

## **Report to Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) on Potential Discussion Topics for CWAC Meetings**

### Background

At the March 2009 Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) meeting, members discussed how to best meet their responsibility to provide advice to DHS and the Governor over the upcoming fiscal year in a way that adds real value to the DHS and Governor. The consensus of the members present was to spend time at each CWAC meeting discussing 2 or 3 specific topics in depth. The topics would be identified ahead of time, with relevant prereading provided prior to the meeting. In some cases, there might be a short presentation by someone external to the CWAC to stimulate discussion. The Committee would then discuss and provide advice to DHS on each topic during the meeting. Members suggested there may be cases in which there was consensus among CWAC members, but that this would not be necessary in all cases; and that in fact it could be valuable to DHS and the Governor to hear the different perspectives of individual CWAC members.

On April 8, 2009, CWAC members were surveyed for their input; eight members provided their suggestions. Subsequently, David VanNingen and Mary Nelson met to review and organize the responses into the following proposal to present to the CWAC at their May 14, 2009 meeting.

### Proposal

Based on the survey responses provided by CWAC members, we are recommending that each meeting focus on one more “macro” or “systemic” issue and one more “micro” or specific issue. Below is a list of suggested topics gleaned from the survey responses.

#### Macro/Systemic/Policy Discussion Topics

- How do we increase/infuse youth and parent voice into child welfare policy and practice?
- What are the gaps in Iowa’s efforts to provide all children/youth in out-of-home placement with permanency, and what can/should be done to fill them?
- What does a system of emergency child welfare services look like? What elements are needed? What outcomes should be expected?
- What is the relationship between the child welfare, children’s mental health and juvenile justice systems? What should it be in order to improve outcomes for children in the child welfare system?
- When should child welfare services be provided on a voluntary basis and when should cases be under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court? What criteria should guide the decision to use Court oversight?
- Child welfare reform efforts in other states – what strategies are other states using to

#### Micro/Specific/Program Discussion Topics

- Family Interaction Standards
- Educational services for children/youth in out-of-home placement
- Family team meetings
- Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA)
- Subsidized adoptions
- Guardianship assistance
- Foster family licensing requirements, impact on recruitment and retention

improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families?  
What can we learn from them?

- Budget reductions in child welfare – how do we continue to make improvements in child welfare outcomes with fewer resources?
- Retention of direct service staff in both private and public sector
- Disproportionality and disparity in child welfare for children and families of color
- How well are we doing in achieving safety outcomes for children in child welfare system? What strategies are we implementing to improve? What strategies should we be focusing on?
- How well are we doing in achieving well-being outcomes for children in child welfare system? What strategies are we implementing to improve? What strategies should we be focusing on?
- How well are we doing in engaging children and parents, and assessing their needs and matching services to needs? What strategies are we implementing to improve? What strategies should we be focusing on?
- How well are we doing in achieving permanency outcomes for children in child welfare system? What strategies are we implementing to improve? What strategies should we be focusing on?
- How well is our case review system working? What strategies are we implementing to improve? What strategies should we focus on to improve?

At the end of each CWAC meeting, the members would identify the two topics for the next meeting. One or two CWAC members would volunteer to work with DHS on each topic between meetings to identify relevant prereading, determine whether to engage someone external to the CWAC to provide a short presentation at the meeting to stimulate discussion, and develop possible discussion questions to get the conversation going. The Committee would then discuss and provide advise to DHS on each topic during the meeting.

Report prepared and submitted by David VanNingen and Mary Nelson.  
May 14, 2009