



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

MAURA D. CORRIGAN  
DIRECTOR

February 1, 2012

The Honorable Bruce Caswell, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS  
Michigan State Senate  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable Judy Emmons, Chair  
Senate Families, Seniors & Human Services Standing Committee  
Michigan State Senate  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable David Agema, Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS  
Michigan House of Representatives  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable Kenneth Kurtz, Chair  
House Families, Children & Seniors Standing Committee  
Michigan House of Representatives  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Chairs:

This report is provided pursuant to PA 63 of 2011, Section 583, of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Fiscal Year 2011-12 Appropriations Act. This section requires that DHS carry out a workgroup to determine what caused individuals participating as foster parents during the previous fiscal year to drop out of the program.

The department engaged in various meetings and discussions in addressing the foster parent dropout rate. On January 12, 2012, DHS invited members of the Legislature, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families, and foster parents to attend a meeting to discuss the outcomes of the ongoing workgroup and invite an open dialogue.

In this meeting, the following statistics for Fiscal Year 2011 were shared: 2,096 new foster homes were licensed; 919 relative foster homes and 1,177 non-relative foster homes were also approved. As of September 30, 2011, there were 7,264 licensed foster homes in Michigan.

During Fiscal Year 2011, 1,955 foster homes closed for the following reasons:

- Administrative closure: This is used when there is a problem with the license and a revocation, denial, or refusal to renew is not sought – 85 foster homes

- Change of type of license from a foster home to a group home – 53 foster homes
- Change of license: An adult household member either moves in or moves out of the licensed home which necessitates a change in the license – 2 foster homes
- Death of licensee – 8 foster homes
- Failure to pursue renewal of licensure – 248 foster homes
- Foster family moved – 46 foster homes
- Licensee requests – 1,513 foster homes

Foster parents close their licenses for a variety of reasons including adoption, guardianship, a relative child moves out, not enough room in the home, and other family needs. The majority of closures are due to a positive outcome and adoption remains the main closure reason. At closure, each foster parent is sent a “Closed Home Survey.” Approximately 35 percent of Closed Home Surveys are returned.

DHS is involved in a number of strategies to recruit and retain foster parents. Current projects are as follows:

- Adoptive and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention (AFPRR) plans are completed annually by the DHS county offices. These plans incorporate activities by the counties to utilize their AFPRR funds to recruit and retain foster parents. The plans are jointly developed by the DHS county offices and the Private Agency Foster Care providers within each county. Counties provide annual recognition events for adoptive and foster parents.
- An AFPRR Strategic Planning Committee meets monthly and includes private and public stakeholders. The committee is currently analyzing the reasons for foster home closures and is determining ways to address the closure reasons.
- A licensing database is currently being tested in Oakland County that tracks a prospective foster parent from the time of inquiry through the licensing process until the foster home is closed. The database will provide information on the reasons a prospective foster parent drops out during the licensing process and following licensure and the reasons why a foster home closes. This database will be utilized by DHS and Private Agency Foster Care providers and will be operational in February 2012.
- DHS is conducting a review on best recruitment and retention practices in other states and receiving technical assistance from Casey Family Programs and from other states.
- The Michigan Association for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents (MAFAK) provides a conference for foster, adoptive and kinship parents annually. DHS is supporting MAFAK in the development of statewide support groups for foster and adoptive parents.
- A faith-based summit is being held on March 15, 2012, to raise awareness within the faith-based communities on the need for foster and adoptive parents in Michigan and to assist congregations in the development of foster care coalitions to assist foster and adoptive parents.
- A “diligent recruitment grant” was awarded by the federal government to Oakland County DHS and Spaulding for Children. This grant provides trainings for foster and adoptive parents and provides an opportunity to develop and test various recruitment methods to increase the number of quality foster homes. This will enable a child, when placed into foster care, to have different placement options so that an appropriate initial placement can be identified and decrease the need for replacements.

The following issues and solutions were identified during the workgroup meeting:

- Foster parent rates have not been increased in the last 10 years.
- What is DHS doing to measure accountability for county directors with regards to recruiting and retaining foster parents? Are there clear measurements for county directors and what are the consequences for losing foster parents?
- Foster parents are not being informed of court dates, are not being asked for input and are not being provided copies of the Updated Service Plans.
- Clarity of the benefits available to support foster home placements is needed across the state. Every county has different benefits, such as respite and mileage reimbursement.
- Foster parents would like a break between placements and not feel pressured to take another placement immediately.
- What is being done to assist workers in licensing foster parents?
- What type of assessment is provided on a child when he/she comes into care?
- Licensing specialists in small counties wear a number of hats which may negatively impact the amount of time to license prospective foster parents.
- Medicaid should be the same across the state. If a child moves from one county to another, his/her Medicaid case closes, which causes a lapse in coverage.
- Packet of information about the child is not being provided to foster parents at placement.
- Collaboration is needed with foster parents. MAFAK suggested that every DHS office should have a foster parent representative.

DHS is committed to continuously looking at ways to recruit and maintain good foster homes. In particular, the department has engaged the faith-based community around sustainable partnerships targeting foster parent recruitment and retention. The workgroup will continue to meet and discuss the issues and solutions identified at the January meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact Suzanne Stiles Burke, Director of the Bureau of Child Welfare, at (517) 241-8606.

Sincerely,

  
Susan Kangas  
Chief Financial Officer

cc: Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittee Members  
Senate Families, Seniors & Human Services Committee Members  
House Families, Children & Seniors Committee Members  
Kevin Koorstra, House Fiscal Agency  
Frances Carley, Senate Fiscal Agency  
Matt Blinkilde, Senate Majority Policy Office  
Dan Dundas, House Republican Policy Office  
Steve Lozier, Senate Committee Clerk  
Angie Lake, House Committee Clerk  
State Budget Director