

March 16, 2011

Dear Foster Parent:

I want to thank you for your ongoing interest in caring for Nebraska's children, and to provide an update on *Families Matter*, reform of child welfare and juvenile services. *Families Matter* is built on our goal of serving more children in their homes and is driven by the federal outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being. Foster parents are extremely important in our efforts to place children in the most family-like setting possible.

Case Management: On January 3 we transferred case management functions from our DHHS staff to KVC and the Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC) in only the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas. In the Eastern Service Area, 1/3 of the cases are managed by KVC, 1/3 by NFC and 1/3 by DHHS. Case management was transferred in part to alleviate confusion being experienced by families and foster families at the time about who to contact, since before January they were involved with staff from both DHHS and the contractors.

Consent for Treatment: I've received questions about consent for medical or mental health treatment, and who is the legal guardian of state wards. In case you've heard these questions, too, DHHS remains the legal guardian of children and youth placed in the custody of DHHS. DHHS must give consent for medical or mental health treatment. DHHS cannot give this authority to the Lead Agency. Any documents that require consent by a legal guardian must be signed by DHHS. The Lead Agency may sign any document that does not require a guardian's consent.

Foster Parent Questions and Concerns: The Department is committed to being open and receptive to all comments from interested individuals. We want foster and adoptive parents to have the support and answers you need. If you have questions about anything, please contact your foster care agency first; then KVC (402-420-8600 for the Southeast Service Area, 402-431-4200 for the Eastern Service Area) or NFC (402-498-1297); or the DHHS Helpline at 800-254-4202. The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (NFAPA) can also help you problem-solve or facilitate getting information at 800-7-PARENT (800-772-7368).

Thanks for all you do and your service to children and youth in need.

Sincerely,

Todd L. Reckling, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services