

**Continuing to Improve Safety, Permanency and Well-Being
in Times of Budget Constraints
Discussion at 5-11-09 Iowa Child Welfare Stakeholder Panel**

The Iowa Child Welfare Stakeholder Panel brainstormed potential strategies for DHS and the Courts and stakeholders to consider in planning for SFY 2010 and SFY 2011. These potential strategies were identified with the goal of continuing to move forward in improving safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families served in the child welfare system, in the context of likely continued fiscal constraints.

Following are the ideas generated. Note that these ideas were not fully explored and as a result, are not recommendations – simply ideas for further exploration.

- Look at ways to coordinate training across systems, can we make better use of the funding that is provided for training Courts, DHS, providers, foster parents, etc.
- Consider using more webinars for training – saves staff time and travel costs
- Look at ways to pursue grant funding
- Work with group care providers to serve youth from the community where the facility is located
- Strengthen assessment protocols so the first setting the child is placed in is the best placement and truly meets child's needs – “first placement, best placement”
- Explore ways to strengthen collaboration with the community and use volunteers to fill gaps (e.g., CPPC), and across systems to serve as a “safety net” for each other
- Examine administrative structures and supervisory ratios
- Look at ways to make better use of Senior Judges, CASA and foster care review board (take advantage of new language allowing more flexibility)
- Build stronger bridge to for-profit community to show the good work going on and the unmet needs
- Explore ways to make reports to the court more concise and less duplicative
- Explore ways to use technology more fully, reduce paper mailings to foster families (e.g., remittance that comes separate from warrant) and others; could e-mail addresses for foster parents and others be added to FACS?
- Use webcam for some visits with children in foster care; check with Regional Office if this would count as “face-to-face”
- Allow group care funds to be used for alternatives, similar to what is going on with shelter care and emergency child welfare services; do more with decat language that allows reinvestment
- Implement “search and engage” strategies to re-build family connections for kids, move kids to permanency that would otherwise age out of care