

Executive Summary:

The end of this quarter marks the end of the first full fiscal year of implementation of Oklahoma's Pinnacle Plan. During this fourth quarter of implementation, OKDHS began preparing for the release of the first issue of public reporting for specific measures outlined in the Settlement Agreement. The first report is set to be released at the end of July 2013, with reporting on the measures related to maltreatment in care, recruitment of resource families, shelter usage, and worker contacts with children. Although many major efforts are underway such as the expansion of community partnerships, an increased focus on shortening time frames for permanency for specific populations of children, and the development of a comprehensive Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) System, the three major points of focus for OKDHS continue to be decreasing shelter utilization, expanding quality placement options, and expanding and supporting our workforce.

Successful efforts to decrease shelter utilization for children under 2 and place them in family like settings began in January of this year. Although there have been instances where an exception to place a child in a shelter overnight had to be granted, huge strides have been made in this area in comparison to the numbers prior to implementation of this strategy. Efforts were expanded to include children under 6 earlier in the year, however the official target date for discontinuation of shelter usage for children under 6 was June 30, 2013. A preauthorization process requiring authorization by a Deputy Director for a child under 6 to remain overnight in a shelter was implemented in the spring to begin preparing for the target date. The goal of the preauthorization process is to ensure that all available supports are provided to locate appropriate placements for children. In many instances, the preauthorization process results in the ability to secure a placement outside of a shelter. If all efforts statewide truly have been exhausted, the Deputy Director authorizes placement in a shelter until an appropriate and safe family like setting can be located. Lack of resources continues to provide challenges for finding these placements. However, the new Request for Provider (RFP) for the recruitment and retention of resource families is anticipated to assist with this issue as soon as the private agencies who are awarded contracts are at full performance capacity. It is anticipated that recruitment contracts to private providers will be awarded by August 1. Other successful efforts to expand quality placement options and supports for resource families involve the increase in availability and flexibility of resource family training, monitoring of all initial inquiries to the Bridge Resource Support Center resulting in an increase in timely "callbacks" to move potential families through the application and approval process more quickly, the development of an on-line application process, and the development of a system to match children's needs with the capacities of families to meet those needs. Additionally, OKDHS continues to plan to incrementally increase the reimbursement rates for resource families. However, the budget for SFY14 will require that this be delayed. The current plan is to delay the increase until a later date in SFY14. The amount of the increase will be determined by available budget.

In addition to successful efforts to reduce shelter care and increase availability of placement options, OKDHS has continued to focus efforts on and succeed in the area of



expansion of our workforce. Manageable caseloads for frontline workers and supervisors are essential to quality engagement with families that results in improved safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children. OKDHS is committed to achieving caseload targets outlined in the Pinnacle Plan by the conclusion of SFY14. In preparation for this, new worker, supervisor, and district director/field manager positions have gradually been added over the last year. An additional 200 new positions will be filled over the next few months. HRMD continues to partner with district offices to focus on recruitment and on-boarding strategies for child welfare specialists. An increase in workforce of this size is substantial. It is imperative that OKDHS continue to work to implement initiatives centered on supporting our workforce and increasing the skill level of staff at all levels and improving retention. Extensive efforts in this area will continue over the next few years. A major initiative that has entered into the first phases of implementation during this quarter is a certification program for all child welfare specialists. Certification, with a goal of increasing the competency and skill level of all staff, will be required of all child welfare specialists levels I-IV. Additional initiatives aimed at providing support for staff that have been implemented this quarter are hiring for child welfare assistant positions and deployment of mobile devices for all frontline staff. The child welfare assistant job classification was created to provide administrative support for child welfare specialists. They are assigned one for every two child welfare supervisory units. Hiring and training for these positions began this quarter and will continue through the summer. Smartphones are now in the hands of all child welfare specialists with the exception of a few who were unable to attend a training and deployment session during the months of May and June. Smartphones are provided to staff in order to support their work when they are in the field away from the office.

Other successes this quarter include progress towards enhancing practice with trauma-informed initiatives outlined in the Oklahoma Trauma-Informed System Implementation Plan and an increase in focus on permanency efforts for “permanency challenged” youth. One specific group of children in focus is a group of older youth placed in congregate care settings. A contract was awarded to Eckerd Youth Alternatives to provide intensive case management services for this specific group of children to identify permanency. The initial work will focus on a group of 40 identified youth. Efforts to increase utilization of family team meetings, parent-child visitation, and Permanency Roundtables as tools to increase permanency outcomes will also continue with more to report on in the coming months. OKDHS has submitted for approval to the Co-Neutrals a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan that focuses on utilization of data to review processes, practices, and outcomes in the child welfare system. The CQI process will incorporate the use of data analyses to identify issues and trends, brainstorm solutions, set goals, identify action steps, as well as to track and adjust goals. Stakeholder involvement will be essential at every step in the CQI process. Upon approval and input from the Co-Neutrals, OKDHS will begin implementation of the CQI plan.

The first issuance of public reporting on the four specific performance areas of maltreatment in care, shelter usage, recruitment of resource families, and worker contacts with children will occur on 7/29/13, and the report will be made available to the public through the OKDHS website at www.okdhs.org.

