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October 10, 2010

Testimony of:

Gina Meier-Hummel, Director of Prevention and Protection Services
Department for Children and Families
Topeka, Kansas

presented to:

**The Honorable Carolyn McGinn and Honorable Members
of the Legislative Budget Committee:**

DCF testimony on Major Changes in Child Welfare Contracts

Chair McGinn, Vice-Chair Rhoades and Honored Members:

Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the substantive changes in our child welfare contracts. DCF posted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for our reintegration/foster care/adoption and family preservation contracts this past spring. Proposals are submitted and DCF is now in the process of reviewing the proposals. The new contracts will commence July 1, 2013, and will be in place for four years; however, DCF will renegotiate costs of the contracts every two years.

Contract regions will align with the four DCF regions.

There are six protective factors woven into all aspects of the child welfare system and DCF expects them to be a part of all contracts: Nurturing and Attachment, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Concrete Support for Parents and Social and Emotional Competence of Children. When these factors are present, the well-being and health of children and families are improved. The

contract bidders for foster care and family preservation were asked to explain how these factors will be implemented in their service proposals.

Foster Care Contracts:

The Prevention and Protection Services division at DCF received input from the courts, partners, stakeholders, and region staff in developing the current RFP. The changes reflect DCF's mission to keep children safe.

Children thrive when they may be placed with families in safe environments. Placement in the home of a relative does not require licensure, but relatives may still need support to care for the children. In order to ensure DCF's commitment that families receive the support they need to assist in improving the well-being of children in the Secretary's custody, providers were asked to set forth their proposed relative reimbursement rate and support. Providers were also asked to provide the proposed foster parent reimbursement, payment structure and support.

Contractors will exhibit clear communication and relationships with relative providers, foster families, other child placing agencies and DCF.

In an effort to maintain direct local input, providers will establish local advisory boards.

Through the new contracts, DCF will enhance its role in monitoring children placed in the Secretary's custody. Placements, case plans and case plan goals will be subject to DCF approval. Unless an emergency exists, contractors shall notify DCF in advance of placement changes. Important considerations for placements shall include grandparents, other relatives (including siblings), the possibility for the child to remain in the same school and same community and potential for permanency.

Health assessments shall be expanded to include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and the contractors will monitor the use of psychotropic medications.

In order to maintain safety and stability, DCF expanded services to families following permanency. Upon reintegration, the contractor will develop an aftercare plan to work with the family, will attempt monthly in-person visits with the child and submit progress reports to DCF. If a child reaches permanency through adoption, the contractor shall continue to serve the child and adoptive family for the life of the contract.

Youth in care deserve to experience a childhood as they would within a stable family. Contractors must support children in the custody of the Secretary to participate in normalizing activities, such as extra-curricular activities.

The contractors will develop a transition plan with youth beginning at age 16 in order to teach them skills that reinforce personal accountability. Contractors will also assist youth in developing/maintaining permanent connections, and contact with mentors that will continue to serve as resources.

The state will review and monitor accountability of the contractor's child welfare programs through direct oversight, case-read processes and administrative site visits. If a problem is identified, the contractor will develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) approved by DCF. New success indicators have been added with respect to child specific contract outcomes. If contract outcomes are not met at the end of the first state fiscal year of the contract, the contractor will develop a DCF approved Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

In order to remain responsive to families we serve, contractors will maintain a complaint response model and will be expected to collaborate with DCF in complaint responses.

Family Preservation Contracts:

Specific to our Family Preservation contracts bidders were asked to weave family-centered practice values and components throughout their proposals.

There are additional services under the new contract, which we expect the family preservation contractors to provide on a regular basis. Emphasis was placed on child-rearing and behavior-management coaching for parents and on direct service provision for individual, couple and family therapy. Trauma-informed treatment was also added to the list of services.

The bidders were asked to provide information about the in-home family preservation model they will utilize and information about how model fidelity will be maintained. The description is to include information about how the model will implement safety and risk assessments as well as how safety and family safety networks will be formed. Information about staff training was also to be included. DCF will be able to make an assessment of their model through outcomes, case reads and site visits.

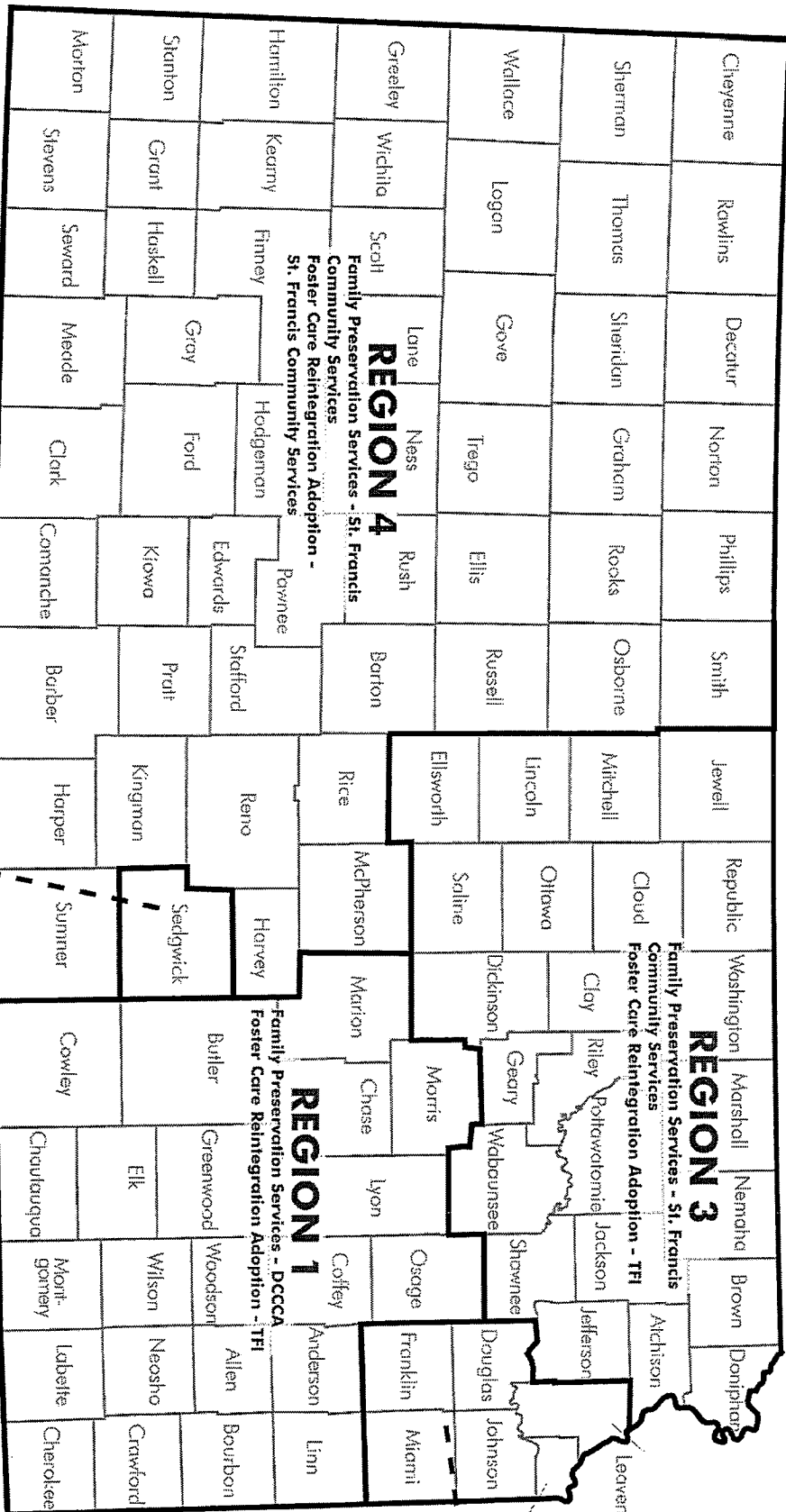
The bidders were asked to include information about how Family Group Decision-Making Principles will be incorporated in their practice models.

Family Preservation contractors will also provide documentation to DCF of their intent to decrease intensity and/or frequency of visits with families.

In an effort to maintain direct local input, providers will establish local advisory boards.

As is the case with the foster care contracts, if a problem is identified the contractor will develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to be approved by DCF. If contract outcomes are not met at the end of the first state fiscal year of the contract, the contractor will develop a DCF approved Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

In order to remain responsive to families we serve, contractors will maintain a complaint response model and will be expected to collaborate with DCF in complaint responses.



REGION 2
 Family Preservation Services - DCCA
 Foster Care Reintegration Adoption - KVC Behavioral Health Care, Inc.

REGION 1
 Family Preservation Services - DCCA
 Foster Care Reintegration Adoption - TFI

REGION 3
 Family Preservation Services - St. Francis
 Foster Care Reintegration Adoption - TFI

REGION 4
 Family Preservation Services - St. Francis
 Foster Care Reintegration Adoption - St. Francis Community Services

REGION 5
 Family Preservation Services - DCCA
 Foster Care Reintegration Adoption - Youthville

