

**Executive Summary:**

During second quarter implementation of Oklahoma's Pinnacle Plan, OKDHS along with our data expert and the co-neutrals, has focused a significant amount of efforts on the final piece of work needed to reach official "approval" of the plan. Final approval is expected sometime in March 2013 after mutually agreed upon baselines and target outcomes pertaining to each performance area contained in the settlement agreement are identified. Although official "approval" has not been granted, diligent and thoughtful work to implement the plan and to achieve targeted outcomes continues.

OKDHS has a new Director, Ed Lake, who is committed to moving the agency forward towards achieving Pinnacle Plan goals. A major marker of recent success has been the filling of key leadership roles within the division. Establishing and building teams continues to be a focus of Child Welfare Services, as leadership throughout the entire division led by the Child Welfare Services Executive team continues to work diligently and purposefully to create and reinforce a system with clearly defined roles, effective lines of communication, and accountability at all levels. A schedule for regular team meetings for Child Welfare Services has been established with a focus on monitoring progress on Pinnacle Plan implementation, supporting staff in carrying out responsibilities, breaking down barriers, providing opportunities to share critical information, and ensuring staff is focused on Pinnacle Plan goals. A schedule has been established for ten Child Welfare Summits to be conducted throughout all five regions within the coming year. All staff throughout the division will have an opportunity to attend a summit with members of their leadership team that will focus on the above mentioned goals.

A critical point of focus that impacts all performance areas in the settlement agreement continues to be the expansion of quality placement options and supports to ensure safety of children in out of home care. Inquiries from potential resource families are monitored to ensure they are responded to with a sense of urgency. All resource family assessments are sent to private providers for completion, and the requirement for completion of the assessments has been shortened to 30 days. The purpose of this change is to move families through the approval process in a timely manner. Availability of resource family training has increased, and the entire division is focused on providing quality customer service and supports to resource families. The on-line application for resource families is available and in the pilot phase. A Request for Proposal for recruitment, support, and retention of resource families was released in October. Proposals were submitted covering 26 of the 29 districts. Recommendations for awards are pending, and the anticipated award date for successful vendors is February 1, 2013. Expansion of placement options is the key to reducing utilization of shelter care. The first major target date regarding reducing shelter usage was January 1, 2013. As of this date, all children under two years of age are placed in a family-like setting. A preauthorization process has been established in the event that an overnight stay in a shelter for a child under two is needed only as last resort for placement. An overnight stay in a shelter will require preauthorization from the CWS Director after all available options have been exhausted.

Another focus that impacts all performance areas is on work that will produce a reduction in caseloads for frontline staff. Caseload standards have been established with a goal



to be reached by June 30, 2014. OKDHS is working with the co-neutrals to develop and deploy a strategy that will set benchmarks for implementation of these standards in an effort to ensure that we hire staff at a rate that is consistent with our reasonable ability to provide adequate space, training, and supports for a growing workforce. OKDHS has begun filling 100 new child welfare specialist positions with a target completion date of January 31, 2013. The number of interested applicants for these positions has increased compared with applicant lists from last year. Additionally during this quarter, OKDHS developed and submitted for approval to the Office of Public Management a request for a new administrative support job for child welfare specialists. This position, if approved, will focus on administrative responsibilities of child welfare specialists and would be assigned as one position for every two child welfare supervisory units. The goal of this position is to relieve some of the burden on frontline child welfare specialists.

Safety of children is always the primary focus in Child Welfare Services. In order to ensure the safety of children in out-of-home care, a major change was made related to the screening and investigative process of reports of abuse and neglect to children placed in facilities. As of November 1, 2012 all reports of abuse and neglect regardless of the level of placement of the alleged victim, are sent through the abuse and neglect hotline with prioritization and screening in accordance to child protective services guidelines. Additionally, all reports, whether conducted by CPS or OCA, are conducted in accordance with the CPS policy timeframe.

In September of 2012, OKDHS identified 325 children who were legally free for adoption without an identified permanent placement and committed to find permanency for each of these children as part of a Pinnacle Plan initiative. As of January 1, 2013 permanent placements for 78 of these children have been found.

Community support for Oklahoma's Pinnacle Plan and for the common goals we are all working to achieve is incredibly widespread. Effectively working with key stakeholders is crucial to our ability as a state to accomplish the established goals that will improve outcomes for children and families. We continue to collaborate with our public and private partners in a focused and coordinated way to benefit the families we serve, and continue to seek ways to establish new relationships and build on existing relationships with key stakeholders. A key group of Oklahoma leaders has formed to focus efforts on raising awareness and support to children in foster care and foster parents. This group, Count Me In 4 Kids, includes faith-based, business, and other community leaders. They are defining their goals and crafting solutions and strategies for supporting the Oklahoma Pinnacle Plan and children in the foster care system. Child Welfare Services leaders continue to present updates and get feedback from other groups involved in the child welfare system. This quarter, presentations and discussions focused on statewide collaboration were held with juvenile judges, district attorneys, group home providers, faith-based recruitment groups, the Oklahoma Statewide Services Collaborative, Trauma-Informed Care Statewide Advisory group, OCCY and Count Me in 4 Kids.

