

Approved: February 14, 2012

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(January 31, 2012)  

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## **MINUTES OF THE HOUSE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mike Kiegerl at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, January 31, 2012, in Room 142-S of the Capitol.

All members were present:

Committee staff present:

June Christensen, Committee Assistant  
Renaë Jefferies, Office of the Kansas Revisor of Statutes  
Martha Dorsey, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Jay Hall, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Gina Meier-Hummel, Director of Children and Family Services and Child Welfare Contract Oversight, Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS)  
Michelle Schroeder, Director of Public Policy, Social and Rehabilitation Services  
Kathy Winters, Kansas Family Rights Coalition  
Mark Gleeson, Director of Trial Court Program, Office of Judicial Administration

Others in attendance:

See attached list.

Chairman Kiegerl asked if there were any bills to be introduced, and Representative Gregory requested a bill regarding keeping adoptions of Indian children within the tribe. As there were no objections, the bill will be introduced.

Chairman Kiegerl announced that Thursday's meeting would be a hearing on **HB 2444 –Grades K-12, use of seclusion and restraint of students with disabilities; reporting thereof**. There is a balloon on this bill, and he requested a motion to accept the balloon. (Attachment 1).

*Motion by Representative Gregory, seconded by Representative Rubin, to accept the balloon amendment as presented. The motion carried unanimously.*

### **Information on SRS Programs**

Representative Kiegerl introduced Ms. Gina Meier-Hummel, Director of Children and Family Services and Child Welfare Oversight, SRS, to present information regarding new and changed

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procedures and policies and personnel changes regarding children and family services provided by SRS.

Ms. Meier-Hummel, presented information on four requested issues: CFS (Children and Family Services) Overview; Foster Care and Adoption Contract Oversight; Audit Results; and FY 2013 Initiatives. She has been in this position for about seven months but has worked the child welfare area for 20 years. Of the approximately 60,000 Child-in-Need-of Care reports, 51 percent were assigned for further assessment. The remaining cases were assigned for investigation of abuse/neglect and the others for non abuse/neglect. The focus is on Investigation and Assessment, Family Preservation, Out-of-Home Foster-Care, and Adoption Services. Of the 901 children awaiting adoption in 2011, 761 were finalized, one-third of those under 3. Two contract providers, DCCCA and St. Francis Community Services serve five contract regions. They also provide Adult Protective Services. Of those 15,257 reports, 10,097 were assigned for investigation. She also presented outcomes for the state of Kansas, which places it very favorably compared to other states. Several external and internal audits are being conducted, with intense scrutiny and oversight. (Attachment 2).

Committee members asked questions regarding prevention, early intervention, and other referring agencies; when the audit scheduled for February 1 will be released; statistics on ethnic-socioeconomic makeup; keeping families together as much as possible; and keeping children in their home schools as much as possible.

Chairman Kiegerl thanked Ms. Meier-Hummel for her informative, comprehensive report. He said a bill regarding compensation for grandparents taking care of grandchildren is being considered to be in line with the foster-parent compensation.

Chairman Kiegerl introduced Michelle Schroeder, Director of Public Policy for Social Rehabilitation Services, who presented information regarding qualification for the food stamp program. SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) is a direct payment of benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with 141,026 Kansas households now receiving benefits. Eligibility is based on their guidelines, and U.S. citizenship status is one of them. Benefits may only be given to families who are citizens or their children having been born here and are citizens. She presented the changes regarding food stamp assistance as previously administered with the changes since October 2011. Whenever income goes over the specified amount, the recipient is taken off the food stamp program. There is no tracking of income except for rent and utilities. (Attachment 3).

Ms. Schroeder answered questions on how quickly are clients assisted and removed from assistance, how clients get on assistance and how it is determined those who are eligible.

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Ms. Jefferies questioned if adult children and their children are eligible for food stamps when living with a parent whose income is calculated when determining eligibility. Kathy Decker, said as long as the food is kept separate and the parent/grandparent is not eating the recipient's food, they may be eligible.

### Hearing on **HB 2537-Children in need of care, access to records**

Rena Jefferies, Office of the Kansas Revisor of Statutes, reviewed the bill that amends K.S.A. 2011 38-2212 and 38-2213, which allow the House Committee on Children and Families access to agency and law enforcement records concerning a child-in-need-of-care case. Representative Gregory questioned if this would allow more public access to confidential information, and Ms. Jefferies said that issue was addressed in the bill. (Attachment 4).

Chairman Kiegerl asked if there was anyone who wished to speak as an opponent or proponent of the proposed bill.

Steve Solomon, Director of TFI Family Policy Service and Children's Alliance, said his group would like the committee to give careful consideration before making the decision regarding the bill, and at this time, was speaking neutrally.

### Hearing on **HB 2542-Citizen review boards; powers and duties; appointment of members**

Ms. Jefferies reviewed the bill, which among other changes, would allow the Governor and Secretary of SRS to appoint members to the Citizens' Review Board in the judicial districts. For large districts, there would four appointed by the Governor and three by the Secretary; in small districts, it would be two and one respectively. (Attachment 5).

Kathy Winters, Kansas Family Rights Coalition that serves 20,000 Kansans, spoke in favor of the bill, noting that judges appointing volunteers to the board, since judges are in charge of the cases being reviewed, might constitute a conflict of interest. (No written testimony).

Mark Gleeson, Director of Trial Court Program, Office of Judicial Administration, spoke in opposition to the bill. He said expansion of the existing CRB, although a goal they would like to implement, would be nearly fiscally impossible. At present, there are ten review boards that oversaw 520 hearings in 2011, and if this bill were implemented, an increase of volunteers would be needed to conduct approximately 11,500 hearings. Time to recruit and train volunteers would be excessive, and costs of nearly \$4 million dollars could be expected. He said he believed the present system of the board being selected by the judicial system was working well. (Attachment 6).

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Representative Brunk suggested perhaps another impartial entity could be utilized to select members. Mr. Gleeson said the judicial branch still has final decision and that the CRB only makes recommendations.

Chairman Kiegerl closed the hearing on the bill.

Representative Gatewood suggested that the hearings be continued Thursday, since notification of today's hearing wasn't out in sufficient time for some who might want to appear to be able to.

Chairman Kiegerl said both bills will have continued hearings on Thursday as well as **HB 2444 – Grades K-12, use of seclusion and restraint of students with disabilities; reporting thereof.**

The next meeting will be held Thursday, February 2, 2012, in Room 142-S at 9 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.