



BILL GRAVES, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF KANSAS

**KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
AND REHABILITATION SERVICES**

915 SW HARRISON STREET, TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612

JANET SCHALANSKY, SECRETARY

May 29, 2002

Dear Consumers, Advocates, Business Partners, and other Stakeholders,

I continue to need your help in meeting the challenges that face social services in Kansas. Last summer and fall, we worked together to meet resource and service challenges and submit a budget that was balanced within available resources. Through your participation in last year's open meeting and a listening tour of the state, we identified needs, priorities, and possible changes in the way we do business. We made a number of policy and business changes that required reducing, modifying, or eliminating services. We streamlined administrative operations and realigned staffing. We then laid out our budget proposal in a way that would help the Legislature make clear choices, regardless of whether resources increased or decreased.

We kept seven points in mind during this process:

1. Our mission: To protect children and promote adult self-sufficiency.
2. Our vision: Partnering to connect Kansans with supports and services to improve lives.
3. Sharing responsibility with our partners, other state agencies, and between SRS programs and offices to meet the social services needs of Kansans.
4. Encouraging consumer responsibility to meet a portion of their own needs by relying on local and natural supports.
5. Emphasizing services that are temporary instead of services that create long-term dependency.
6. Controlling program growth by refining service priorities.
7. Limiting funding increases in critical areas where they were necessary to avoid undermining program integrity or putting consumers at greater risk.

The Governor adopted proposals that were consistent with those priorities in developing his budget, and we worked hard together to win legislative support of those items.

I want to thank you for your efforts on behalf of needy and vulnerable Kansans during this session. Despite declining resources and the most difficult and contentious legislative session in recent history, I believe that we emerged with a budget package that is substantially better than it would have been without your advocacy and support. In comparison to other parts of state government we fared relatively well, largely because the essential services that are included in the consensus caseload estimating process were excluded from more substantial reductions.

Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of being able to relax now. There is much work to be done, both to implement the policy changes that have been made for fiscal year (FY) 2003 which begins July 1, 2002, and to develop a workable budget for FY 2004. This will be particularly difficult, given that almost \$75 million of the ongoing costs in the 2003 budget were financed with "one time" money that will need to be

replaced with state general funds in FY 2004.

The \$250 million tax package passed by the 2002 Legislature is a stop-gap measure rather than a longer-term solution. It just barely allows us to move forward in implementing the FY 2003 budget. If tax collections continue to fall short, as they have each month since the last revenue estimate was made on March 8, the state may begin FY 2003 with no reserves. The national economy is rebounding, but Kansas typically lags behind, and improvement may not be evident in our economy for a year or more. This uncertainty means it is still possible that expenditure reductions may need to be made at some point during FY 2003. We understand this is difficult for consumers, partners, and social service workers. The Governor's budget office and SRS will be watching revenues closely, and we will share that information as changes become evident.

Even with the approved budget, funding is at the "bare bones" level for most public services. As we move into July and beyond, the funding shortfalls that remain unaddressed and the results of corresponding service cuts will become apparent in agency programs and in Kansas communities.

Last year, we were able to solicit feedback in communities statewide and use that information to help craft statewide approaches to do business differently. Depending on school budgets, city and county budgets, and the other community resources available this year, we believe that Kansas communities may each have very different needs. To accommodate these local differences, we have decided to conduct the SRS open meeting and community forums in a different way this year. We hope that a stronger community-based approach will help us find more flexible ways to meet community needs.

As a follow up to this meeting, Area Directors and Hospital Superintendents have scheduled public meetings in communities across the state with consumers, advocates, business partners, and other stakeholders. SRS will also participate in regularly scheduled planning meetings with partners and other organizations. Those meetings will provide an opportunity to specifically discuss how the changes will affect your area, find ways community partners can work together to meet the social service needs in their communities, and gather information needed to plan for the future as we prepare our FY 2004 budget and consider the very real possibility of mid-year reductions. These meetings will take place in June and July. We will incorporate that feedback during our budget planning cycle, and I will report back to you in a second public forum during the fall.

We have prepared several documents that summarize the actions of the 2002 Legislature, for use during those discussions. If you do not receive those documents along with this letter, or to find out when public meetings will be held in your vicinity, please contact your local SRS area office or visit our web site: www.srskansas.org. We ask for your continued input and support as we work together to meet the ongoing challenges before us.

Sincerely,

Janet Schalansky
Secretary