



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
1250 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

FEB - 4 2015

The Honorable Terry Branstad
Governor, State of Iowa
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Branstad:

I am writing on behalf of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to congratulate the State of Iowa on the successful completion of its Program Improvement Plan (PIP), developed and implemented as a result of the State's Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The State has completed all required PIP action steps and has achieved all of its PIP goals. As a result, ACF is rescinding all associated CFSR penalties.

The Administration for Children and Families, in collaboration with the Iowa Department of Human Services, conducted the CFSR to identify both strengths and areas needing improvement in the State's child welfare system. The review focused on seven outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being, and seven systemic factors that impact those outcomes. The CFSR culminated in an on-site review the week of August 23, 2010.

The Final Report, issued on February 28, 2011, notified the State that it was in substantial conformity with five of the seven CFSR systemic factors. Additionally, the State met the national standards for the data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment of children in foster care by foster parents or facility staff, timeliness of adoptions, and permanency for children in foster care for extended time periods. However, Iowa was not found to be in substantial conformity with any of the seven CFSR Outcomes including Safety Outcomes 1 and 2, Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2, and Well-Being Outcomes 1-3. In addition, Iowa did not meet the national standards for data indicators pertaining to absence of maltreatment recurrence, timeliness and permanency of reunification, and placement stability. As a result, the State implemented a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) during the two year period from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2013 in addition to a non-overlapping period for achievement of negotiated improvement goals.

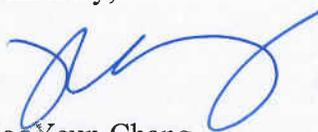
Iowa's PIP addressed the review findings by implementing several cross-cutting strategies and action steps aimed at promoting positive outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being; engaging and support fathers and non-custodial parents; improving stability of placements for children in foster care; better engagement of and services for older youth placed in foster care; and improving the quality of interactions for children in foster care and their parents. These strategies included, but are not limited to, expansion of the Parent Partner program and Non-Custodial Parent initiative, implementing a foster youth bill of rights, establishing a training plan for Family Team Decision-Making facilitators, and strengthening the agency's quality assurance process.

Some notable aspects of Iowa's PIP were the changes in the state's case record review process which resulted in a more reliable and valid review process and confidence in the results. Iowa also strengthened relationships with stakeholders and especially biological parents through the expansion of the Parent Partner program and infusion of the parent voice across the child welfare continuum. These efforts demonstrate how much Iowa recognizes the importance of evaluating and improving child welfare practice from an agency and stakeholder perspective.

The Administration for Children and Families and the State, through an ongoing partnership, jointly assessed progress throughout the PIP period. As a result, ACF has verified the State's completion of all action steps and the achievement of all data and program goals negotiated between the state and ACF. It should be noted, however, that among the negotiated improvement goals evaluated during the non-overlapping period was Iowa's goal for the national standard of placement stability. Iowa was not able to meet the goal using the CFSR round 2 data indicator and methodology by the end of this period. However, the Children's Bureau released Technical Bulletin #8 in October 2014 which defined new statewide data indicators and national standards for CFSR round 3 including a provision which allows the Children's Bureau to consider a state's performance on the related round 3 statewide data indicator in determining whether the state has met an improvement goal for the round 2 CFSR PIP. Upon review of Iowa's data for the CFSR round 3 statewide data indicator of placement stability, the Children's Bureau has determined that Iowa has met the national standard for placement stability and is considered to have satisfied the improvement requirement for a successful completion of the CFSR round 2 PIP.

Iowa has demonstrated a commitment to continuous quality improvement through the PIP as well as the State's efforts in developing the most recent Child and Family Services Plan. Although the PIP is complete, we look forward to our continued work with you and your staff as we plan for next Child and Family Services Review and as part of other child welfare reform efforts in Iowa. We congratulate Iowa on your efforts to improve the child welfare system on behalf of the children and families you serve.

Sincerely,



Joe Yeun Chang
Associate Commissioner
Children's Bureau

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