



STATE OF WASHINGTON

February 4, 2014

The Honorable Troy Kelley
Washington State Auditor
P.O. Box 40021
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor Kelley:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the State Auditor's Office (SAO) performance audit report on "The Experiences and Perspectives of Washington Families Who Adopted Children from Foster Care." The Department of Social and Health Services and the Office of Financial Management have reviewed the report, and we hereby enclose our joint response and action plan.

We agree that we can improve post-adoption services for Washington families. The Children's Administration has begun to review parent survey responses and other recommendations to help improve access to information and community resources for adoptive families and increase customer satisfaction.

We appreciate that the SAO worked collaboratively with our staff during this audit and thank the audit team for its work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin W. Quigley".

Kevin W. Quigley, Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Schumacher".

David Schumacher, Director
Office of Financial Management

Enclosure

cc: Joby Shimomura, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Kelly Wicker, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Ted Sturdevant, Executive Director for Legislative Affairs, Office of the Governor
Wendy Korthuis-Smith, Director, Results Washington, Office of the Governor
Tammy Firkins, Performance Audit Liaison, Results Washington, Office of the Governor
Jennifer Strus, Assistant Secretary, Children's Administration
Tracy Guerin, Deputy Director, Office of Financial Management

OFFICIAL STATE CABINET AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT ON THE EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF WASHINGTON FAMILIES WHO ADOPTED CHILDREN FROM FOSTER CARE

FEBRUARY 4, 2014

This coordinated management response to the draft audit report received on December 12, 2013, is provided by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Office of Financial Management.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Develop a plan for enhancing post adoption services for families adopting foster children using the parent survey results and information from other states:

- a. The plan should include strategies for addressing the largest service gaps identified, including:
 - o Services for children whose disabilities significantly affect their lives
 - o Information on available services
- b. Submit the plan and associated resource needs to the Governor and the Legislature for consideration by January 1, 2015.

RESPONSE

We agree that post-adoption resources for families adopting foster children can help improve the overall adoption experience.

The Children's Administration (CA) in DSHS has initiated work with the National Resource Center for Adoption to create a more informative post-adoption website. The website will help guide adoptive families to resources and services available in their community for the special needs of children adopted from foster care.

The department will develop a list of experienced and knowledgeable counseling providers and furnish the list to adoptive families. Currently, the majority of post-adoptive support groups operate independently. CA is working to build a comprehensive post-adoptive network that will encompass both CA and community groups.

Action Steps & Timelines

- Redesign the CA adoption website to separate pre- and post-adoption categories. Work has begun with the National Resource Center for Adoption to identify design needs to be included in the DSHS website redesign. **By December 31, 2015**
 - CA will work with stakeholders and nonprofit organizations to develop a public-private partnership to enhance resources for post-adoption services. **Ongoing**
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RECOMMENDATION 2: Reach out to parents one year after the DSHS finishes centralizing the adoption support program to determine whether their satisfaction with the unit’s performance and its consistency has improved and report the results of its analysis to the Governor and the Legislature after the outreach is completed.

RESPONSE

We agree the department can improve overall customer service satisfaction. CA has begun work in this area by centralizing the adoption support program.

Staff centralization to ensure consistent processes and information statewide

CA has centralized the adoption support program and is finalizing processes and procedures. All adoption support consultants will have the same job description, expectations and responsibilities. Changes will assist in the consistency of information that adoptive families receive regardless of their location in the state at the time of adoption.

Action Steps & Timelines

- Establish initial standard processes and procedures for reviewing adoption support case files to meet necessary case requirements in a timely manner. *By January 31, 2015*
 - CA will conduct a follow-up survey to adoptive families to assess for improved customer service satisfaction. *By January 31, 2016*
 - The department is expanding the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. As a part of systems improvement, CA will do a survey once per year.
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