

## NCCSD Audit Committee Overview 2019-2020



### Membership

Committee Members	State or Territory
Benidia Rice	District of Columbia
Adam Norman	Indiana
Michele Cristello, Chair	Massachusetts
Barbara Delaney	Montana
Lyndsy Irwin	Mississippi
Karen Hebert	New Hampshire
Robert Duck	Tennessee

### Background

At the 2019 NCCSD Directors Meeting, two discussions about Data Reliability Audits (DRA) took place – the first was at the Directors Only meeting and the second was at the OCSE/Directors closed session. At the time, there was significant concern and frustration on the part of the Directors about how these audits have gone over the past couple of years. These concerns stemmed from the following, among other things:

- Findings based on “unclear” policy
- Process issues – length of time and speed of audits, lack of transparency and communication; auditors’ lack of child support experience
- Inconsistency issues – amongst auditors and states, across years

The Directors expressed those concerns to OCSE and to Mona Ferrell, Director of Audit during the closed-door session. Mona Ferrell, in particular, expressed a willingness to work with states on these issues.

Since those discussions took place, significant progress has been made. Some states have had their issues resolved favorably and some audits have completed in a more expeditious manner. Mona Ferrell has been very helpful in resolving issues and very willing to continue to do so.

However, some states still haven’t had all their issues resolved and there are still inconsistencies – between auditors, across years, etc. Transparency and better communication are also needed. States have encountered varying levels of experience and child support and child support systems knowledge from their auditors. And in some states, auditors change every year.

Audit findings have significant impact and cost to states so it is imperative that states understand the findings, the reasons for the findings and what recourse they have regarding the findings before they undertake any significant cost or make impactful changes to their system.

## **Vision and Purpose**

The vision of the NCCSD Audit Committee is that all IV-D Directors are supported in their management of the Data Reliability Audits, NCCSD and the Directors maintain an open communication with OCSE regarding DRAs and other federal audits and DRAs and other federal audits are conducted in a consistent, transparent manner in accordance with clearly understood and widely accepted criteria.

The Committee will provide support to IV-D Directors in the area of audits through information gathering, monitoring of ongoing audit activity across states and disseminating relevant and timely information to Directors. The Committee will seek to provide a strong, unified voice by which we will communicate to OCSE in support of IV-D Directors in their management of the Data Reliability Audits.

## **Objectives**

The NCCSD Audit Committee will focus on the following primary objectives this year:

- Solicit information from states regarding current status of their DRA and the outstanding issues that states have raised with OCSE with the goal of identifying common issues and themes. Gather and consolidate information and provide states with “State of DRA” type information.
  - OCSE has indicated they would provide a list of errors across states. The information gathered via this committee can then be used to compare to that list.
- Monitor and track “policy issues” for potential clarification in the next OCSE-157 instructions.
- Map the current DRA process and define roles, in order to develop a strategy and best practice model (with samples successful and unsuccessful challenges to findings) that would ensure appropriate flexibility and transparency from both OCSE and the State that includes a sufficient opportunity to review, analyze and fully consider OCSE and State evidence and information that might negate or change a finding. Aim for audit findings that are concrete, reliable and supported by evidence to prevent unnecessary system changes, state legislative changes and expenses.
- Work with OCSE to develop a mutually agreeable communications strategy so that NCCSD can fully understand OCSE’s audit process, can effectively raise process issues that are consistent across states and have an opportunity to discuss the potentially significant impacts of DRA findings.

## **Action Steps**

- Prepare a bulleted list to provide OCSE with items that are pertinent to the directors, what directors need and what needs to be more transparent.
- Develop and send out a survey to IV-D Directors on the listserv soliciting relevant information regarding the current status of DRAs and the outstanding issues that states have raised.

- Consolidate survey responses and compare with any additional OCSE provided information and sent out to Directors as well as maintain a running list.
- In coordination with OCSE, create an overview document that maps the current DRA process, outlining roles and timeframes as well as basic and executive level training. OCSE will start the document but ensure that the Committee has a draft for input and opportunity to contribute in a significant way. Provide the final document to Directors.
- Define a best practice model of how best to manage the DRA process. Coordinate with OCSE to obtain their input and feedback on the model. Provide the final model to Directors.
- Coordinate some sort of joint OCSE and NCCSD workgroup to ensure we are working together to ensure a smooth and transparent DRA process.

### **Meeting Structure**

Initially, the Committee will meet via conference call on a monthly basis to set up the structure of the Committee and begin taking next steps. In the future, the Committee may meet less frequently or on an ad-hoc, as-needed basis.