



Iowa Department of Human Services

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IOWA'S PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP) QUARTER 1 (OCTOBER 1, 2011 – DECEMBER 31, 2011)

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 One PIP Activities:

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

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| 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) • Iowa Children’s Justice (ICJ) projects • 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 quarter |
| 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 quarter |
| 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"> • Align services with safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes • Cultural competency/responsiveness of child welfare workforce |
| 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 One 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. The group completed the following tasks:

- reviewed and evaluated various resources related to social work supervisor competencies, model of practices, and a summary of prior supervisor cohort training;
- defined Iowa’s supervisory practice model, which is “ Iowa’s supervisory practice model is a comprehensive, written, articulated approach to the supervision of child welfare practice. It is a concise statement of the distilled essence of good supervisory practice. It describes the “way of doing business” that supervisors are expected to use to achieve desired child welfare outcomes. The model identifies how supervisors monitor and support practice implementation to ensure consistent quality service delivery to children and families.”; and

- developed the supervisory practice model, which was submitted to DHS leadership for approval.

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.

- The DHS' Policy Bureau, University of Kansas, Casey Family Programs, and Iowa's Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) Bureau collaborated to implement Results Oriented Management (ROM) in Iowa.
- ROM implementation began in January 2012.

Community Partnership for Protecting Children (CPPC): Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) is an approach that neighborhoods, towns, cities and states can adopt to improve how children are protected from abuse and/or neglect. It aims to blend the work and expertise of professionals and community members to bolster supports for vulnerable families and children with the aim of preventing child abuse, reducing the number of children experiencing repeated maltreatment, safely decreasing the number of out-of-home placements, and promoting timely reunification when children are placed in foster care. CPPC is not a "program" – rather, it is a way of working with families to help services and supports to be more inviting, need-based, accessible and relevant.

- Forty (40) CPPC sites representing Iowa's 99 counties provided their plans for state fiscal year (SFY) 2012. The plans include activities to advance implementation in the four key CPPC strategies, which is an action step in Iowa's PIP.

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:

A group of 33 public/private individuals volunteered to be part of the committee assigned to complete tasks identified by the CFSR PIP. The following tasks were accomplished:

- the practice of FTDMs across the state; and
- the existing standards, the handbook for preparation of FTDMs, and barriers to effective preparation:
 - The group decided to merge some of the existing standards and to recommend two additional standards:
 - Family Interaction
 - Child/youth/other voice
 - The group reviewed the Family Team Decision-Making Evaluation Handbook which was designed to evaluate the FTDM Facilitator prior to approval. In reviewing this document, it was determined that there was a need to develop a handbook specific to the FTDM process.

- The group identified barriers to effective FTDM preparation and will be addressing those in future work.

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 months will have 2 or fewer placements. The current statewide performance for placement stability for children in care 12 to 24 months is 64%. Across Iowa's five Service Areas (SAs), the scores vary only plus or minus 5% from the statewide average.

- Currently, the SA with the lowest stability for this sub-measure is the Northern SA with 59%. The score is an average over time made up of monthly data demonstrating a four month trend of successively improved performance (55%, 58%, 60%, 61%) averaging 59%.
- DHS staff will implement PDSA efforts in the second quarter in the Northern SA.

Iowa Children's Justice (ICJ) Projects: The CFSR Final Report identified differences in court permanency practices as a concern. The following tasks were accomplished to address this concern:

- Standards for Representation: Standards for representation were completed by the two task forces, parents' representation task force and agency representation task force. The standards for parents and agency representation were revised by the ICJ Advisory Committee and presented to the Iowa Supreme Court in October 2011. The standards are still under review by the Iowa Supreme Court.
- University of Iowa Parents' Representation Legal Clinic: The clinic is established and operational. Three student attorneys represent parents in the Iowa City Juvenile Court under the supervision of the parent representation project.
- ICJ conducted the following trainings:
 - New attorney training in August and October 2011 ~ Training evaluations revealed significant gains in knowledge reported for all items around advocacy for clients. This training will continue to be improved and provided under the oversight of the ICJ Advisory Committee and State Council. Ongoing training will continue to be provided to attorneys.
 - Judges' Training in October 2011 ~ The training covered a range of topics from comprehensive review of court-mandated drug testing to "Iowa's Blueprint for Forever Families" and Parent Partners.
- The ICJ State Council and Iowa's Child Welfare Advisory Committee sponsored the development of "Iowa's Blueprint for Forever Families", a document that establishes Iowa's permanency vision and framework. The blueprint was introduced at the Permanency Summit in May 2011 and published on the DHS and ICJ websites for access by all Iowa child welfare professionals.

Iowa Foster Care Youth Council: To improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children in foster care, Iowa believes that foster care youth and foster care alumni youth are essential partners. 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.

The tasks associated with this strategy for quarter one was:

- Re-procurement and award of a new contract aligned with safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes in 2011; and
- DHS and provider staff were trained on the new contract.

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:

- gathered, reviewed, and evaluated best practices to identify key concepts necessary for quality visits and documentation of visits;
- defined a quality visit, which was "A quality visit assesses the safety, well-being, and permanency of children and families while engaging them and ensuring their needs are met to achieve safe case closure.";
- developed and adopted standards for documenting a quality visit;
- developed a Visitation Note, a guide for case managers to streamline organization of narrative; and
- provided recommendations to DHS leadership to assist workers in freeing up time in order to conduct visits.

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:

- reviewed and revised employee manual chapters to reflect the identification, location, and engagement of fathers and NCPs throughout the life of the case; and
- reviewed the DHS' protocol regarding child welfare staff accessing the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS).

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. PP expanded in 2011 by adding seven new sites. These sites are:

- Boone, Dallas and Story counties;
- Clinton, Jackson and Dubuque counties;
- Jasper, Poweshiek and Tama counties;
- Buchanan, Delaware and Fayette counties;
- Cedar, Scott, Louisa, Muscatine, Des Moines, Henry and Lee counties;
- Adair, Adams, and Union counties; and
- Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Ringgold, and Wayne counties.

There are now 20 individual Parent Partner sites serving families in 65 counties across the state of Iowa.

Align child welfare services with safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes: Iowa's child welfare providers are essential partners in improving Iowa's child welfare system. Continued collaboration between the DHS and service providers, especially regarding service array, will result in improved outcomes for Iowa's children and families.

New contracts for Iowa's child welfare service delivery, which took effect on or about July 1, 2011, are aligned with the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. Each contract has performance measures linked to these outcomes, including cultural competency and responsiveness, which provides oversight and accountability for improved performance. The following services have new contracts:

- Safety Plan Services (SPS)
- Family Safety, Risk, and Permanency (FSRP) Services:
- Child Welfare Emergency Services (CWES)
- Foster Group Care
- Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care
- Recruitment and Retention of Foster and Adoptive Parents
- Iowa Foster Care Youth Council (IFCYC)
- Iowa Child Abuse Prevention Program (ICAPP)

Cultural Competency/Responsiveness of Child Welfare Workforce: To increase the cultural competency/responsiveness of child welfare service providers, the new service array contracts included enhanced cultural competency expectations.

- Across contracts, cultural competence is defined as “...the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each”.

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 gaps regarding QA system.

To address the gaps, Iowa's QA system accomplished the following tasks:

- Received training from the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) on the CFSR Onsite Review Instrument, including how to conduct second-level QA reviews. The CFSR Onsite Review Instrument will be used for PIP case reviews;
- Defined the case review process for the PIP;
- Completed the first quarter's reviews as a group with similar subsequent reviews working towards independent reviews and second-level QA reviews; and
- Continued clarifications made as issues and questions arise. Consistency across reviewers will be an on-going focus as the case reviews progress.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Iowa's child welfare system completed the identified PIP benchmarks for quarter one. The benchmarks built upon existing structures, some of which were developed from the first round of the CFSR in 2003. 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.

For more information regarding the CFSR and the PIP, please contact Kara L. Harvey at (515) 281-8977 or kharvey@dhs.state.ia.us.