



Special Committee on Foster Care Adequacy

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LPA Response: Foster Care Perspective

Presented by:

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Attachment 15
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Testimony of:

Deneen Dryden, Director, Prevention and Protection Services
Kansas Department for Children and Families

Testimony on:

DCF Foster Care Overview

Chairman Knox, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding the ongoing Legislative Post Audit on foster care in Kansas.

We appreciate the work of audit staff members and their efforts to understand a complex system in a short amount of time. As you know, the child welfare system is expansive and complex, and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) is only one of many entities involved in ensuring that children remain safe and families achieve stability. We are happy that the audit findings have allowed us to make substantial improvements in many program areas which will further the best interest of Kansas children.

Keeping children safe is of utmost importance, and we are pleased that Kansas ranks highly among the states for safety of children in care. In an ongoing effort to build upon our success as one of the safest child welfare systems in the country, DCF developed an implementation plan that addresses the Legislative Post Audit recommendations.

In regards to the finding on monthly in-person visits, DCF has reviewed and revised policies that will go into effect in January 2017. DCF established a Child Welfare Compliance Unit for ongoing audit-level monitoring of contractors and staff. DCF has also begun Documentation Training 101 and all DCF, contractor and CPA staff will have taken this online course by Dec. 30, 2016.

DCF has continued implementing the recommendations made by Casey Family Programs. The Practice Model is currently a one-page document that is being approved by the Executive Team at DCF and will be rolled out in January 2017, with a strategic rollout plan for the State. DCF has made many new changes to the Kansas Protection Report Center, including a policy change to require a four-year degree in the human services arena for new hires. DCF is aggressively pursuing applicants to fill openings for this new Intake Protection Specialist position.

DCF is aware of the recommendations from our federal partners, as well as Casey Family Program, to redefine abuse/neglect categories. DCF has identified those categories that will be moved from non-abuse and neglect to the abuse and neglect assignment-type. Making these changes includes IT system changes, which will require some time. However, we have made changes to policy in regards to in-person contact with the identified child and completion of a safety assessment.

DCF is currently identifying the best safety/risk assessment for the State of Kansas. Casey Family Programs continues to assist in this matter and the plans are to have this tool identified and implemented by July 2017. DCF staff have traveled to several States to observe and review specific assessment tools. Once Kansas identifies the best safety/risk assessment tool, this will help remove some of the potential subjectivity from findings.

DCF has been substantially updating and revising agency policy. In January 2017, there will be more than 120 new policies in Prevention and Protection Services (PPS) that incorporate best practices for adoption, intake, investigation/assessment, foster care, family services and family preservation. Some of the relevant policy changes related to monthly in-person visits include the following:

- In-person Contact (Non-Abuse/Neglect). This contact requires PPS staff to begin completing an in-person contact with the identified child in Non-Abuse/Neglect assignments.
- Monthly In-Person Contact (Family Service, Family Preservation and Foster Care). This contact requires quality in-person worker/child visits with each child in the family at least monthly.
- Safety and Risk Assessments. Formal and informal safety and risk assessments must be completed on an ongoing basis, at monthly visits, and at critical times in the case.
- Supervisor Consultations to Monitor In-Person Contacts: At least monthly supervisor consultations are required on each case to review and monitor the quality of visits and ensure the safety of the children.
- Forms (PPS 4010 In-Home Family Services Supervisor Consultation Log, and PPS 5004 Supervision Guide and Log for FPS). These were developed to provide a guide for the worker and supervisor to use during monthly consultations. These forms provide prompts to discuss key areas which inform decisions for safety, risk, services and case planning for families and children.
- Enhance Information Gathered During In-Person Contacts. Sufficient information must be gathered during in-person contacts to inform safety and risk assessments.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to take your questions.

Kansas Child Welfare

Enhancements and Improvements Progress Report

The Kansas Department for Children and Families is fully committed to its mission—to protect children, promote healthy families and encourage personal responsibility. Of the utmost importance is keeping children safe, especially when youth are in our care. In an ongoing effort to build upon our success as one of the safest child welfare systems in the country, DCF has developed an implementation plan that addresses the Legislative Post Audit recommendations.

Response to LPA	Implemented	Jan. 2017	July 2017	Jan. 2018
Monthly In-Person Visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review/revise policies. Create Child Welfare Compliance Unit for audit-level monitoring of contractors and staff. Implement best practices training on documentation. 	✓	✓ ✓		
Background Checks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete annual checks on everyone 10 and older in foster homes. Enact real-time notification of foster parent arrests/convictions. Implement fingerprinting/relative placement background checks. 	✓	✓	✓	
Kansas Protection Report Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review policies and implement procedures to ensure timely assessments. 		✓		
Casey Family Programs Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use intervention practice model. Implement evidence-based family preservation. Hire skilled staff at KPRC. Review staffing levels at KPRC. Track investigations per case worker. Redefine abuse/neglect categories. Modify safety/risk assessment tools. Remove subjectivity from findings. 	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓
Capacity/Sleeping Space Exceptions in Foster Homes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve ability to match data on location/characteristics of children in foster care with location/capabilities of licensed homes. 		✓		
Foster Parent Financial Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and assess financial documentation during licensing and renewal. 	✓			
Safety Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require Child Placing Agencies to assess safety of homes during visits. 	✓			
Contractor Corrective Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require foster care contractors to submit a corrective action plan. 	✓			
Temporary Permit Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End the practice of granting temporary permits to foster homes before statutory/regulatory standards are met. 	✓			

ADDITIONAL MEASURES