

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jim Morrison at 1:30 p.m. on January 21, 2003 in Room 243-N of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Bill Wolff, Legislative Research Department  
Renae Jefferies, Revisor of Statutes' Office  
Gary Deeter, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Janet Schalansky, Secretary, Social and Rehabilitative Services

Others attending:

See Attached sheet.

The Chair introduced Janet Schalansky, Secretary, Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS), and complimented her for responding to the Committee's questions in a thorough manner. (Attachment 1)

Ms. Schalansky provided documentation for members' questions. She said SRS works with five foster-care contractors in five regions, as detailed in documents A and B. She said because a contractor's employee information is proprietary and because each contract is performance-based, she could not give details on administrators, office managers, or case workers. She stated that the cost per contractor is provided by Document C.

Ms. Schalansky answered various questions on child welfare and adoption, noting that adoption aftercare extends to 18 months and that no child is considered unadoptable, even though some children's needs are complex and require multiple services. She said 98% of adoptions are successful. Giving background for the 1989 lawsuit, which was settled in 1993 (Document K), she said the settlement ultimately created a public/private partnership in 1995. Noting the advantages of contracted children's-issue services, she said contractors are available 24/7 rather than weekdays 8-5 and that they have a "No reject, no eject" policy that motivates them to initiate resources for children, allowing more placements in foster homes and fewer in group homes. She observed that although the system is never good enough, SRS continues to improve in delivery of services. Answering questions, Ms. Schalansky said a child is available for adoption when a judge severs parental rights and that a child "ages out" of SRS supervision when he/she reaches age 18, although some are carried until they reach age 21. She noted that the FY 2004 budget recommends medical coverage for children through college.

Answering further questions, Ms. Schalansky said SRS can track every child except some runaways. Regarding children removed from the home, she said police are authorized to intervene and remove a child from his/her home if the child is deemed in danger; SRS is authorized to investigate after removal of a child, but only a judge can mandate permanent removal of a child from the home. Representative

## CONTINUATION SHEET

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Bethell requested information on the number and cause of death for those in foster care.

Regarding SRS employees, Ms. Schalansky referred members to Documents D and E, saying one way to balance a shrinking budget is to hold positions open for a given length of time. She said the central office leaves 1 in 6 positions open; hospitals, 1 in 9; about 1/3 of the November budget reductions involved administrative cuts. Further reductions include closing field offices (23 in 2003, Document H), reducing services or raising eligibility limits (Document F and G), as well as "realignment" of staff to areas of greater needs. A member noted that such realignment impacts rural areas more severely because of fewer alternative jobs.

Thanking Ms. Schalansky for her testimony, the Chair then gave a rationale for his vision of more extensive use of information technology. He said those not computer literate would be provided all the information they desire; however, he wished to introduce efficiencies that are possible electronically. He noted that proposed testimony shared between legislators was considered privileged. (K.S.A. 45-217 sub F#2) He proposed a procedure for shepherding bills through the committee by utilizing the discussion resources of individual members and sub-committees. The committee was adjourned at 2:51 P.M. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, 2003.