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Rickman earns Casey Excellence for Children Award in Leadership

(Des Moines, Iowa) - Wendy Rickman, the administrator of the Adult, Children and Family Services (ACFS) Division for the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) has been selected as a recipient of a distinguished national award that honors leaders for their dedication to improving the lives of children and families.

The 2017 Casey Excellence for Children Award in Leadership was presented to Rickman on January 9, 2017.

The award recognizes achievements in improving outcomes, which include safely reducing the need for foster care, increasing pathways to permanency, and improving child well-being. It also recognizes reform efforts to use data and innovation to achieve goals, and to develop meaningful community and constituent relationships.

“This award is a strong reflection of the value of Wendy Rickman’s contributions to child welfare, and efforts to strengthen families and keep kids safe,” said DHS Director Charles M. Palmer. “She is committed to improving outcomes for Iowa families, and provides a commonsense approach to child welfare leadership that comes from a strength-based, family-centered philosophy.”

Under Rickman, Iowa has developed several initiatives aimed at strengthening families and improving outcomes for children, including a system that creates two pathways for handling child abuse and neglect allegations and uses a proactive approach for less serious cases; an examination of racial disparities in youth outcomes; and development of the state’s nationally recognized children’s mental health and well-being community learning labs.

She has led the state in performance-based contracting for services for children and families, and she is highly esteemed among her child welfare leader peers for her ability to articulate with compassion, wisdom and humor how our work involves helping support and strengthen families to keep their children safe at home. Over the past five years, Iowa has experienced an overall reduction of 6 percent in the number of children in foster care.

Rickman has worked for the Department of Human Services since 1987 and is a licensed social worker. She also has worked closely with Casey Family Programs as a presenter for national conferences focused on child welfare system improvement.

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