



Nebraska Child Welfare and Juvenile Services Reform  
Safety • Permanency • Well-being

## **Families Matter Action Plan 2010 through 2012**

**Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Children and Family Services**



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## Vision

**Nebraska will be a national leader in serving children and families in need.**



### **We believe that Families Matter:**

- Children grow best in their own homes.
- Children should be reunified or moved to permanency through adoption or guardianship in a timely manner.
- Families should get services earlier and be offered services after they leave DHHS.

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## **Families Matter Outcomes**

- Newly assigned cases are engaged in the program and receive services
- Children are safe from abuse and/or neglect
- Communities are safe
- Children are maintained at home with family
- Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification
- Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care for Long Periods of Time
- Placement Stability
- Placement in a Family Like Setting
- Maintaining Family Relationships and Connections
- Needs Assessment & Case Planning
- Other Measures

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## **Action Plan Summary**

- Solicit broader, ongoing stakeholder input and improve communication and transparency about Families Matter
- Prepare CFS and Contract staff for changes in roles and responsibilities
- Ongoing evaluation and accountability and continual assessment, analysis, and adjustment
- Increase service funding

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## **Solicit broader, ongoing stakeholder input and improve communication and transparency about Families Matter**

- Increase frequency of Partners Council meetings and expand agenda and time to review status of Families Matter Reform.
  - Casey Family Programs assistance to restructure and redefine the meetings
  - Facilitation of the meetings
  - Change to monthly rather than quarterly meetings
  - Proposed agendas set by group members to include such items as presentations by contractors on progress toward outcomes, responses to questions, solicit input and feedback on direction, analyze data, presentations of evaluation data and information, receive feedback on progress and operation and input on adjustments to improve outcomes, etc.
- Sent letter to foster parents from Todd Reckling, NFC Executive Director David Newell, KVC Nebraska President Sandra Gasca-Gonzalez and Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parents Association Director Pam Allen offering four phone numbers for foster parents to use if they have any difficulty in reaching contract staff
- Collaborate with the Nebraska Federation of Families and the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parents Association and others to solicit input and feedback from families and foster or adoptive families
- Utilize local stakeholder advisory groups. SESA has one in operation and ESA will have one in operation in January
- Add CFS e-mail address to new Families Matter Reform website as an avenue for stakeholders to send in comments and ideas for improvements
- Increase use of the new Families Matter Reform website to present data and program reports about the reform, provide monthly messages on the progress of the reform, posting of a Question and Answer document to share responses to questions from stakeholders
- Meet with Judges to address changes and court needs
- Continue weekly e-mails with CFS staff
- E-mail communication monthly to Senators, Judges, County Attorneys, FCRB, CASA Association, Federation of Families, Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, provider associations and others on the status of the reform

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- Set up monthly meetings of the Partners Council or subgroup
  - Give presentations to community groups and associations

### **Prepare CFS and Contract Staff for Changing Roles and Responsibilities**

- CFS staff in the ESA and SESA will be trained together.
  - Initial training on roles and responsibilities will occur by December 31
  - An additional 2 hour training session on behavioral and culture change related to the change in roles and responsibilities will be completed by December 31
  - Follow-up and reinforcement training will be done as “just in time” training in approximate one hour per week increments in 2011
- Contract staff in the ESA and SESA are being trained by Contractor’s Training Coordinators using curriculum and material from CFS case management training, contract staff with extensive history working with child welfare and CFS and experts from the child welfare community. Training Coordinators recently completed all the CFS training for trainers.
  - Contract staff previously received extensive training in areas connecting to case management. Having the context of the work given the prior role of service coordination, the additional “gap training” includes an additional 37 hours of training in the following areas: Nebraska Safety Intervention System, Court and Legal Issues, General Case Management, Placement, and Documentation
  - Additional follow-up training will be provided after January 1 to include approximately 2 days of training in conducting the Youth Level of Service Inventory (YLSI) for juvenile service cases
  - Contract staff will receive ongoing training as needed

### **Ongoing evaluation and accountability and continual assessment, analysis, and adjustment**

- Casey Family Programs facilitation of key strategies (Casey is a nationally recognized philanthropic organization focused entirely on foster care and improving the child welfare system):
  - Convene researchers and others to define implementation process questions for an evaluation of the reform
  - Restructure the Partners Council and involve more stakeholders
  - Develop and implement proficiency model of safety assessment for supervisors, emphasizing what’s needed to keep the child in his/her family home and using foster care as last option

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- Assist in development of fiscal performance method for private lead contractors that provides appropriate incentives, and also captures reinvestments (as foster care population continues to decrease)
  - Develop communication strategies to build and sustain public support to meeting outcomes in Families Matter Reform effort
  - Assist in development of an enhanced QA and monitoring system that is built upon mutual goals and outcomes
  - Strengthen the use of data for planning and setting benchmarks with private lead contractors
  - Identify changing roles and responsibilities of staff at different levels due to reform effort, leading to more efficiencies, improved recruitment, increased retention, and greater competency
  - Conduct further data analysis on entries, including those removals made by law enforcement. Identify strategies to address needs on the front-end of the system to prevent removals
  - Conduct Permanency Round Tables on youth in care.
- External Evaluation
    - Develop implementation evaluation questions
    - Secure evaluator(s)
    - Initiate evaluation
    - Receive and analyze evaluation progress reports with stakeholders
  - Monthly review of progress by Partners Council
  - Quarterly review of outcome performance by Partners Council (see Outcomes)
  - Quarterly report of progress and outcome performance to Senators, Judges and other stakeholders
  - Posting of progress updates and outcome performance on Families Matter website
  - Continuous input and assessment will result in adjustments throughout the year and in the development of an updated plan for the next calendar year and future years

### **Increase service funding**

- Additional one time funding investment due to increased services for children and families and to support current service coordination.

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## Plan Timeline

- November-December, 2010
  - Train CFS and Contract staff
  - Secure Administrative Services approval
  - Finalize transition plan to move case management to lead contractors
  - Partners Council Meeting
  - Finalize plan for input from parents and foster and adoptive parents
  - Continued weekly communication with staff
  - Monthly communications with stakeholders
  - New Families Matter website
  - Written and verbal communications to bio/legal parents/caregivers by CFS and by lead contractors to foster parents, youth in independent living and stakeholders providing an overview of the change, timelines and direction to the Families Matter website for additional information
  
- January, 2011
  - Case management functions transfer to lead contractors January 3
  - Notification to CFS staff on staff reductions starting with staff on original probation
  - On-going training of CFS and contract staff
  - Request State Personnel review of new job duties for CFS staff for assessment of current classification
  - Partners Council Meeting
  - Continued weekly communication with staff
  - Monthly Communications with Stakeholders
  - Presentations and meetings
  
- February-March, 2011
  - On-going training of CFS and contract staff
  - Family, Foster and Adoptive Family, process for input
  - Partners Council Meetings
  - External evaluation plan finalized
  - Continued weekly communication with staff
  - Monthly communications with stakeholders
  - Presentations and meetings
  
- April-December, 2011
  - Monthly Partners Council Meetings Continue
  - Monthly updates to website
  - Continued weekly communication with staff
  - Monthly communications with stakeholders
  - Presentations and meetings

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- Assess case management transfer to contractor(s) for the Western, Central and Northern Service Areas and conduct process to secure contractor(s) as indicated. Contractor secured mid-late 2011
  - Evaluation updates, analysis and adjustments
  - Develop plan for 2012
  
  - January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012
    - Contractor for WSA, CSA and NSA starts implementation in 2012
    - Continue evaluation of ESA and SESA, analysis and adjustments
    - Continue monthly Partners Council
    - Ongoing communications with staff and stakeholders

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## **Families Matter Outcomes and Measurements**

The following outcomes are contained within the current Child Welfare and Juvenile Services contract to 2014. Please see Operations Manual, Chapter 13, Performance Accountability, for more information on how the outcomes are measured.

### **Newly assigned cases are engaged in the program and receive services**

- 98% of families will have a face-to-face contact with the contractor's assigned service coordinator no later than one calendar day following the referral from the Department

### **Children are safe from abuse and/or neglect**

- 95% of children will not experience any substantiated abuse or neglect during the first 180 days of services
- 100% of families referred to the Contractor for Safety related services will receive the services within 2 hours of referral by the Department
- 99.68% of children and youth in out-of-home care will not experience substantiated abuse or neglect from a foster parent or employee at an out of home care facility during a 12-month period

### **Communities are safe**

- 100% of youth referred to the Contractor for Community Safety related services will receive the services within 2 hours of referral by the Department
- % of delinquent youth who are Direct Commits will not be ordered to the YRTC during the period under review (baseline percentage in process)
- 80% of delinquent youth discharged from the YRTC will not return (either by parole revocation or recommitment) twelve (12) months from the date of release from the YRTC

### **Children are maintained at home with family**

- 50% of state wards will be served in their family home.
- % of all children placed in out-of-home care will be reunified within 12-months (71% for ESA; 69.08% for SESA)

### **Timeliness and Permanency of Reunification**

- % or less of all reunified children re-enter out-home-care within 12-months of discharge (8% for ESA; 9.9% for SESA)
- 36.6 % of children are adopted within 24 months of removal from the home
- % of cases of children legally free for adoption will be adopted within 12-months of being legally free for adoption (61.76% for ESA; 67.5% for SESA)

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### **Achieving Permanency for Children in Foster Care for Long Periods of Time**

- % of cases, of youth in care for 24 or more continuous months discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday (38.96% for ESA; 43.76% for SESA)
- % or less of cases, of youth grow up or age out of foster care (26.23% for ESA; 18.43% for SESA)

### **Placement Stability**

- % of new cases of children in care for <12 months will have 2 or fewer foster care placements (84.27% for ESA; 87.18% for SESA)
- % of legacy cases of children in care for <12 months will have 2 or fewer foster care placements (83.27% for ESA; 87.18% for SESA)
- % of new cases of children in care for 12 to <24 months will have 2 or fewer foster care placements (to be determined)
- % of legacy cases of children in care for 12 to <24 months will have 2 or fewer foster care placements ( 55.19% for ESA; 60-16% for SESA)
- % of new cases of children in care for 24 or more months will have 2 or fewer foster care placements
- % of legacy cases; of children in care for 24 or more months will have 2 or fewer foster care placements (25.75% for ESA; 32.03% for SESA)
- % of new cases of children placed in family like out of home care placements will be placed with relatives or families known to the child (43.30% for ESA; 42.67% for SESA)
- % of legacy cases of children placed in family like out of home care placements will be placed with relatives or families known to the child (38.3% for ESA; 37.67% for SESA)

### **Placement in a Family Like Setting**

- 75% of new cases of children in out of home care will be placed in a family like out of home care setting
- % of legacy cases of children in out of home care will be moved from a congregate care to family like setting (87.1% for ESA; 89.4% for SESA)

### **Maintaining Family Relationships and Connections**

- 92% of children in out of home care will be placed with their siblings

### **Needs Assessment & Case Planning**

- 90% of families will have a needs assessment completed on every child, parent and foster parent involved in a case
- 90% of custodial parents will be actively engaged and involved in the case planning process. Every family will have a scheduled Family Team Meeting every month to plan, strategize, discuss progress etc
- 90% of non-custodial parents will be actively engaged and involved in the case planning process. Every family will have a scheduled Family Team Meeting every month to plan, strategize, discuss progress etc.

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- 90% of youth will be actively engaged and involved in the case planning process. Every family will have a scheduled Family Team Meeting every month to plan, strategize, discuss progress etc
  - 90% of youth age 15 & older wards of the state will have a documented Independent Living Plan that includes individualized goals, needs and strategies

**Other Measures**

- All youth recommended for release from the Detention facility by the CFS Specialist or the court shall be placed in an alternative placement within 2 calendar days of the identified release date
- All youth identified for parole from a YRTC shall be placed in an alternative placement on the identified date for their parole