



December 10, 2010

Dear Foster Parent,

I'll be providing information to foster parents periodically as we move forward with "Families Matter," our efforts to get better outcomes to children and families served by Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile services system.

On November 30, CEO Kerry Winterer and I briefed the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee. We provided information on the change in roles and responsibilities for Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) staff and lead contractor staff in the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas as we move certain case management decisions to KVC and NFC.

In January 2011 in the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas, we'll be assigning to lead contractor staff the case management decisions that CFS staff have been performing. This refocuses CFS efforts on oversight rather than the day-to-day case activities and decision-making that are part of case management. CFS staff are taking on a new and key role of 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 removal and return the child if possible, or to develop a plan leading to adoption or guardianship.

We'll continue to follow requirements in state law for CFS decision-making in court-involved cases:

- In court-involved cases, CFS staff takes on a stronger "oversight" role. When a child or youth is made a ward of the State, the law requires us to have certain decision making authority. In these cases, the contract case manager will present recommendations for case plans and court reports that CFS staff will review and present to the court. The review will focus on an assessment of reasonable efforts and best interest of the child. Depending on each court and at least in the initial stages of this change, CFS staff will attend court hearings and be prepared to testify. In addition to reviewing contract case manager recommendations, CFS staff will conduct quality assurance (QA) reviews to assess contractor compliance with policies. The tool or tools to conduct this review are being developed.

Please know that we'll be looking for contractors for the Northern, Central and Western Service Areas mid-to-late 2011, with implementation of changes in 2012. Until then, CFS staff will continue to serve children and families in those three Service Areas.

There's a wide variety of information available, including materials from the November 30 briefing, by going to [http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Children\\_Family\\_Services/](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Children_Family_Services/) and clicking on the Families Matter logo on the right-hand side of the page.

For those of you who provide foster care in the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas, you will be personally contacted to talk more about these changes.

I appreciate the questions you've asked about the changes we are making. They provide me another perspective to ensure changes are accomplished in the best possible way. Please feel free to send comments or suggestions to your foster care agency, the lead contractors, or to me via email at [dhhs.childrenandfamilyservices@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.childrenandfamilyservices@nebraska.gov) Your commitment to children and their families is inspiring and your work is appreciated!

Sincerely,

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