul>
---------------------------	---

# Focus Group—Make-up Focus Group

---

On September 19, 2013, a focus group was held for anyone who was unable to attend a previous focus group. This report summarizes discussion at that focus group. It supplements the earlier Focus Group Report dated September 9.

There were five participants in this focus group.

## **Option 1—Status Quo with efforts to increase collaboration**

### **Make-up Focus Group**

What do you see as the most important **advantages** of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

- No advantages identified.

What do you see as the most important **disadvantages** of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

- Hard to provide services over large service area. Many people can't drive—transportation issues.
- Centralization of Birth-to-Three has hurt collaboration and reduced the resource. Families are receiving less services before.
- APS workers are stretched thin. Reports come in just before deadline, doesn't give attorney the time for adequate follow-up.
- NCHC stretched too thin. Example, can't get them to the table to work on problems with pregnant women on heroin.
- NCHC lets alcohol commitments lapse inappropriately.
- NCHC does "terribly" with AODA. Getting assessment and treatment is a "massive funnel" with long delays in scheduling. Lack of both resources and will to deal with the issue.
- 

### **Other comments**

Cultures of the counties are very different. Major differences in court system; cultural differences; resource differences. People with mental health issues have moved to Marathon because services aren't available in Lincoln and Langlade. Marathon provides preventive services; little appetite in Lincoln and Langlade to pay for that.

## Option 2—Human Service Collaboration Advisory Committee

### Make up focus group

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 2?

- Could be effective if additional counties were brought in—this is the only way it could benefit Marathon County. The hardest area for Marathon to service is western area near Marshall. Bringing in Wood would be beneficial.

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 2

- The 3 county area doesn't have a large enough population base to support significantly improved services. Would make more sense to collaborate with Wood and Portage where there is a larger population to draw on. North Central Health Care service area is too small for it to be a benefit to Marathon County.

### Other comments

Discussion of the umbrella legislation. Timing for introduction and consideration in legislature is unknown at this time. Participants felt that DHS is not supporting it; DCF is supporting it.

## Option 3: Multi-County Human Services Department through NCHC

### Make up focus group

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 3?

- There is precedent for regional service delivery through ADRC, Family Care.
- Sometimes change can be positive.
- Sharing resources/intellectual capital and understanding of state and federal regulations

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 3?

- Huge differences between the counties.
- Need the right "critical mass" to provide improved, efficient services. The three county area by itself doesn't support this. We need to collaborate, but this is the wrong group.
- Marathon's child welfare issues are much more similar to Portage and Wood than they are to Langlade and Lincoln.

- Staff and leadership in each county is tuned into that county's culture and needs. You don't want to lose that.
- Is it realistic to assume that a board would have the knowledge base to supervise this broad range of services effectively?
- Large geographic area results in travel time issues and different cultural differences.
- Mismatched quality among the counties. For example, how have county child welfare agencies done on their respective QSR reviews?
- Wasted time and legal cost, particularly if umbrella legislation passes quickly.
- Potential loss of solid county leaders who can communicate with county boards.
- 

#### Other comments

Very important to have local presence for CPS investigators.

Is NCHC ready to take this on, if they aren't already providing excellent services in their current operations?

How would this change work in tandem with Affordable Care Act implementation? Is this too much for the system to take on?

How would WSAQIS metric reports be submitted? Would it be submitted as one entity or reported as three separate counties?

Implications of combining existing systems—IT, etc.

# Focus Group--Marathon County Judges' Meeting

---

On September 17, 2013, a focus group was held at the Marathon County Judges' meeting. In addition to the judges, meeting participants included a public defender, the Clerk of Courts and the District Attorney. This report summarizes discussion at that meeting. It supplements the earlier Focus Group Report dated September 9.

In addition to the Marathon County judges, the District Attorney, Clerk of Courts, and a Public Defender participated in the focus group.

## **Option 1—Status Quo with efforts to increase collaboration**

### **Marathon Judges' meeting**

What do you see as the most important advantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

- There is a good relationship between the judges and the head of the delinquency section.
- There are frank discussions on problems
- From perspective of public defender, Marathon does a very good job.

What do you see as the most important disadvantages of the way that human services are currently delivered in the three county area?

There is lots of turnover of caseworkers, resulting in inexperienced caseworkers who are less effective.

### **Other comments**

Judges participate on committees with NCHC and Marathon Social Services staff, providing an opportunity for dialogue on issues.

## **Option 2—Human Service Collaboration Advisory Committee**

### **Marathon Judges' meeting**

What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 2?

- "I'm all for collaboration but the devil is in the details"

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 2**

- Marathon County could potentially lose ground through this option, even though it is the largest county with over 50% of juveniles. What would happen if other counties voted and recommended collaboration that is not in Marathon's interest?
- Marathon County has tried lots of innovations. Would being part of this committee actually limit its ability to innovate, because it would need approval from the committee?
- Marathon's systems work better than Langlade and Lincoln's.

**Other comments**

Who would pay for the committee and how would that impact decision-making?

**Option 3: Multi-County Human Services Department through NCHC**

**Marathon Judges' Meeting**

**What do you see as the most important advantages of Option 3?**

No advantages identified

**What do you see as the most important disadvantages of Option 3?**

- Workers would make dispositional decisions, recommending services through NCHC. NCHC would have a financial interest in those decisions.
- Would the best interests of Marathon County be represented in the decisions by the multi-county Human Services Board?
- There is lots of dissatisfaction with NCHC's services for adults. Despite discussions, there has been no improvement in service quality. This would give NCHC many more clients, this time juveniles.
- Lincoln and Langlade would not want to pay for Marathon's innovations.