

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families
Lincoln D. Chafee, Governor *Dr. Janice DeFrances, Director*



As active members of the community, we share a vision that all children, youth and families
reach their fullest potential in a safe and nurturing environment

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
The Honorable Catherine Cool Rumsey
Co-Chairs, Senate Task Force on DCYF & Family Care Networks
State House Room 211
82 Smith Street
Providence RI 02903

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Chairwoman Cool Rumsey:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Senate Task Force on DCYF & Family Care Networks at your October 14th hearing. I hope that you and the Task Force members found the information we provided to be helpful in your efforts to better understand the strengths and challenges of DCYF and our System of Care.

There were two items for follow-up requested by the Task Force. One was in regard to understanding our data regarding the decrease in the percentage of children age 12 or under in congregate care settings relative to the increase in out-of-state placements. The second was our decision to end the Foster Family Support contracts with several providers around the state. I address each of these below.

Congregate Care and Children 12 and under

The Department has made a concerted effort to increase the numbers and percentage of young children (defined as children age 12 or under) placed in more family-like settings and decreasing the number and percentage of young children placed in group homes or institutions. Table 4 (slide 15) shows that the percentage of young children who entered care during the Federal Fiscal Year and whose most recent placement was congregate care has decreased from 18.4% in FFY 2010 to 7.9% in FFY 2013. This measure is based on all children 12 and younger placed in congregate care, both in-state and out-of-state. Although the number of children and youth in out-of-state placement has increased over the last 2 years, most of these youth are over the age of 12 and would not impact this measure. Of all youth currently in residential out-of-state placement, 94% are age 13 or older.

Foster Care Support Contracts

The Foster Care Support (FCS) contracts provided care coordination to kinship families. With the exception of one of the Community Care Alliance contracts, the support was provided for 60 days in order to assist families in understanding the direct care services available to foster families and children who work with DCYF. The Community Care Alliance contract assisted families for a period of up to 180 days. The agencies that held the contracts are responsible to

assess the family's need for services and to advise the family on how to access services in the community. They assisted families with understanding the DCYF licensing process as well.

From inception, these contracts were always intended to be temporary until we could implement the Family Care Networks. The Department now believes we are at a point where we can end these temporary contracts and shift the locus of these services. With the closing of these contracts, DCYF Intake and FSU staff now will refer kinship foster families to community services available through the foster child's health plan or through Family Care Networks. DCYF staff have been provided with updated information on the service array in order to assist them in the referral process.

Since foster families face significant financial pressure in caring for the youth placed in their care, DCYF is recommending that funds from the FCS contracts be reallocated to assist the department in funding the proposed 30% increase in the foster board rates and in providing more direct in-homes services to the foster parents. DCYF will continue to provide financial support to foster families through the funding of child care, clothing vouchers, transportation reimbursement, birthday and holiday stipends for youth in foster care.

In order to provide comprehensive, ongoing support to foster families, DCYF is working with the treatment foster care provider and foster family communities to improve foster care recruitment and retention through a federally-funded, diligent recruitment grant. The diligent recruitment effort is bringing together stakeholders committed to improved child welfare practice that is focusing efforts on expanding the availability of foster care in RI through relevant support that meets the specific needs of children and families in the system.

We are in the process of developing appropriate progress measures to be able to effectively report on this shift in the upcoming weeks and months.

Please feel free to contact me at 401-528-3540 should you have any questions regarding this report.

Sincerely,



Janice DeFrances, Ed.D.

Director, RI Dept. of Children, Youth & Families