

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***Families Matter Shows Promising Results*** **Additional funds for child welfare/juvenile services system**

**Lincoln** – Nebraska children in the child welfare/juvenile services system are safe, more families receive services earlier, and fewer children are in out-of-home care, according to data from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

- Children in care are safe. The national goal when monitoring absence of abuse by foster parents or facility staff is 99.68%. Nebraska was at 99.69% in September, 99.65% in October, and 99.57% in November 2010.
- Aftercare services are now available for the first time to help families. Before *Families Matter*, families did not receive support services after they were no longer involved with the Department. Today, through our partners KVC Behavioral Healthcare Nebraska, Inc. and the Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC), over 2,000 children are receiving aftercare services that reduce the number of children who reenter the system.
- More children are served without court involvement. There were 1,163 non-court involved children in October 2009 and 1,745 non-court involved children in December 2010.
- The number of children in the state's custody was down to 6,250 as of December 31, 2010 from an all-time high of 7,803 in April 2006.

At a briefing to the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee last November, Reckling presented an Action Plan for 2010-2012 that included investing additional funding in *Families Matter*.

"After evaluating the early results, we believe it's the right time to redirect \$19 million in one-time funding to support this fundamental change in how we serve children and families," he said. Within the next nine months, KVC will receive \$12 million, and NFC will receive \$7 million in one-time funding to serve children and families in 2011 and 2012. The total DHHS Division of Children and Family Services budget for child welfare and juvenile services is \$206 million a year.

The additional one-time funds will support KVC and NFC, who are providing new aftercare services to over 2,000 children; serving all family members, not just the child who is a state ward; serving more non-court involved families than anticipated; and who have already made significant investments in *Families Matter*. These additional funds will be recaptured by DHHS if there is an early termination of a contract.

"We're implementing *Families Matter* because Nebraska has historically had one of the highest rates of children in state custody, with too many children removed from their homes and served away from their families," said Todd Reckling, director of the Division of Children and Family Services in DHHS. "*Families Matter* is based on achieving safety, permanency and well-being for the children and families we serve."