

ESA Transition Report

Updates on the transfer of case management to DHHS

January 31, 2022

Transition of Eastern Service Area case management commenced on January 3, 2022. DHHS Division of Children & Family Services management, DHHS administrative leaders, and Saint Francis Ministries management have partnered through the first weeks of transition to ensure youth cases transferred to DHHS with the highest level of care and attention.

After the intent to transition cases was announced in December 2021, DHHS made job offers to over 200 SFM caseworkers, casework supervisors and other child welfare and support staff. Nearly 90% of those SFM employees accepted offers to become DHHS teammates. These new teammates will join DHHS between January through April 2022.

Over the first several weeks of 2022, more than 1,600 youth cases will be staffed by CFS, SFM, providers, attorneys, court officials and other stakeholders. A case will not officially transfer to DHHS until the staffing is complete and the SFM caseworker has onboarded with DHHS.

In addition to casework, DHHS and SFM teams have dedicated significant time to ensuring office space, technology, personnel and other shared administrative concerns are addressed collaboratively. DHHS appreciates the patience, dedication and thoughtfulness of SFM caseworkers and support staff, family support providers, judicial partners and many others who are working hard to make sure the transition is successful and that the ESA children and families receive outstanding service from the State child well-being system.

Table 1: ESA Teammate Transfers—SFM to DHHS	2022					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Cumulative # of caseworker transfers	12					
Cumulative # of casework supervisor transfers	3					

Approximately 200 SFM employees will become DHHS teammates over the first 16 weeks of 2022. This table shows transferring caseworkers and casework supervisors only. Other incoming teammates include legal, IT, training and administrative specialists.

Table 2: ESA Case Transfers—SFM to DHHS	2022					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Cumulative # of youth to be transferred to DHHS	1,655					
Cumulative # of youth cases staffed by DHHS/SFM	178					
Cumulative # of youth cases closed/set to close	64					
Cumulative # of youth officially transferred to DHHS	134					

Case staffings are scheduled through the end of February 2022. Staffings assess a child's placement, visitation, current services, permanency plan, upcoming hearings, barriers and other key factors.

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**Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services
Division of Children & Family Services**

Legislature Considers Child Welfare System Reform

LB1173 targets system-wide change

Nebraska Legislative Bill 1173 would create a work group and strategic leadership group for child welfare system reform.

Introduced by the Health and Human Services Committee in January 2022 and supported by Governor Ricketts and DHHS, LB1173 establishes a child welfare partnership among the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The bill asserts that “comprehensive transformation will require an integrated model addressing all aspects of the system.”

If LB1173 becomes law, the three branches of government, joined by community stakeholders, would establish a practice model and financial model to comprehensively support “children and families receiving, and persons providing or effecting” Nebraska’s child welfare system. This includes case management, health care, prevention, adoption, probation, education and other services.

Testifying in support of LB1173, DHHS CEO Dannette R. Smith said, “While this [practice] model would guide Nebraska’s child welfare practice, it needs to be more than just a strategic plan. It needs to be an operational realignment and reimagining of the services and supports across the entire child welfare system.”

Table 3: ESA Cases	2022					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
# of out-of-home cases (per child)	1,527					
# of in-home cases (per family)	193					
# of Initial Assessment/Alt Response cases	545					

Case counts as of the last Friday of the month.

Table 4: Statewide Cases	2022					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
# of out-of-home cases (per child)	3,265					
# of in-home cases (per family)	728					
# of Initial Assessment/Alt Response cases	1,374					

Case counts as of the last Friday of the month.

Table 5: ESA Case Distribution	2022					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
# of caseworkers in training (no caseload yet)	15					
# of caseworkers with <15 cases	89					
# of caseworkers with 15-17 cases	23					
# of caseworkers with 18-25 cases	41					
# of caseworkers with 25+ cases	14					

Case counts as of the last Friday of the month. Caseload distribution is an indication of caseload burden. Monitoring distribution helps CFS managers make case assignment decisions on a daily and weekly basis. (DHHS also reports compliance with statutory caseload ratio requirements here: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/CFS-Data-and-Reports.aspx>)

New Administrator for the Eastern Service Area



In January 2022, Lana Verbrigghe joined DHHS as the new ESA Administrator. Lana has over 20 years of child welfare experience, most recently serving as the Senior Director of Programs and Service for Children’s Square where she oversaw 11 different services across Iowa and Nebraska. Prior to Children’s Square, Lana was the Director of Child Welfare services for Child Saving Institute from 2011-2019. This capacity afforded Ms. Verbrigghe the opportunity to lead a variety of child welfare services, in addition to gaining experience in growing and expanding services to meet the needs of the community.

Lana brings a wealth of experience and knowledge working with children, youth, and families in crisis as well as nonprofit management. Lana holds a BS in Child and Family Studies from Iowa State and a MSW from University of Nebraska Omaha; Lana is also licensed as an LMHP and LMSW. Outside of work, Lana enjoys spending time with her family camping, hiking and kayaking.