

Kansas Department of

Social and Rehabilitation Services

Janet Schalansky, Secretary

Joint Committee on Children's Issues
June 23, 2004

Child Welfare Community Based Services RFPs

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Chairman Jordan and members of the committee. I am Sandra Hazlett, Director of Children and Family Services of SRS. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to provide an update on the Child Welfare Community Based Services RFPs. SRS also, as requested by this Committee, provided information on significant changes to these contracts to all legislators in a letter dated May 27, 2004.

As you are aware this is currently an open bid, so I will be somewhat restricted in the information I can share with you today. It will be important that I limit my comments to facts contained within the RFP. Any attempt to interpret the information beyond what is said in the RFP could result in a bidder being disqualified, or at a minimum given an advantage in the bid process, if they are in the room today and hear what is said or are told about it from someone who is here.

Process

Providers interested in bidding on these RFPs are currently submitting questions to the Department of Administration. A pre-bid conference is being held June 28 and 29. Interested bidders will be provided preliminary answers to questions previously submitted and given the opportunity to ask additional questions. An addendum to the RFP will then be issued providing final answers to all of the questions.

The bid responses are due to the Department of Administration on August 6, 2004. After evaluation and negotiation, the new contracts will be awarded in January 2005, with a July 1, 2005 start date. The original contract period will be 4 years with an option of one 2 year extension.

The contract catchment areas will match the five new SRS regional boundaries, except the SRS South Central Region will be divided. The counties in the former Hutchinson SRS Area will remain with the Western contract catchment area (Region 4) to provide a population base for the region. The remaining counties from the SRS South Central Region will stay joined with the Southeast contract catchment area (Region 1). A map of the new regions has been attached for your convenience.

Background

Eight years ago Kansas boldly decided to enter into contracts with Child Welfare Community Based Service (CWCBS) providers based on a recognition that the old child welfare system had serious deficiencies preventing it from providing adequate protection and permanency to children. The decision to contract for family preservation, foster care and adoption with Kansas not-for-profit organizations was driven by the belief that public/private partnerships would yield improved

outcomes for children and families.

Kansas' performance in child welfare has improved since implementation of the CWCBS partnership. Advantages of the partnership include the benefits to families of pooled public and private resources creating accessible services, and the ability to measure desired indicators of performance. Although challenges still remain in this service delivery model, SRS has become wiser with regard to managing contracts for complex social services and child welfare providers are learning how to manage businesses that involve a significant amount of risk.

Child Welfare Contracts of the Future

The Department's vision for the next evolution of CWCBS contracts is to create a child welfare system that is family-centered, focused on preserving families and family connections whenever possible, supportive of community partnerships as a vehicle for service delivery, and relies on evidence - based practices. The RFPs contain requirements that incorporate these values and address concerns identified by stakeholders during the public meeting and information solicitation process conducted last summer. The Department has also researched, and intends to implement, practices that utilize the natural competition between contractors to improve child welfare services, while promoting the collaboration that must also be present.

The program design incorporated in the RFPs eliminates the need for children to transition between contractors. We received significant input from those who believed child transitions between contractors increased a child's length of stay in the system and delayed permanency. Transitions of any kind can be disruptive for the child and family and need to be minimized.

The RFP places responsibility for the child/family's case management and services with the contractor who originally receives the referral, throughout the life of the case.

This means if the family is referred to the Family Preservation Contractor, and during their course of services the child needs out-of-home placement, the Family Preservation Contractor will be responsible for providing the foster home placement and the services necessary to reunite the child with the birth parents. If reintegration is not possible, the Family Preservation Contractor will continue to provide services to the child throughout the adoption process or other alternative permanency.

If the child, who cannot be reunited with the birth family, has an identified adoptive resource, such as a family member or the foster home where the child is living, the Family Preservation Contractor will continue to provide services to the child and the adoptive parents throughout the adoption process. The Family Preservation Contractor will also be responsible for providing aftercare to the adoptive family.

If the child, who cannot be reunited with the birth family, does not have an identified adoptive resource, the Adoption Contractor will be called upon to assist with recruiting an adoptive home.

This same program design applies to the Reintegration/Foster Care Contractor. If upon completing an investigation SRS determines the child cannot reside safely at home, the initial referral is made

to the Reintegration/Foster Care Contractor. The Reintegration/Foster Care Contractor will be responsible for the child/family's case management and services through reintegration or adoption of the child.

A statewide adoption contractor is being sought whose only responsibility will be to recruit, train, and prepare adoptive families statewide for children waiting for adoption. When a child does not have an identified adoption resource, the Family Preservation or Reintegration/Foster Care Contractor will make a referral to the Adoption Contractor to help match the child with an adoptive family. The Adoption Contractor will provide training and support to adoptive families, while the case manager from either the Family Preservation or Reintegration/Foster Care Contractors will continue their case management responsibilities to the child.

Another challenge we faced when designing the RFPs was to ensure the program design supported a family centered model, desired outcomes, and best practice.

The RFPs stress preserving families or promptly reunifying children with birth families when safety is assured. This requires the delivery of an individualized array of informal and formal services and supports to meet the needs of the child and family. The RFP encourages contractors to utilize community options to deliver services that appear seamless to the family. Many families just need assistance in basic parenting tools such as daily living skills and managing normal child development stages of behavior, and access to community resources that can help them keep food on the table, provide rental assistance, etc. By focusing services on the family and not just the child, the desired outcomes can be achieved more quickly.

Understanding the importance of relatives and other kin in planning for and ensuring child safety and permanency is another requirement in the RFP. The tradition of extended family and other significant adults caring for children and young adults when their parents are unable to do so is strong in all cultures and must be incorporated into the contractor's way of doing business.

Placement of children with kin, placement of children in their home communities, and utilizing foster families as a resource and mentor to biological parents are all best practice models that are included in the RFPs. Placement of children with kin and in their home communities allows for more frequent visitation between parent and child, siblings and child and worker and child. Frequent visitation has been shown to contribute to positive outcomes for the child. Foster Families told us they are trained and eager to engage the birth family, helping them improve their ability to safely parent their children. When these temporary caregivers are included among the pool of resources available to the contractors to provide support and mentoring to the birth family, the child will benefit by experiencing less divided loyalties and having opportunities to observe these role models.

The RFPs also require that family assessments and team meetings engage the family system which includes the child (when age appropriate), birth parents, kin, and others invited by the birth family. The meeting must occur at times and in locations convenient to family. Staff facilitating these meetings must be trained to recognize this is a frightening time for birth families, and be capable of dealing with families who feel threatened, vulnerable, potentially angry, and very lost as to what to do to make things better.

Payment Structure

We heard from stakeholders during the public input process that the per-child, per-month payment structure in the contracts today increases the length of stay in foster care and adoption. Our own research told us that we needed to design a payment structure that would automatically reward contractors for achieving the desired outcome of shorter lengths of stay and automatically hold them accountable when this outcome was not achieved. The payment methods included in the RFPs and described below will achieve this desired outcome.

- Family Preservation services will be paid to the contractor in three installments: at the point of referral; the 45th day; and the 90th day. The aftercare period is 12 months. If the family does not engage in services or the child goes into foster care prior to the 45th day, the last two payments will not be made. If the child goes into foster care prior to the 90th day the last payment will not be made. In each of these cases, the contractor would begin receiving the Reintegration/Foster Care services Tier 1 rate.
- Reintegration/Foster Care services will be reimbursed a monthly case rate through a tiered payment structure. The first six months after referral, the contractor will receive a Tier 1 rate which will be an enhanced amount. A Tier 2 rate will be paid for months 7 through 12, covering what is projected to be the average monthly cost for services and maintenance for a child in out of home placement. Month 13 and beyond, the contractor will be paid at a reduced Tier 3 rate. This tier payment method will provide an incentive to contractors to move quickly to either reintegrate the child or find an alternative permanency. A 12 month after care period will help ensure children are stabilized. Physical and mental health services will be accessible to children through the medical card and not be a part of the contractor's case rate.
- The Adoption Contractor will be paid a flat monthly amount to recruit and train a pool of families willing to adopt, and provide matching services to the Family Preservation and Reintegration/Foster Care contractors. The Adoption Contractor will provide 12 months of post adoption support to the adoptive families they recruit.

To address concerns raised regarding contractor accountability, strong program outcomes geared at achieving safety, permanency and child well-being have been incorporated into the RFPs. The outcome requirements are based upon federal and state legal and policy mandates, and recognize best practices in child welfare. If contractors do not meet the outcomes, SRS will work with the contractor to develop corrective action plans, and may withhold payment anytime the contractor fails to meet outcomes, provide data in a timely manner, or fails to work with other contractors and community partners to achieve the best interests of the child.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this update. I would be happy to respond to questions within the boundaries of state purchasing regulations.