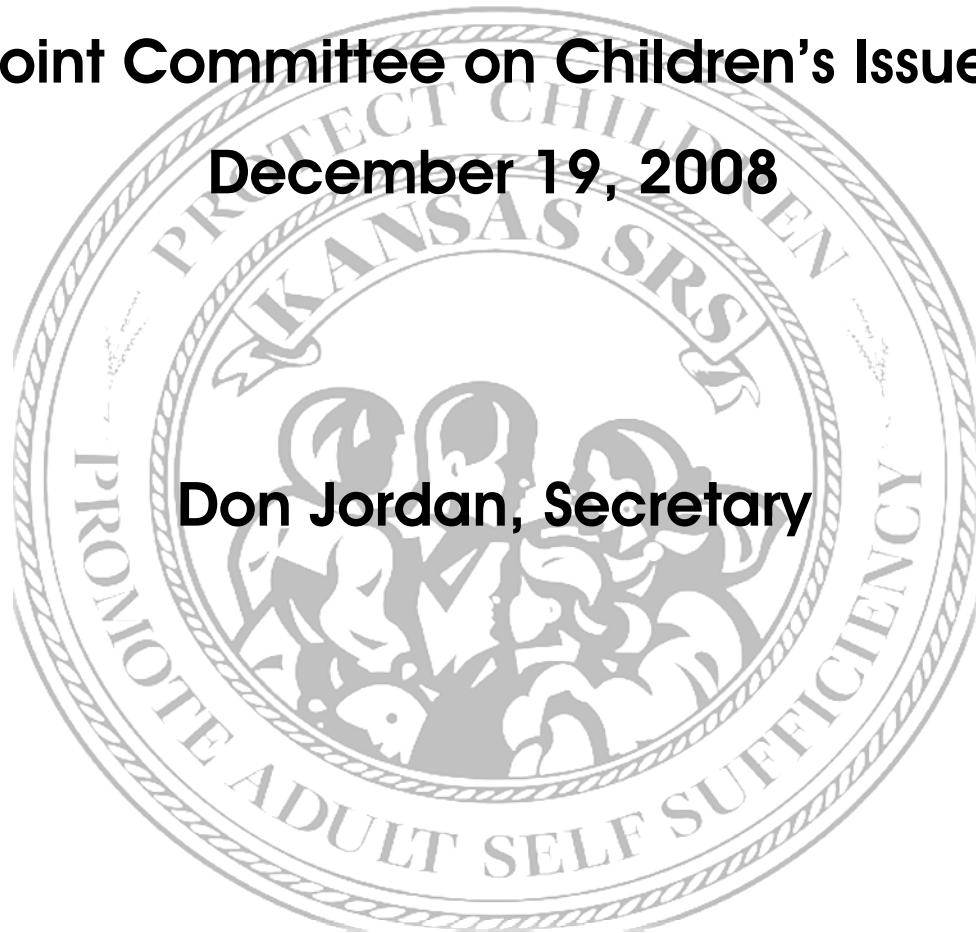


Kansas Department of
Social and Rehabilitation Services
Don Jordan, Secretary

Joint Committee on Children's Issues

December 19, 2008

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Review of Child Welfare System

Joint Committee on Children's Issues

For Additional Information Contact:
Patrick Woods, Director of Governmental Affairs
Docking State Office Building, 6th Floor North
(785) 296-3271

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of family preservation and foster care services in Kansas.

The primary charge in children and family services is to take carefully considered action to protect children. Professionals who interact with children on a daily basis – teachers, doctors, child care providers – are required to report apparent maltreatment. When these or other community members become worried about a child's welfare, they report their concern to law enforcement or SRS. When children are not in imminent jeopardy, family preservation services are available to help families deal with problems that might evolve into dangerous situations. Only when a child is in imminent danger and cannot otherwise be protected will SRS request that law enforcement consider protective custody or ask a county or district attorney to consider involving the court.

In SFY 2008, SRS received 53,888 reports expressing concern. The agency reviewed these concerns and determined that 27,423 reports merited contact to ensure a child's safety and/or identify family service needs. Because children fare better when they remain safely with their family, SRS offers a variety of prevention programs to support and maintain families without involving courts.

Community Services

SRS Regions receive funds to develop and support community-based prevention programs designed to meet the needs of families and children in local communities. These include local tutoring and mentoring services. The FY 09 budget for these programs is \$1,726,332.

Family Services

SRS field staff worked to connect 404 families in SFY 2008 with local supports ranging from food pantries to battered women's shelters to mental health services. This program's goal is to help families live safely and avoid the need for more intrusive services like Family Preservation. The SFY09 budget for family services is \$2,090,657.

Family Preservation

Intensive in-home services were provided for 2,755 families in SFY 2008 through a contract with three private agencies licensed by KDHE to assist families to overcome problems which may, if not resolved, lead to court involvement, loss of parental custody and out-of-home care. The SFY09 budget for family preservation services is \$10,230,083.

The following is an example of Family Preservation Services:

A mother and her three children (ages 7, 5 & 3) were referred for services due to a history of domestic violence, unmanaged depression, ineffective parenting and a chronically dirty home. Intensive services were implemented, but the mother continued struggling to provide a safe home for her children. The Family Preservation provider engaged the maternal grandparents, who took the children into their home. The mother joined them in the home when she was released from the hospital. Today the children and mother continue to live with the grandparents. The mother is employed full time, actively participates in therapy, and the children have appropriate care. The father was located and is providing child support and visiting his children.

That success story is one of many. The focus on maintaining children safely in their own homes is showing results:

- The number of children in out of home placement decreased 8%, from 5,606 to 5,184, between 12/31/2007 and 11/30/2008.
- The year-to-date number of removals has decreased 16%: 1,591 in FY 08 to 1,341 in FY 09.

Foster Care

Children enter the foster care system through a petition usually filed by a county or district attorney representing the state. The court determines whether the child must be removed or whether additional efforts should be made to improve the child's care at home. To remove a child, courts must make specific findings that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent separation of child from parent **and** that it is contrary to the child's welfare to remain in the home. This legal requirement is intended to highlight the significant emotional difficulty of removing a child from a parent's care. Parents who are unable to afford an attorney are entitled to appointed counsel. The child's best interests are represented by an attorney serving as a guardian ad litem.

When children are placed out of home, 25% are placed with relatives, 59% are placed in a KDHE-licensed family foster home, 8% are in group homes, 5% are in pre-adoptive homes, and 3% live independently. SRS contracts with five KDHE-licensed child placing agencies to place children when they enter SRS custody. The Department manages recruitment, training, licensure preparation and ongoing support of foster parents through these contracts and coordinates activities of child placing agencies who sponsor foster homes.

Child welfare contractors also work with families to reintegrate children and, when the court determines that is no longer viable, to find alternative permanent residence for the child, like adoption or permanent custodianship. Court oversight continues until the child achieves reintegration (60% of cases) or an alternative permanency of adoption (30%), or permanent custodianship (4%). Most of the remaining children aged out of the system with transition supports provided until age 23. A small number transition to other systems including juvenile justice.

In addition to court oversight of individual cases, the federal Administration for Children and Families oversees foster care through Children and Family Service Reviews and subsequent program improvement plans. Kansas recently underwent a second CFSR and have negotiated our second program improvement plan. The CFSR provides information on how Kansas compares to other states in meeting national outcomes concerning child safety permanency and well being. This information is set out on the attached sheet.

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CFSR Performance Kansas Comparison

Data reflects comparison to states whose CFSR round 2 results were available at the time Kansas' final report was issued.

Outcomes Substantial conformity for a state is based on if an outcome met 95%	Kansas	Delaware	New Mexico	North Carolina	Vermont	Arizona	District of Columbia	Oregon	Oklahoma
Safety Outcome 1: Children are Protected	93.8%	65.6%	87.8%	66.7%	87.5%	78.1%	80.8%	62.5%	67.6%
Safety outcome 2: Children are safely maintained whenever possible	75.0%	78.5%	70.8%	73.8%	46.9%	63.1%	81.5%	60.0%	67.7%
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have Permanency and Stability in their living situations	52.5%	42.9%	37.5%	57.5%	30.0%	42.5%	41.0%	46.3%	35.0%
Permanency Outcome 2: Continuity of family and connections are preserved	90.0%	65.8%	75.0%	80.0%	65.0%	71.1%	71.8%	70.7%	60.0%
Well Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to meet their needs	65.6%	49.2%	63.1%	63.1%	23.4%	41.5%	49.2%	38.5%	48.0%
Well Being 2: Children have appropriate services to meet their educational needs	91.5%	90.5%	80.8%	96.0%	87.8%	77.3%	88.0%	76.9%	86.0%
Well Being 3: Children have adequate services to meet physical and mental health needs	85.5%	82.4%	81.2%	78.7%	72.1%	62.9%	87.3%	68.3%	82.0%

Systemic Factors Substantial conformity for a state is based on a score of 3 or 4	Kansas	Delaware	New Mexico	North Carolina	Vermont	Arizona	District of Columbia	Oregon	Oklahoma
Statewide Information System	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	2	4
Case Review System	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
Quality Assurance System	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	4
Training	2	4	2	4	2	4	3	3	4
Service Array	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	2
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	2	3