



Strong Families Make a Strong Kansas

House Committee on Children and Seniors

February 13, 2014

Testimony on:

TANF, CINC, Wichita foster care

Presented by:

Phyllis Gilmore

Secretary

Kansas Department for Children and Families

Chuck Knapp, Deputy Secretary of Operations & Public Affairs
Docking State Office Building, 6th Floor North
(785) 296-3271 www.dcf.ks.gov

Testimony of:

Phyllis Gilmore, Secretary
Kansas Department for Children and Families
Topeka, Kansas

Testimony on:

TANF, CINC and Wichita foster care

Chairwoman O'Brien, Vice-Chair Meigs, Ranking Minority Member Wilson, and Members of the Committee: Becker, Bollier, Carpenter, Hawkins, Hill, Kiegerl, Lusk, Phillips, Rooker and Whipple

TANF

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) administers Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding for the State and the TANF cash assistance program. States receive TANF Block Grant funding and are asked to design and operate programs to accomplish the purposes of TANF. The four purposes of TANF are:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes
- Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage
- Prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

The TANF program is the result of the 1996 Welfare to Work legislation and is a temporary program meant to be a bridge from poverty to employment. Employment is the cornerstone of the TANF program. TANF cash recipients are required to take part in work activities that will help them find and maintain employment and ultimately self-sufficiency. TANF funds are limited in their use to individuals who meet the income guidelines to qualify for TANF services.

Basic eligibility guidelines for families receiving TANF Cash Assistance in Kansas include:

- The household must include a child; may include an unborn child.
- The family must have little to no income and/or resources.
 - Maximum net income may not exceed approximately 25 percent of the federal poverty level.
 - Certain resources may be exempt, including the home where the family lives, assets less than \$2,000, cars, furniture, personal items and some tools, and \$90 plus 60 percent of earnings.

- Assistance is time-limited to a lifetime maximum of 48 months.
- The family must comply with Child Support Services and work requirements of TANF.
- School-age children must be enrolled in school.
-

Guiding principles for the use of TANF Block Grant funding include accountability provisions, work requirements, time limits, state penalties, and data collection and reporting requirements. Guidance also allows and supports state flexibility, innovation, and creativity to develop programs that can reach all families and provide supports to working families. States are not instructed as to how they must design their TANF programs or spend funds, but they are held accountable for moving families toward self-sufficiency.

Every three years or when major changes to programs/policies occur, states must submit their TANF State plan. By statute, each state is subject to separate 15 percent caps on the amount of the federal and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds it may spend on administrative activities. Also, within certain guidelines, states may transfer a portion of their TANF funds for a fiscal year to the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and/or the Social Services Block Grant program (SSBG).

In addition to the TANF Cash Assistance Program, other major programs identified to receive TANF funding include:

- Child Care
- Employment Services
- Accelerating Opportunities-Kansas
- Kansas Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs
- NetReach
- Kansas Reading Roadmap
- Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood Initiatives
- Foster care/Emergency Care
- Communities in Schools
- Jobs for America's Graduates
- Connections to Success
- Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault
- Healthy Family Supports
- Solutions Recovery Care Coordination

These programs were developed and offered across the state to serve the unique needs and circumstances of Kansas families, moving them closer to self-sufficiency.

CINC

Efforts and Objectives: DCF is engaged in ongoing initiatives to connect children, youth and adult consumers to evidence-based prevention strategies that address the risk factors to which they are exposed. The goal of these initiatives is to improve customer service, decrease the need for further additional services by those coming into contact with the agency, increase cross-agency collaboration, and reduce the need for crisis management. DCF is purposeful about integrating prevention throughout all program areas.

The agency's efforts focus on the following six risk factors to target service delivery to more effectively address the issues that place DCF clients at risk:

- Poverty—conditions of extreme deprivation, poor living conditions, high unemployment
- Low Attachment and Community Disorganization—sense of inability to change environmental conditions compounded by fragmented supports
- Early Initiation (age of onset)—involvement at an early age in destructive and dysfunctional behaviors increases the likelihood of the issues escalating to serious levels of intensity
- Individual and Family History—exposure increases the likelihood that individuals (including children) become involved in destructive behaviors
- Family Management—unclear expectations, failure to supervise and monitor, and excessively severe, harsh, or inconsistent punishment
- Family Conflict—persistent serious conflict between primary caregivers or between caregivers and children

As the cornerstone of measuring success, DCF employs its mission to protect children, promote healthy families and encourage personal responsibility. The agency's charge includes promoting the well-being of individuals and families and assisting them to achieve success in their lives. The broad, overarching outcomes DCF seeks to achieve include:

- Safety, permanency and well-being of children
- Maximum self-sufficiency for adults and families
- Safe, stable and supportive environments for adults and families
- Satisfaction with DCF services

With the above focus in mind, the agency will continue to emphasize the following measurable results:

- Performance improvements in long-term outcomes for Kansas individuals and families, which are tracked through federally-required outcomes
- Reduction in the need for crisis and intervention related services, which are addressed through provider and community services

- Strengthened partnerships with community organizations, which are assessed through annual site visits conducted on both Child Welfare Case Management Providers by DCF's Prevention and Protection Services (PPS).

Data Collection: The PPS Data Unit collects significant amounts of data and compiles reports to assist in ensuring services provided and actions taken are data driven. Attached is a Child Welfare Portrait which provides a limited sample of information processed and documented by the Data Unit. Much of the information and many reports are available on our public website.

The Revised Code for Care of Children Codified Policies of the State to:

- Consider safety and welfare of a child to be paramount in all proceedings under code
- Provide that each child within code provisions receive care, custody, guidance, control and discipline that will best serve the child's welfare and interests of the state, preferably in the child's home, recognizing the child's relationship with such child's family is important to child's well-being
- Make the ongoing physical, mental and emotional needs of the child decisive considerations
- Encourage reporting of suspected abuse and neglect
- Investigate reports of suspected abuse and neglect thoroughly and promptly
- Acknowledge the time perception of a child differs from an adult and to dispose all of child in need of care proceedings without unnecessary delay
- Provide stability for child who must be removed from home of a parent
- Place children in permanent family settings, in absence of compelling reasons to the contrary

Front End Redesign: Casey Family Programs provided for a consultant to work with Kansas in a thorough review of the State's Front End Redesign (from intake to assessment) of the child welfare system. The consultant was engaged from approximately January to May 2013, and submitted a full report at the conclusion. DCF was to determine which recommendations to pursue and prioritize. Workgroups were created to address needed changes, based upon recommendations. Funding is an ongoing factor in implementation. Some of the changes which DCF has implemented or plans to implement include:

- Improved efficiency of the Kansas Report Center
- Use of social workers to take reporter calls (currently non-social workers take calls, but social workers review/screen to determine whether a report is assigned based upon applicable criteria)
- Transitioning the alternative response program (established in fall 2013) to the differential response program statewide, which will provide increased focus and services to assist with needs/issues of families in an effort to prevent the removal of children from their homes

Adoption Recruitment: DCF is reviewing the process of special needs adoption from foster care with Saint Francis Community Services (SFCS) and Kaw Valley Center (KVC). This includes examining challenges and barriers to adoptions of children who have no identified family to adopt. DCF is working on a recruitment initiative with DCF's Faith-based and Community Initiatives program to raise awareness of the need for adopt-only families for these children.

Independent Living: During FY 13, 407 young people received services through DCF's Independent Living program. The number of youth receiving financial supports for post-secondary education and monthly subsidy for living expenses increased from last fiscal year, from 386 to 402 receiving post-secondary assistance and 270 to 323 receiving monthly subsidies. During FY 13, 156 youth received the State's tuition waiver for post-secondary education. Two of the youth in the Independent Living program were chosen this year as Outstanding Young Leaders by the Foster Club, a national organization that advocates for success of youth in foster care.

Wichita foster care

Over the course of several months, DCF conducted an internal review to address concerns from community members and legislators regarding the department's relationship with Faith Builders. The report was recently released with an independent review provided by Special Investigator Brad Burke, with the Department of Labor.

DCF's report represents a comprehensive effort to answer the questions raised, both through internal and independent review processes. A few DCF staff members within the Wichita Region violated DCF policies and procedures. They have been held accountable. I truly believe this is an isolated situation and all appropriate action has been taken. At no point were there any allegations of abuse or neglect. Please find attached a copy of the internal and independent reviews.