

**DHS Report to the Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC)  
March 27, 2009**

The following are update items that may be of greatest interest to the Committee. For each of these items, the Committee may want to discuss how they want to be updated or engaged. Note that, depending on final decisions on DHS SFY 2010 budget, DHS may or may not be able to sustain all of these activities during SFY 2010.

**Community Partnerships for Protecting Children**

- DHS released a report in November 08 that analyzed how sites implemented each of the four Community Partnership strategies. This report examined the different levels of sites' implementation and identified various partners involved in the Community Partnership approach statewide. (Copies will be available at the meeting.)
- DHS and Prevent Child Abuse Iowa held a Community Partnership Immersion workshop on March 24 with approximately forty participants. This annual workshop is offered to community members and professionals who want to learn more about the Community Partnership approach.

**National Resource Center on Child Protective Services Report**

- As noted in the February update, the Department requested technical assistance from the National Resource Center (NRC) for Child Protective Services in April 2008. We shared the Executive Summary of the reports, the full reports, and our plans for addressing the NRC's recommendations at the February CWAC meeting, and asked for any advice the CWAC had to offer regarding our initial response/strategies.
- The Department is moving forward on implementing the plans that were contained in the document we shared in February. We continue to welcome any input/feedback from the CWAC.

**Community Care Contract**

- As noted in the February update, DHS published the RFP for Community Care on February 5, 2009. Bid proposals are due April 9, 2009. DHS anticipates announcing the apparent successful bidder by May 4, 2009 with a June 1, 2009 start date. Start-up activities are slated for June with referrals to Community Care beginning July 1, 2009.
- DHS reduced the Community Care budget for FY10 by one million dollars due to budget constraints. This reduction will require a cap be placed on referrals. Bidders will indicate the maximum number of referrals they will accept from each Service Area in their proposals. DHS is working to develop guidelines pertaining to the referral cap.
- DHS made 2397 referrals to Community Care during calendar year 2008. Client satisfaction rating from regarding convenience, helpfulness and benefits of services and supports exceeded 85% for FY08.

**Parent Partners**

- Since October 2008, the four Parent Partner sites have served 51 additional families.
- The CPPC state committee has finalized the dates and location for the May Parent Partner Summit -- May 12 – 13, 2009 at the Holiday Inn and Suites in

WDM. Among other sessions, national consultant will present information on how to start Parent Partners in a community.

**Parent-Child/Family Interaction Guidelines**

- The DHS/contractor work group led by Wendy Rickman (DHS) and Chris Secrist (Mid-Iowa Family Therapy) is continuing activities to implement the Family Interaction guidelines for children in foster care.
- In February, the workgroup conducted a readiness survey of DHS staff, providers and other stakeholders. A total of 927 individuals responded, including 535 DHS staff, 332 provider staff, and 60 other stakeholders. Following are a few of the findings.
  - 94% indicated that they believe families should be actively involved in planning contact with their children, and 90% believe that effective family interaction can lead to permanency being reached in a timelier manner.
  - 77% are somewhat to very confident that key stakeholders are ready to implement the family interaction philosophy.
- Foster parents were also surveyed, with 396 respondents.
  - 57% had heard something about family interaction plans.
  - 73% indicated that they believe families should be actively involved in planning contact with their children, and 66% believe that effective family interaction can lead to permanency being reached in a timelier manner.
  - 73% indicated they had invited the child’s birth family to their home to assist in providing care at least once.
  - 76% had shared responsibility with the child’s birth family for the child’s school, medical or mental health appointments at least a few times. Foster parents provided similar responses when asked about their involvement in assisting with the child’s contacts with their birth family.
  - 42% indicated they were comfortable with the close, hands-on role in working with birth parents, 45% were unsure of their views, and 13% were uncomfortable with this role.
- The workgroup engaged Norma Ginther to provide “champion” training on 3-19-09. Six persons, including DHS staff, private agency staff, resource parents, parent partners, and guardians ad litem, represented each DHS Service Area. Chris Secrist and Lori Mozena then lead the champions through the training that the teams will provide in their service areas.
- On March 30 and 31, there will be two 3-hour ICN’s for DHS and provider supervisors. On March 31 and April 1, there will be three 3-hour ICN’s for DHS and provider supervisors, as well as foster parents and other stakeholders on a space-available basis. Local training will be done by two “champion” trainers and will be completed in the months of April, May and June.

**Transition for Youth in Foster Care**

- **Preparation for Adult Living.** Following are PAL caseload numbers for the last several months.

Month-End	Caseload	Average YTD Caseload
January 2009	291	297
December 2008	274	298
October 2008	299	307
August 2008	317	310

- Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative Expansion.** Last year, DHS began expanding the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, which started in Polk County, to 6 Community Partnership for Protecting Children (CPPC) sites, through funding provided by the Jim Casey Foundation. DHS provided sites with small, two-year grants to increase partnerships and integrate services and resources to improve outcomes among youth over the age of 16 who are involved in or who have aged out of Iowa's foster care system. Grant initiative highlights include: a youth-centered planning approach; the recruitment of youth into community leadership roles (coordinated with elevate™); and an intense focus on assisting youth to build life-long connections and achieve permanency. Sites receive training and technical assistance for implementing the Iowa Youth Dream Team (IYDT) process, an individualized approach to support youth in planning for transition. Approximately 20 youth have had at least one IYDT gathering; 7 experienced Dream Team facilitators have begun using the process and will begin coaching and mentoring new facilitators as they complete the training; and 10 FTM facilitators who have attended Dream Team training are in the process of being coached by the experienced facilitators.

### **Disproportionality**

- As noted in the February update, the Community Partnership for Protecting Children state committee has identified child welfare disproportionality as a priority, and has established a task team to develop a plan for embedding disproportionality work within CPPC.
  - On April 8th, Pat Parker with the University of Iowa and a Milwaukee child welfare consultant will meet with the CPPC Task Team to discuss increasing cultural competency, including various learning opportunities and approaches that could have potential impact for culture change.
  - On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Pat will present at a statewide CPPC site meeting to increase awareness and present ideas for community approaches.
  - On May 15<sup>th</sup>, Pat will meet with the CPPC Executive Committee to begin identifying strategies for developing resources to assist communities in addressing disproportionality and disparity.
- As noted in February update, a small group of DHS staff, plus Gail Barber (Judicial Department, Children's Justice), and Brad Richardson (University of Iowa) met with Susan Ault from Casey Family Programs (CFP) in December to begin exploration of possible CFP technical assistance to DHS efforts to address child welfare disproportionality both systemically and statewide. On March 20, this group<sup>1</sup> met again with Susan to review various frameworks for addressing Disproportionality (e.g., Alliance for Racial Equity, CFP Breakthrough Series on Disproportionality and Disparity, Black Administrators in Child Welfare, CPPC, etc.) prepare for a "compression planning" session in May. The compression planning session will be used to develop a vision, identify key elements for an Iowa framework, and lay out a strategy for engaging communities in addressing disproportionality and disparity in child welfare. The May discussion will include DHS staff from 5 of the Service Areas and the Division of Child and Family Services, as well as community members representing families, youth, foster

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<sup>1</sup> Gail Barber was not able to join us due to the Judicial furlough day. Brad Richardson was also unable to participate in the meeting.

parents, the court and legal community, providers, Native American tribes, organizations serving the minority community, etc.

### **Education and Foster Care Collaboration**

- Representatives from the Department of Education, the Juvenile Court, DHS and community partners are meeting with Kathleen McNaught (American Bar Association Legal Center on Education and Foster Care) on 4-1-09 as a follow-up to the initial 12-5-08 Education and Foster Care Summit. The group will focus on two issues – systems coordination and data exchange, and implementation of the education provisions of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. The goal is to develop specific recommended strategies and a process/structure for moving forward.

### **Child Welfare Provider Training**

- As noted in earlier updates, DHS and the Coalition signed the contract for the Coalition to administer the \$250,000 child welfare provider training allocation in early November 2008.
- The Coalition launched the Child Welfare Provider Training Academy website on March 19, 2009. All details of upcoming trainings to be held for child welfare provider frontline staff and supervisors are now available at [www.cw-academy.org](http://www.cw-academy.org). The website will be updated periodically to include any new offerings of trainings. The website allows for online registration and provides an immediate confirmation of registration. It also provides information on courses, trainers, locations, dates, etc.

### **Proposed Foster and Adoptive Parent Rule Changes**

- As noted in the February update, DHS developed a set of draft rule changes for foster and adoptive parent licensing/approval. In addition to making revisions in response to comments we received on the draft rules, we are adding a rule requiring the family to complete a visual assessment for potential lead hazards in homes built before 1960 and to apply interim controls (e.g., painting) if they find peeling or chipping paint. The rule will be similar to the existing rule for licensed child care centers and the rule that is being proposed for registered child development homes.
- We anticipate noticing these rules in March 2009, with an effective date six months after notice in approximately September 2009.

### **Shelter Care Emergency Services**

- As of March 1, 2009, DHS has signed contract amendments with ten shelters to reduce the number of guaranteed shelter beds that are part of Iowa's unused emergency juvenile shelter bed capacity and reinvest the allocated funding to develop or enhance child welfare emergency services (CWES). Funds from a total of 19 guaranteed shelter beds are being reinvested into community based CWES for children referred by DHS, juvenile court services, or law enforcement who might otherwise be served in shelter care. The total annualized state funding associated with these beds is \$640,517. Following are examples of the types of child welfare emergency services being developed: appropriate shelter diversions or short stays (up to 23 hours) by offering crisis interventions, problem mediation, and in-home shelter; problem assessment and linkage with community resources; in-home and telephone follow-up to families of children

referred; emergency assessment and triage activities to assess children's needs and arrange for appropriate services; and, multi-community on-call crisis intervention and telephone help lines. Some of the projects are specifically focusing on law enforcement referrals to shelter.

- As noted in the February update, the Child Welfare Partners Committee has chartered a Child Welfare Emergency Services workgroup, co-chaired by Margaret Wright (DHS) and Cheryl Goodwin (Family Resources, Davenport, Iowa). The group has worked to prepare a report and recommendations for CWES in SFY 2010. The group expects to submit the report to the Child Welfare Partners Steering Committee in April. The report provides information on the efforts this year to move toward CWES and an appropriate balance between bed capacity and other services. The report will also lay the groundwork for continued efforts next year to identify core elements for a continuum of statewide child welfare emergency services, with flexibility for service area specific needs.

### **Group Care**

- On March 20, 2009, DHS held a second meeting with a small group of DHS staff, Sue Pitts-Fischer (Lutheran Services of Iowa, and co-chair Child Welfare Partners Committee), and Susan Ault from Casey Family Programs (CFP) to continue exploration of possible CFP technical assistance to (1) learn more about efforts across the nation to improve permanency for children in group care and reduce reliance on residential care; and (2) assist DHS in having conversations with stakeholders around the vision and role of group care in achieving permanency for children in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. Unfortunately Gail Barber (Judicial Department, Children's Justice) and Candice Bennett (Juvenile Court Services) were unable to participate due to a judicial services' furlough day. George Belitsos of Youth and Shelter Services (co-chair CWAC subcommittee on permanency) was also invited but unable to attend due to a previous commitment.
  - The group reviewed administrative data that CFP had been able to put together about children currently being placed in group care, identified additional data sets that would be helpful, and discussed next steps to develop a more qualitative picture of the needs of these children and for local discussions on next steps.
  - As a result of the discussion, DHS' plans next to invite the eight Service Area Managers (SAMs) and Chief Juvenile Court Officers and all group care providers to a conversation that will be facilitated by Susan Ault. While one of our aspirations is to reduce reliance on group care, first and foremost, we hope to enhance the array of services so that we increase safety and permanency outcomes for children. This next conversation will focus on 3 things – review of administrative data regarding children in group care, conversations with one or more group care providers from other states that have re-engineered their program and business model to focus more on permanency and community based services, and finalizing plans for Service Area discussions on the needs of children currently being served in group care and strategies to address those needs and improve permanency.
- As noted in February update, DHS recently noticed administrative rule changes to rescind the rehabilitative treatment services rules in chapter 185, move group care contracting into chapter 152, and clarify requirements related to documentation for billing for child welfare group care services. A public hearing

was held on February 20, 2009. DHS had received several comments prior to that date and made revisions to address provider concerns. Attendees at the public hearing appreciated the changes made by DHS and complimented the DHS on the open exchange of information during this process. The rules are scheduled to be adopted by the Council on Human Services on April 8, and to be effective 7-1-09.

### **Children's Centers**

- Iowa Code Chapter 237B provides for DHS to establish certification or licensing standards for children's centers; however administrative rule-making authority is not clearly granted to the Department. This Code section also does not provide authority for the Department or any other state agency to enforce "children's centers" standards. Iowa Code Chapter 237B also says that the standards shall be broad facility standards for the protection of children's safety and that the Department shall not establish program standards or other requirements involving program development or oversight of the programs provided to the children served by "children's centers" (e.g., requirements related to staff education and training, program curriculum, etc.).
- In response to these Iowa Code provisions, the Department has chosen to implement two courses of action, in light of the lack of clarity as to whether the Department has rule-making authority.
  - First, in April 2009 the Department will publish for public notice a set of rules describing broad facility standards that focus on keeping children safe. Although the rules will not include enforcement provisions, they will provide guidance to facilities that meet the definition of "children's center."
  - Second, the Department has taken input from other state agencies and a service provider to assemble a set of recommended standards, which we will publish on the DHS website. The Department believes these standards would form a solid foundation for certification or licensing-related expectations of "children's centers" if the current law required certification or licensing or granted licensing authority to the Department or another state agency. Staff modeled the additional standards on existing licensing standards for group foster care, emergency juvenile shelters, and child care.
  - Both the proposed administrative rules and the more detailed standards cover the following areas: definitions; providing for basic needs; protection from mistreatment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect; record checks; seclusion and restraints; health and safety; and application of the standards.
  - In the event a facility meeting the definition of children's center is subject to licensure, certification, registration or regulation pursuant to another provision of law, both the proposed rules and standards will clarify that the other provision of law and regulatory provisions shall control and take precedence.

### **Legislation on Options for Growth Mechanism for Provider Reimbursement Report**

- As noted in the February update, DHS filed the above report to the General Assembly on 2-9-09. See <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Partners/Reports/LegislativeReports/LegisReports.html>
- DHS had initially planned to amend our contract with Myers and Stauffer to complete the analysis of actual provider costs and DHS payment rates for Safety Plan and Family Safety Risk and Permanency (FSRP) services, as described in

the report. However, based on the contract amount, we were required to use a competitive process to select a vendor for this work. We posted a “mini-RFP” for the project on the Targeted Small Business website on 3-19-09, and invited bids from two additional accounting firms. We received a total of two bids, and have issued a notice of intent to award the contract to Myers and Stauffer on 3-25-09. We hope to have a contract in place effective 4-1-09. The next step will be a meeting between DHS, the contractor, and FSRP providers to discuss the cost report format. We will send out an invitation to FSRP contractors as soon as we have dates from Myers and Stauffer.

### **DHS Provider Partnership Steering Committee**

- As noted in the February update, DHS and private contractors developed a “Child Welfare Partners Committee” to serve as a steering committee to guide our efforts to develop a stronger partnership towards improving outcomes for the children and families we serve. Sue Pitts-Fisher (Lutheran Services of Iowa) and Mary Nelson co-chair the Committee, which includes 14 members – 7 representing providers and 7 representing DHS.
- The steering committee has met several times since the 12-17-08 inaugural meeting. As a result, the steering committee has developed four workgroups: quality improvement, understanding roles across contracts, child welfare emergency services, and training (including the family interaction training). All four of the workgroups have been working diligently to complete their scope of work. The steering committee is working on a communication plan, including a presence of the DHS child welfare webpage, where workgroup and Steering Committee materials will be posted.

### **Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (FCSIAA)**

- As noted in prior updates, the Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (FCSIAA) was signed into law on October 7, 2008. Highlights of the new legislation include: health oversight and coordination, educational stability, options for subsidized guardianship, fostering connections grants, Tribal access to IV-E funding, re-authorizes adoption incentives, de-links adoption subsidy from AFDC income requirements, transitional plans for youth aging out of foster care, and options for continuing foster care beyond age 18.
- As noted previously, DHS requested state legislation in 4 areas for Iowa to come into compliance with the federal legislation – identifying and notifying relatives, improving educational support for youth in foster care, and case plan changes related to transition planning and education. SF 152 has passed out of the Senate and the House Human Resources Committee, and is ready for floor debate in the House.
- Also as noted in the February update, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is making technical assistance (TA) available to Iowa to assist in identifying and analyzing current spending on transitioning youth and to assist Iowa in determining the fiscal impact of extending foster care to age 21. The TA will be provided by the Finance Project. The initial conference call with the Finance Project is scheduled for March 30.
- Based on input from the Child Welfare Stakeholder Panel and other groups, DHS has developed the following draft definition of relative for purpose of the Subsidized Guardianship program option in FCSIAA that would replace our

current IV-E Subsidized Guardianship waiver. The definition is an initial draft to help guide further discussions.

“Relative” is defined as a person related to a child by blood, marriage or adoption, or an individual with whom the child has resided or had significant contact, or with whom the child has close emotional ties. For an Indian child, relative includes members of the extended family as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child’s tribe.

We would welcome CWAC comments/advice on the draft definition.

- For more information on the federal law and DHS activities to implement, see [http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Consumers/Child\\_Welfare/BR4K/Fostering\\_Connections/Fostering\\_Connections.html](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Consumers/Child_Welfare/BR4K/Fostering_Connections/Fostering_Connections.html)

#### **Other Legislation Related to Child Welfare**

- SF 323 would add language relating to the provision of health records of a child in foster care to the foster care provider.
- SF 271 would add language to the definition of child abuse regarding situations in which the person responsible for the care of the child has knowingly allowed the child access to obscene material as defined in section 728.1 or has knowingly disseminated or exhibited such material to the child. The bill would also add language to the definition of child in need of assistance (CINA) regarding situations in which the child has suffered or is imminently likely to suffer harmful effects as a result of the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian, or person responsible for the care of the child has knowingly disseminated or exhibited obscene material as defined in section 728.1 to the child.
- SF 101 creates a Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program within the Department of Public Health.

#### **DHS SFY 2010 Budget**

- Attached is information regarding the federal stimulus dollars related to DHS programs. DHS Director Gene Gessow presented this information to the Health and Human Services Appropriation Subcommittee on February 24, 2009.