

A photograph of a man and a young child with curly hair sleeping together on a couch. The man is on the left, wearing a watch, and the child is on the right, resting their head on the man's shoulder. The image is in a warm, sepia tone.

Children's
Administration

Performance
Report
2005

Public and Legislative Accountability for Child Safety, Permanency and Well-Being
July 2004 - June 2005

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CA Children's Administration

Message From the Assistant Secretary

I am pleased to present the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration Annual Performance Report. This report covers Fiscal Year 2005, July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005.

Fiscal Year 2005 was a difficult year for the Children's Administration. The agency faced new requirements to carry out program improvements resulting from a federal review and the settlement of the Braam foster care lawsuit. By Fall 2004, spending projections were exceeding the budget. Strong controls were put in place, resulting in staff layoffs and a new system of monitoring and controlling spending practices.

In addition, an independent review of two children's deaths sharply criticized our efforts to protect them. An emphasis on child safety brought a mandate from the Governor to respond to all child abuse and neglect referrals in shorter periods of time and to see children in their homes more frequently.

I was appointed Assistant Secretary in May 2005, with less than two months left in the fiscal year. My instructions were to stabilize the agency and keep children safe through solid and consistent child welfare practice. My first months were both sobering and hopeful. It soon became clear that our agenda was too broad and we needed to narrow the focus. Agencies, and especially field staff on whom most of the day to day improvement efforts fall, can focus on and sustain only a limited number of changes at any one time. We want our reform efforts to be successful and support lasting improvements in the child welfare system.

Moving forward, we are focusing on the basics and on building the foundation to meet the multiple agendas given to us. Without the right foundation—even with all the necessary financial and staff resources—we will be unable to do our best work to keep children safe, strengthen families so they are able to keep their children safe at home, and provide loving, safe and stable families for children who cannot live with their parents. It takes time, concentrated focus, and resources to build a strong foundation. The six major areas identified for improvements in order to build a strong foundation that will achieve and sustain positive outcomes for children and families include:

- Develop a new practice model
- Implement a new statewide automated child welfare information system
- Develop a new financial management model
- Improve contracted services
- Support the workforce
- Improve the organizational culture

I am fortunate to work with dedicated professionals who every day perform critical, complicated, and sometimes dangerous work to protect children and give families the support and strength they need to succeed in life. We made significant progress this year:

- 92 percent of children at imminent risk of harm are seen within 24 hours (September 2005)
- Family Team Decision Making Meetings are producing initial results in pilot sites
 - Parents, children, friends, and relatives are participating in high numbers
 - Children remained at home in more than 50 percent of the cases where removal was being considered
 - Placement changes were prevented in 46 percent of the cases
- Completed the initial phase of the first-ever comprehensive review and revision of service contracts
- Met 20 of the 23 federal performance targets in the program improvement plan (Fourth Quarter 2005)
- 20 of 44 field offices met international quality standards for accreditation

In the following pages, you will see the extraordinary accomplishments of our staff and the children and families with whom we work.



Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary





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MISSION The mission of the Children's Administration is first to protect abused and neglected children, to support the efforts of families to care for and parent their own children safely, and to provide quality care and permanent families for children in partnership with parents and kin, Tribes, foster parents, and communities.

VISION The Children's Administration seeks to be an organization that provides excellent services which produce successful safety, well-being and permanency outcomes for children and families. We strive to be innovative, results driven, responsive to changing needs, accountable, and guided by a commitment to professionalism and excellence in the field of child welfare. We promote teamwork and embrace our partnerships with parents and kin, Tribes, foster parents, and communities in the design and delivery of child and family services we would be proud to offer our own families.

**Protecting children, supporting families,
providing quality care with our partners.**

Artwork:

"In this picture I'm showing my very first plane ride. We went to Arizona with my Mom and Dad and sister and me." – Katie F, age 8
Katie lives in a foster to adopt home.

Guiding Principles of the Children's Administration

We Believe Children Who Have Been Abused and Neglected Deserve Quality Services

Safety of children is the first priority when making decisions about children. Protecting children is primarily the responsibility of families and communities, and we intervene to protect children only when families are unable to do so. We first seek permanent homes with parents, then with extended family members to maintain important family connections and heritage, and finally seek permanent homes with non-relatives if we are unable to secure care for children within their extended families. We support family and community partnerships that protect children, provide stability and expedite permanency in children's placements.

We Support Families and Build on Their Strengths

Families are the best place for children to grow and develop. The family is the best and most effective structure to assure stability, nurturing, care, and safety for its members; families are responsible to provide for their children and make decisions concerning their children's welfare. We strive to recognize and support family strengths and culture, to discover options, to help families make choices and to understand the results of their choices.

We Join With Foster Parents as Essential Partners in Caring for Children

We embrace the principles of the Foster Parents' Rights and Responsibilities statement, which guide the course of the relationship between foster parents and the administration toward a mutual goal of fostering safe, healthy children. We value foster parents as members of the child's team and as advocates for children and families in their care, with the right to a supportive relationship with the agency.

We Partner with Tribes and Communities in Serving Children and Families

We value our partnerships with Tribes, communities, and public and private agencies to promote the safe and healthy growth and development of children in their own homes and in out-of-home placement. We encourage open communication and we work with communities to resolve issues. We strive to make decisions openly, with as much consultation and shared decision-making as possible. We support federally and non-federally recognized Tribes and off-reservation Indian organizations and their rights to provide for and nurture their own children.

We Value Diversity and Respect

We value the racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of our clients and staff. We are committed to exceptional customer service which reflects respect and appreciation for diverse needs. We strive to provide services to children and families that are individualized, community based, culturally appropriate and responsive. We work to develop and maintain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the people that we serve and contributes to the quality of life of our clients and communities.

We Encourage Excellence in All We Do

We encourage staff to be innovative and resourceful, making efficient use of state resources, while providing exceptional quality service. We strive to be open, caring and capable and to be accountable for the choices we make. Employees deserve to be supported and nurtured so they can support and nurture each other and the families we serve. We are committed to building on the strengths of others and to developing a professional and competent workforce.