



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

Don Jordan, Secretary

House Federal and State Affairs
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Child Welfare System Improvements

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Chairman Neufeld and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide historical perspective on the issues which prompted development of Kansas' child welfare contracts, and to provide details on how SRS currently measures and manages child welfare outcomes.

LPA Report Series 1987-1994

Several reports examined aspects of Kansas child welfare service delivery hampered by deficiencies and complexities in protection and permanency services for children and families.

February 1987

- Spending per child varies considerably across Kansas.
- The number of children in SRS custody rose by more than 20 percent between FY 1986 and FY 1988.
- Although the number of people licensed to provide foster care generally has kept up with this increase in children, the number of social workers has not increased correspondingly.
- Cost of the foster care program is unknown because SRS budgeting and accounting system counts only direct payments to foster care providers; it excludes the salaries of social workers who manage cases.
- Noted problems with the accuracy of figures reported by SRS
- During the previous three years, the amount spent on direct payments to foster care providers increased by about 56 percent (35.2 percent when adjusted for inflation).

1990

- SRS established procedures to ensure that children are placed in the least restrictive setting possible, but did not always follow those procedures or document compliance.
- SRS needs to improve its foster care allocation formula, compliance, and documentation.

November 1990

- The number of child abuse or neglect reports investigated by the SRS increased by about 34 percent between FY 1980 and FY 1990
- Twenty percent of SRS investigations were not reviewed timely and adequately; some reports were not investigated at all.
- Many families that were at risk of abusing or neglecting their children did not receive preventive family services from SRS.
- Department procedures and management controls were not always effective and were not always followed.
- Finally, surveyed SRS staff indicated they do not always have adequate resources to do their jobs, which could have contributed to problems noted during the audit.

March 1991

- Many controls and procedures for the foster care system seemed to be adequate, but SRS lacked basic program management information.
- About one-fifth of all placements were not made as recommended, apparently because recommended facilities often were not available.
- Most children and families received services--such as individual or family counseling or clinical evaluations--but SRS did not always recommend services for those who needed them.
- Recommended services often were not started or completed.

April 1991

- The number of social workers assigned to foster care has not kept pace with the growing number of children in SRS custody.
- Although SRS could not provide information showing changes in caseloads over time, LPA estimated that average foster care caseloads were more than double the standard proposed by the Child Welfare League of America.
- It did not appear that funding affected placement and service decisions. The limiting factor appeared to be the lack of appropriate placements and services.
- Most foster care providers surveyed thought the reimbursements they received from the State did not cover their costs, but this did not appear to be a major reason for them leaving the system.

June 1991

- This report summarizes the findings and recommendations from the series of audits the Division conducted of the State's foster care program, plus an audit of the handling of reports of child abuse and neglect.

- This summary report discusses the need to place greater emphasis on preventing children from coming into the overburdened foster care system.

June 1994 (SRS investigation of abuse or neglect in foster homes)

- About 30% of abuse and neglect complaints against foster homes reviewed were not adequately investigated.
- In nearly half the cases LPA reviewed, SRS did not take adequate steps to determine whether foster parents' natural or adopted children were safe.
- The problems stemmed from inadequate Department policies, failure to follow existing policies, and failure to document some actions.
- The most common shortcomings were delays in getting investigations started and failure to interview all appropriate persons.
- The Department did not always follow up to ensure that foster parents completed additional training or made corrections they agreed to make following an abuse investigation.
- The Department has not established adequate checks to ensure that licenses are not issued to applicants with past criminal records or other problems that might present risks to foster children.
- Nearly 20% of the licensing files LPA reviewed did not contain required assessments of the applicant and his or her family, and many had inadequate character reference checks.

July 1996

- The department did not properly assess and screen abuse or neglect reports it received
- Preliminary risk assessments were not conducted as required, and protective services investigations were not initiated by the assigned deadline
- Family-based assessments were not completed as required or by the assigned deadline
- Family service plans were not completed as required or by the assigned deadline
- SRS did not interview all the appropriate parties during an investigation
- Protective services investigations were not completed by the assigned deadline
- SRS did not review and document previous unconfirmed reports of abuse or neglect, as required
- SRS did not request ex parte orders or removal by law enforcement appropriately.

Sheila A. v. Joan Finney

A local guardian ad litem filed suit in 1989 in Shawnee County District Court. The Children's Rights Project (CRP) of the American Civil Liberties Union filed an amended petition and joined Ms. Netherton in 1990. In 1993 the court approved a 33 page settlement agreement containing 153 requirements for SRS to adhere to within certain deadlines, with implementation monitored by LPA. Kansas and CRP agreed in 2002 to terminate the 1993 settlement agreement as successfully completed. No other state had been able to achieve a mutually satisfactory conclusion to CRP's efforts to improve child welfare. Kansas' promising performance with national CFSR outcome standards with service models supported agreement to terminate settlement.

Pre-Privatization Summary

- SRS child protective service staff
 - Divided their time between conducting child protective service investigations and the myriad tasks involved in the delivery of permanency services, e.g. reintegration and adoption support.
 - Provided many direct services to children and their families and purchased services from private providers to meet the needs of families.
- Service Standards
 - Standards were applied in deciding which providers would be used for various sorts of service provision, but there were no outcome measures associated with the amount of services provided or the progress of clients receiving services from the providers. Expectations were not clear.
 - Providers often gave services to families for many years at a time with little or no improvement being shown.
 - The availability of services, especially family preservation, was not equal across the state. Urban areas of the state were often heavy on services to keep families intact, but those in rural areas were largely unserved.

Child Welfare Contracts

- Diverse public and private entities worked in concert to design a new delivery system and improve child welfare practices in the State of Kansas, with support from Governor Graves and the Legislature.
- Kansas was the first state to implement measurable statewide outcomes for safety and timely permanency.
- Child welfare service delivery involves networks, relationships and partners who share values responsible for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families
- Supported the service shift for SRS staff to CPS including the investigation of child abuse/neglect reports, safety planning and service assessments of families.
- Statewide access to FPS available 24/7 achieved (rather than the 44 counties prior to contracts.)
- Partnerships increased capacity of family foster homes in Kansas.
- US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) reviewed Kansas information and benchmarks as they developed the National Child Welfare Outcome.

Initial Implementation

- July 1996 - Family preservation services privatized.
- October 1996- Adoption services privatized.
- February 1997 - Foster care services privatized.
- July 1997 - Juvenile Justice programs transferred from SRS to JJA

Subsequent Contracts and Improvements

- 2000, second round of contracts
 - Well-being outcomes to assure children placed in a family-like setting make Kansas a leader in placing children in the least restrictive setting.
 - Modified payment structure of a base administrative rate with variable rate per child per month.
- Child and Family Services Review Round 1
 - On-site review in June 2001,
 - Program Improvement Plan (PIP) approved September 2002
- 2005, third round of contracts
 - Scope of services in the Family Preservation Contract includes working with the

family should they need foster care services.

- Foster care payment structure created with tiers and caps at certain months of stay in a child's custody episode.
- Additional outcomes and process measures implemented to amplify family centered practice and accountability:
 - Increased frequency of parent / child interactions
 - placement with relatives
 - satisfaction surveys with families and older youth in care
 - independent living services for older youth in care
- Children and Family Services Review Round 2
 - Round 2 site review in June 2007
 - PIP approved 2008
- 2009, fourth round of contracts
 - Outcomes match Children and Family Services Review, with additional success measures included for same school attendance, placement with sibling/relatives and educational attainment.
 - Financial payment structure returns to structure of a base administrative payment and variable payment for the number of children served to ensure predictability for the state and contractors.
 - Family Preservation - scope of work returns to in-home services and expands to serve population of pregnant women using substances.
- Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) 2010
 - Kansas performance has achieved negotiated rates of improvement
 - If performance continues, Kansas will successfully end PIP June 2010
 - With 36 states completing Round 2 of CFSR:
 - Kansas ranks in the Top 5 performers for 4 of 7 national CFSR outcomes.
 - Kansas ranks 1st in preserving family connections and in enhancing families' capacity to meet their needs (tied for 1st with Ohio).
 - Kansas is in the Top 10 for six of seven outcomes and ranks 11th in the seventh.

Performance Then and Now

The child protection system that LPA found in the mid-1990s has been strengthened since the Child Welfare Community Based Services Partnership was implemented.

- Since 2003, Kansas has met national safety standards (94.6% of children are safe from recurrent abuse) for assuring children are safe from recurrent abuse.
- For nearly 10 years, Kansas has met the national standard for safety in foster care placement (99.68% of children are safe from maltreatment in FC).
- To date in FY 2010, 98% of CINC reports are reviewed timely by a social worker (within one half work day) to determine if further action is needed by the agency.
- Thus far in FY 2010, 97% of assigned CINC reports have timely contact initiated by a CPS social worker with a child or family.

Foster Care Indicators	1997	1999	2003	2006	2009
Number of children entering care	N/A	3,342	2,642	3,048	3,040
Number of Children In Residential Facility (snapshot = last day of the year)	1,064	606	535	421	421
Percentage of Children in Residential Facility	67%	N/A	12%	9%	8%
Number of Adoptions	352	418	486	501	812
Average Number of Months In Custody	N/A	23	26	19	18
Number of Family Foster Homes	1,950	N/A	N/A	2,420	2,620

Attachments:

CFSR All States Comparison

Contract Outcomes Performance Report