



Families Matter is the reform of Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile services and is driven by the federal outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.

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

We believe that families matter and:

- 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.

Nebraska is fundamentally changing delivery of services to children and families.

Why? 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.

The November 30, 2010 briefing to the Health and Human Services Committee included information on:

- Overview of *Families Matter*
- Data
- Case management roles/responsibilities
- Families Matter Action Plan 2010 – 2012
- Child welfare/juvenile services timeline, 2006 -2012
- Letter of support from Casey Family Programs

Updates since the November 30, 2010 Briefing:

- **On January 3, most case management functions in Southeast and two-thirds of the Eastern Service Area transferred to KVC and NFC.** DHHS remains responsible for the critical areas of initial assessment and investigation of child abuse/neglect and critical case decisions such as placement and case closure. CFS staff will also take on a stronger monitoring and Quality Assurance role, critical to ensuring accountability from lead contractors and to evaluating and measuring progress on meeting outcomes. This new and key CFS role includes analyzing recommendations, information and reports provided by contract case managers in order to assure:
 - That the child's best interest is addressed and that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent the removal of a child from the family; or,
 - If a child or youth has been removed, that reasonable efforts are made to return the child if possible or that a plan is developed that leads to adoption or guardianship.

January 31, 2011

- **On Dec. 13, over 40 stakeholders met in Lincoln to begin planning evaluation and implementation of *Families Matter*.**
- **Nationally-known Casey Family Programs will provide consultation, technical assistance and funding** over the next year to the Division of Children and Family Services in areas like:
 - Improving data and fiscal analysis;
 - Developing safety assessment proficiency model for supervisors;
 - Reporting on QA and monitoring activities;
 - Assisting with a communication strategy to build public understanding and support of *Families Matter*
- **DHHS redirected \$19 million in one-time funding to KVC and NFC** to support *Families Matter* efforts. The additional one-time funds will be recaptured by DHHS if there is an early termination of a contract. The additional one-time funds are needed to support the lead contractors, KVC and NFC, who are:
 - Providing new aftercare services to over 2,300 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*.

Enhancing communications about *Families Matter*:

- **Employees:**
 - Weekly email to staff and Q&A on internal website, plus e-mail address for employees
 - Scheduling meetings with staff in Eastern and Southeast Service Areas
- **Stakeholders:**
 - Emails to foster parents, judges, county attorneys, senators, advocates, providers
 - Presentations or individual meetings with various individuals and groups

Working on the Action Plan implementation for *Families Matter*, including:

- Soliciting broader, ongoing stakeholder input and improving communication and transparency about *Families Matter*.
- Doing ongoing evaluation and accountability and continual analysis and adjustments.
- Increasing service funding.
- Holding stakeholder meetings for input on evaluation/ implementation of *Families Matter*.

The federal Children and Family Services Review (CFSR):

- Measures all states in outcomes around safety, permanency and well-being.
- Failure to meet outcomes can result in a loss of federal funds.
- 2002 – Nebraska only met 2 of 6 data measures.
- 2008 – federal government changed method of measurement. Like many other states Nebraska did worse and met only 1 of 6
- 2010 – Nebraska meeting 2 of 6 data measures (has been as high as 3)