

Kansas Department of

# **Social and Rehabilitation Services**

Gary J. Daniels, Secretary

## **Senate Ways and Means**

January 17, 2006

### Update on Foster Care

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**Update on Foster Care**

Chairman Umbarger and members of the committee, I am Candy Shively, Deputy Secretary of SRS. I come before you today to provide information on the status of foster care in Kansas.

On July 1, 2005 the transition to new Child Welfare Community Based Service (CWCBS) Provider contracts was completed culminating a process begun early in 2003. SRS, as a national leader in child welfare service delivery, took the time to review lessons learned with our providers, stakeholders and the communities we serve. Based on the feedback received some significant changes were implemented.

- When a family is referred for services to a CWCBS Provider, that provider remains responsible for services and there is never a transition to a different provider
- Resource families will, in addition to fostering the child, mentor the birth parents
- More frequent, less formal parent/child interactions replace visitation
- Family driven process emphasizing involvement of entire family, kinship placement, maintaining connections for child and developing natural supports for families
- Payment structure removes any financial incentive for delaying permanency and rewards up front service delivery
- A single adoption contractor focuses entirely on recruiting and supporting adoptive families for those children with no other resource
- Community stakeholder meetings gather feedback on what's working and ideas for improvement.

The first round of community stakeholder meetings were held across Kansas late in 2005 and will continue at least twice a year in every region of the state. These gatherings provide valuable insight into the actual issues on the front line; supplementing data, case reads, participant interviews and court oversight to insure Kansas children and families benefit from an ever improving child welfare system.

The restructuring of SRS and the CWCBS contracts has not been without challenges. Staff turnover and difficulty filling empty positions reflects the stress for staff in both the public and private sector. We are working with our providers and our communities to address working conditions and incentives to assure a full complement of well trained, competent professionals necessary to achieve our mission to protect children and promote adult self sufficiency.

At the same time we are working closely with other states and our federal partners to understand the shifts in federal policy impacting funding streams and service delivery. Federal foster care funds remain tied to the 1996 AFDC eligibility criteria and current interpretation of federal law and regulation result in an ever decreasing share of federal financial participation along with increased administrative costs. Despite these challenges in August 2005, Kansas passed the federal IV-E

audit with no errors.

Efforts to maximize efficiency within current resources include an initiative to streamline the partnership with our CWCBS providers by eliminating duplication of services. The private sector is sophisticated and knowledgeable enough to communicate directly with the courts reducing the crowd sometimes in attendance at child in need of care hearings and freeing SRS staff to invest in prevention of the need for child welfare services. Although communities are eager to join us in planning for the use of these resources to improve prevention services, as with any change, there is some resistance. Each community will move forward as barriers are identified and addressed. We are particularly interested in serving youth in conflict with home, school and community by resolving those conflicts without removing the youth.

We are also aware of the need to support adoptive placements for children who are not able to return to parents, be placed with relatives or kin and at risk of aging out of foster care. Until we achieve perfection, we need to support youth in obtaining the skills necessary to achieve adult self sufficiency and assure for each of these young people a qualified, safe and willing adult to serve as guide, mentor and support.

We are interested in supporting efforts to revise the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children across state lines for purpose of foster care or adoption and continuing an improved tuition waiver program as good steps in our ongoing efforts to lead the nation in excellent child welfare service delivery.

Lastly we are pleased to announce that Kansas will be recognized on January 26, 2006 by the Child Welfare League of America as a national leader for the quality of our child welfare program and service delivery.

For your information, the following supplemental information has been attached:

Children and Family Services Outcomes Data  
Community Stakeholder Input and Quarterly Management Reports  
Child Welfare Issues - Federal and State Legislation  
Child Welfare in Kansas: A Family Centered, Community Based System of Care