



IOWA'S PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP) QUARTER 2 (JANUARY 1, 2012 – MARCH 31, 2012)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction:

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), who is responsible for the implementation and outcomes of the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) PIP, and its child welfare partners welcome the opportunity to improve safety, permanency, and well-being for the children and families served in Iowa.

Iowa's child welfare system focuses on the three CFSR domains of safety, permanency, and well-being:

- **Safety**
 - Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
 - Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- **Permanency**
 - Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- **Child and family well-being**
 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
 - Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
 - Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The DHS' vision is that all children grow up safe from abuse and with permanent family connections. To achieve this vision, the DHS aligns child welfare resources, through utilizing a customer focus and a dedication to excellence, accountability, and teamwork.

Iowa's child welfare system has several outstanding strengths, chief among them being the dedication of staff, providers, and the judicial system and the emphasis on collaboration in order to implement improvement strategies.

Quarter Two PIP Activities:

OUTCOME/SYSTEMIC FACTOR:	QUARTER 2 TARGETED STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES:
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision • Results Oriented Management (ROM)
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Team Decision-Making meetings (FTDM) • Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) • Permanency Round Tables (PRTs) • Joint Substance Abuse Protocol • Iowa Foster Care Youth Council
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not addressed in the first and second quarters
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseworker Visits • Expand Responsible Fatherhood and Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) initiative • Expand Parent Partners
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Addressed in the first and second quarters
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseworker Visits
Systemic Factor: Service Array and Resource Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not addressed in the second quarter
Systemic Factor: Quality Assurance (QA) System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance and Improvement (QA&I) system • Supervision • Results Oriented Management (ROM)

Quarter Two PIP Accomplishments:

Supervision: Iowa recognizes supervision as a key strategy to ensuring quality social work practice, recruiting and retaining quality social workers, and supporting those social workers in ways that enhance morale and job satisfaction, which will improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for the children and families served.

A group of 12 public/private individuals, including assistance from the National Resource Center on In-Home Services (NRC-IHS) volunteered to represent the committee assigned to complete tasks identified by the CFSR PIP.

- In quarter two, the group developed a model of supervisory practice.

Results Oriented Management (ROM): ROM is a web-based system, which will generate reports for supervisors and managers regarding performance on selected indicators. Supervisors and managers will utilize the reports to drive practice discussions and improvements with staff.

- In quarter two, ROM was coordinated and aligned with the model of supervisory practice.

Family Team Decision-Making meetings (FTDM): The FTDM process, a strength-based process, encourages families to draw upon formal and informal supports, promotes team

decision-making, and provides a healthy environment for resolving conflict and solving problems. Results of the 2010 CFSR identified differences in FTDM practices as a concern.

The following tasks were accomplished to address this concern:

- Selected criteria for effective preparation of FTDMs; and
- Established recommended best practices, such as when the Life of the Case (LOC) FTDMs should be held, recommended length of time to achieve goals within the meeting, and behavioral benchmarks for moving families toward success and safe case closure.

Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) for Placement Stability: Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) staff chose to focus PDSA efforts on one sub-measure of placement stability, which is children in out of home placement between 12 and 24 will have 2 or fewer placements.

The following were activities completed in quarter two:

- Bureau of Quality Assurance staff conducted an event in the Northern Service Area (SA) to design the PDSA for quarter 3 implementation.
- The PDSA will focus on:
 - providing enhanced up-front identification and assessment of potential caregivers for child out-of-home placements;
 - offering enhanced contact information and community resources at the beginning of the placement to ensure the smoothest transition possible for the child and caregiver; and
 - initiating timelier family team decision-making (FTDM) meetings to ensure family interaction, engagement and planning for the family happens as early as possible in the life of the case.

Permanency Round Tables (PRTs): The DHS and Iowa Children's Justice (ICJ) collaborated with Casey Family Programs to conduct permanency roundtables in each service area in Iowa. Permanency roundtables examine cases where children have been in foster care for an extended period of time and need permanency. The purpose of the roundtables is to review the case to determine opportunities missed to pursue permanency and family connections for youth and develop an action plan to achieve permanency for the youth.

- Iowa implemented round two of the permanency roundtables in summer and fall of 2011 in four service areas.
- Service areas identified lessons learned, such as:
 - Long-term stability does not equal permanency;
 - Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPA) is not permanency; and
 - Absence of financial support for kinship or guardianship placements is a barrier to permanency.
- As a result of the lessons learned, service areas identified action steps, such as:
 - Conducting facilitated conversations with the courts/Guardian Ad Litem/attorneys about APPLA not being permanency;
 - Instilling the importance of life-long connections; and

- Sharing individual action plans to educate and spread the message about the importance of permanency with stakeholders.

Joint Substance Abuse Protocol: In 2008, the Iowa General Assembly passed House File 2310 (HF2310). The purpose of HF2310 was to identify effective means of reducing the incidence and impact of child abuse, including denial of critical care and interventions with families by the child welfare system caused, partially or wholly, by substance misuse, abuse, or dependency by a child's parent, guardian, custodian, or other person responsible for the child's care. The DHS, Iowa Children's Justice (ICJ), and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) worked together to develop a protocol for working with these families in the child welfare system. DHS, ICJ, and IDPH will expand the Joint Substance Abuse Protocol by rolling it out in two additional counties. Counties having higher rates of abuse per 1,000 will be targeted and recruited.

Activities completed in quarter two were:

- DHS staff conducted a review of the Calendar Year 2011 child abuse statistics to determine the rate of abuse per 1000 for Iowa's counties.
- The following are the counties with the highest rates of abuse per 1,000:
 - Montgomery County – 32
 - Adams County – 31
 - Union County – 30
- Montgomery County currently is a pilot for the protocol. Subsequently, in quarter 3, Iowa will market the protocol to Adams and Union counties.

Iowa Foster Care Youth Council: The Iowa Foster Care Youth Council (IFCYC) is a primary way to engage youth in the Iowa child welfare system. The IFCYC serves as a support group for youth involved in Iowa's foster care system and foster care alumni. Chapter meetings are held in approximately ten sites across the state and provide an opportunity for youth to meet other youth having similar experiences, learn about programs and services, and an opportunity to impact policy and practice change in the child welfare system. The chapter meetings occur approximately two times a month. A trained, paid facilitator prepares an agenda, invites presenters, and leads the discussion.

- This quarter, IFCYC developed the Youth Bill of Rights.

Caseworker Visits: DHS staff formed a group consisting of DHS and Juvenile Court Services (JCS) staff to complete tasks in the PIP regarding the quality, frequency, and documentation of caseworker visits.

The work group completed the following tasks:

- Development of a standard practice document;
- Identification of ways to streamline work processes for caseworkers; and
- Provided recommendations to the Service Business Team (SBT) for implementation.

Expand Responsible Fatherhood and Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) initiative: DHS staff formed a committee, including staff representing field, policy, administration, and staff from the Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU), Parent Partners, Iowa Department of Corrections (DOC) staff, and a domestic violence advocate to complete tasks identified by the CFSR PIP.

The work group completed the following tasks:

- Developed standard practice document;
- Conducted pilot for Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS);
- Researched existing arrangements with DOC and began collaborations with DOC; and
- Researched and chose available father engagement curricula.

Expand Parent Partners:

Parent Partners (PP) are individuals who previously had their children removed from their care and were successfully reunited with their children for a year or more. PP provides support to parents that are involved with the DHS and are working towards reunification. PP mentor one-on-one, celebrate families' successes and strengths, exemplify advocacy, facilitate training and presentations, and collaborate with the DHS and child welfare. Their efforts support placement stability for children in care, support timely reunification, and support successful reunification to prevent re-entry.

In quarter two, the following task was completed:

- Parent Partner central office staff and current Parent Partner Coordinators conducted the Building A Better Future (BABF) Train-the-Trainer training on February 1 and 2, 2012 in Des Moines, Iowa. There were 38 participants who completed the training. The training included topics such as the presentation preparation with training partners, training presentations on the curriculum sections and modules, recapping and reflecting on the curriculum on the second day, and evaluations and presentation of certificates.

Quality Assurance (QA): Because of Iowa's 2003 CFSR, Iowa implemented and continuously operates an identifiable Quality Assurance and Improvement (QA&I) system. The QA&I system serves all of Iowa's 99 counties. The QA&I system evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and addresses prioritized need areas of the service delivery system, and provides relevant analysis and reporting of the performance of Iowa's child welfare system. The 2010 CFSR identified areas needing improvement in Iowa's QA system.

To address these areas needing improvement, Iowa's QA system continued to build upon the tasks completed in the last quarter. The following was completed in quarter two:

- Refined practice regarding review of cases enhancing consistency in scoring across reviewers, such as:
 - Minimal expectations were identified pertaining to documentation of caseworker visits with children and parents, as well as specifying those elements that are required during the visit which relate to assessment of quality.
 - Reviewers increased familiarity with the content of the case reading tool and making the connection between engaging the family and thoroughly assessing needs. In addition, reviewers periodically conducted interviews of DHS workers in pairs, providing another opportunity to learn from, and provide mentoring to, peers. This pairing of reviewers has been a consistent strategy throughout the first two quarters of case review implementation.

There were no discernible trends in Iowa's performance on selected measures after the second quarter as there have only been two quarters of case reviews. Iowa will continue to baseline performance, and analyze the data quarterly for notable trends over the remainder of the PIP.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Iowa's child welfare system completed the identified PIP benchmarks for quarter two. The benchmarks built upon tasks completed in quarter one. The child welfare system will continue to build upon its promising practices throughout the PIP implementation period to continuously improve Iowa's child welfare system.

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