

Executive Summary:

In February of this year, Casey Family Programs and The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group completed a Review of Child Removal Decision-Making. DHS sought technical assistance from the two groups to assist the Department in learning more about the reasons behind the growth in the number of children in out-of-home care. Since January of 2012, the number of children in out-of-home care has increased from just over 8,000 to over 11,000. The goal of the review was to provide insights that will assist the Department in strengthening decision-making and improving practice by providing tailored supports to both the workforce and the families we are serving. Following the review, DHS convened a Planning Session involving the CWS Executive team, Program Administrators, CQI Leads, ACF Region VI partners, National Resource Centers, Casey Family Programs, and Annie E. Casey. The focus of the meeting was to develop a shared understanding of the information and recommendations from the report, assess current priorities in Child Welfare, develop ideas/strategies, and to align ongoing support and technical assistance with priorities and key strategies. The meeting discussions affirmed the need to continue focusing on the basics. The need to fill and retain positions and help new and existing staff build and apply critical skills is paramount to making progress.

Efforts continue to focus on hiring for vacant front line positions as well as on retaining and supporting the current workforce. It is anticipated that other efforts and initiatives focused on keeping children safely in their own homes and on safely exiting children to permanency will impact caseloads significantly over the next year as well. This quarter, 33.9% of child welfare workers statewide met caseload standards established in the Pinnacle Plan. This is a slight increase over the previous reporting period. However, it is not close enough to ensure the goal of 90% of staff meeting standards is reached by 6/30/14. DHS is completing an internal analysis to determine the number of staff needed to hire, taking into account expected turnover, over the next year in order to reach caseload standards by the end of SFY15.

Safety of children is the primary focus of Child Welfare Services. An area of strength continues to be in the area of case worker visitation. DHS has consistently exceeded the standard for monthly caseworker visits with children. This positively impacts our ability to ensure safety of children in care.

Providers continue to make progress in the area of resource family recruitment. This progress has resulted in our ability to make significant progress on keeping young children out of shelter placements. The current data reported for the month of January indicates the number of overnight shelter stays experienced by children under the age of 2 decreased from 70 in December to only 5 in January. Without the success of the resource family recruitment efforts, the progress made towards our goal of keeping young children in family like settings would not be possible. Although progress had been made, there is still work to do. In order to better understand the barriers to keeping young children from entering overnight shelter placements, DHS conducted its own internal qualitative review. The review focused on children under the



age of 6 who entered and spent a night in a shelter placement during the months of October, November, and December. Through the review, information was learned about internal processes that is being utilized to improve checks and balances to ensure all available placement options have been fully explored prior to a child being authorized to enter and stay in a shelter overnight. DHS continues to strengthen efforts to locate family like settings for all children in DHS custody.

This type of problem identification and analysis is representative of the efforts underway to create an organizational culture of continuous learning. A large part of the Pinnacle Plan is focused on creating an improved continuous quality improvement system that effectively measures the quality of work, informs leadership and staff of what is and is not working in the system and improves all 15 performance areas outlined in the Settlement Agreement. Extensive work has been completed this quarter to embed continuous quality improvement principals throughout the organization as rollout of the approved CQI Plan begins in the first 5 pilot sites. The CQI Plan focuses on identifying strengths and problems informed by data analysis and stakeholder involvement. Assessments and action plans will be created at the district level as solutions are tested, implemented, and revised while learning occurs. An effective Continuous Quality Improvement system is the catalyst needed to achieve and maintain the level of change needed.

DHS has retained a new data expert. Chapin Hall is working with DHS to develop a small number of specific outcome measures to measure progress in the system. These measures will drive conversations at the leadership level down to the front line level. Monthly and quarterly reporting related to specific metrics created through the Settlement Agreement continues. All reports can be found at www.okdhs.org under the Pinnacle Plan logo.

