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Executive Summary Marion County

The Department of Child Services began the process of analyzing service availability, delivery and perceived effectiveness in September 2009. This planning process culminates in the Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan (the Plan). The Plan encompasses the Early Intervention Plan, Child Protection Plan, and Regional Service Plan. The Early Intervention Plan was completed historically to list and summarize child abuse prevention efforts in a county. The Child Protection Plan outlined the policies and procedures surrounding services delivered by the Department of Child Services to assess families after an allegation of abuse or neglect has been made. The Regional Service Plan outlined the intervention services contracted by DCS. The Early Intervention Plan, Child Protection Plan and Regional Service Plan have been all combined into one plan, the Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan.

The planning process to develop the Plan involved a series of activities led by a guided workgroup composed of representatives from the community. The activities included a needs assessment survey, public testimony, and review of relevant data. While DCS has several other mediums with which to determine effectiveness of DCS provided services, such as practice indicator reports, Quality Service Reviews (QSRs) and Quality Assurance Reviews (QARs), this process took that information and looked at it through a contracted service lens. The workgroup considered results from the QSR and practice indicators in conjunction with the needs assessment, previous service utilization and public testimony to determine the appropriate utilization of available services and to identify gaps in service. As a result, the workgroup developed a regional action plan to address service needs and gaps. The workgroup completed budget projections by service for the next fiscal year as well as the next biennial budget. It was assumed budget amounts would remain flat lined so the workgroup focused on how funds might be shifted.

The Marion County Director published the Public Hearing Notice in the Indianapolis Star newspaper and sent an email to all providers and potentially interested parties. Public testimony was limited to one individual whose primary focus was on the perceived need for the State to further integrate all outcome data and quality indicators. This recommendation is consistent with the State's goals and this planning process. The additional written testimony submitted was a marketing piece from a provider. Multiple providers attended the hearing but did not testify.

The needs assessment survey had a balanced mix of respondents and the workgroup believed the results were an accurate based on their collective knowledge. The workgroup and DCS director reviewed the survey data, the testimony, the practice indicators, previous utilization, expenditures and QSRs. Needs were prioritized and a plan was developed to address the priorities. The plan includes local initiatives to be spearheaded by DCS and other recommendations for State consideration. Based on the picture created by the compilation of data, the county will continue to focus on earlier identification of the need for services and better

utilization of those services available. The indicators did point to some quality deficiencies in adoption services and those are being investigated and will be addressed by the county with providers and DCS staff. It was not felt this issue needed to be addressed in the plan as ongoing initiatives are in process.

With the exceptions noted at the end of this summary, Marion County has generous array of intervention services and the quality of its services were rated more than adequate. The array of prevention services is impressive as well. The prevention services brokered through Community Partners are well utilized and in fact would increase substantially if additional funding becomes available. The largest portion of Community Partners brokered dollars are awarded to the Marion County Commission on Youth with a focus on providing coordination, potential funding and identification of gaps for child abuse prevention services. With the exceptions of gang and pregnancy prevention as well as sex education, the survey results report adequate and good quality prevention services in the county. The noted inadequacies are addressed in the plan. Additionally, Marion County noted the steadily increasing needs of Community Partner's prevention services and has reflected increased projected allocations for these services.

The priority areas chosen for increased attention are as follows.

Bilingual (Spanish) services: the need for Spanish speaking professionals in all measured indicators continues to be unmet and to increase. Some interested potential providers appear to have difficulty in completing the RFP process.

Suggestions were made to consider incentives for the recruitment of bilingual staff as well as providers with bilingual services. Consideration of special assistance be given to bilingual providers in the RFP process was also recommended.

Mentoring: All community resources have waiting lists, some will not serve high risk youth, and many of the resources that are available are not well known to FCM's.

The county plans to assure all staff are aware of the mentoring resources that are available and has recommended the State consider an RFP for mentoring.

Kinship Care: Although Marion County has a relatively high rate of kinship/relative placements, there are barriers to increasing and maintaining these placements. The group sees primary barriers as the issue of lack of payment to the families; difficulty obtaining benefits to those families/relatives that are willing, but cannot afford, to care for the children (families are often turned down because eligibility is based on the family income, not the child's); immediate needs for tangible goods such as beds; immediately available and affordable child care; the LOS is usually much longer than usually anticipated, and families are not well prepared for the longer LOS; the families often have struggles with how to appropriately relate to the bio parents. Although the survey did not differentiate between the two, there also is a perceived need for policy clarification between relative care and kinship care.

Multiple recommendations were made that included working more closely with DFR, developing more tangible needs resources, having FCM's do a better job of explaining potential length of

stay, better coordination with biological parents and State advocacy regarding day care accessibility and affordability for these families.

Services to Gay, Lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth: There appears to be very limited specialized services for these youth and limited expertise at provider agencies to deal with the special needs of this population.

Recommendations included engaging Indiana Youth Group in discussions about training staff in the special needs of these populations and consideration of a residential RFP for specialized care.

Prevention Services: These included perceived gaps in gang prevention, pregnancy prevention, and sex education.

The Regional Manager plans to discuss the survey results with the Early Intervention Planning Council and advocate the needs of this group become part of their agenda.

Budget constraints were discussed with hopes of increased funding for prevention in the future. The largest amounts of Marion County non-residential expenditures involve both home-based Family Centered Casework and Therapy. Non residential historical budget/expenditures highlight a steady increase in the utilization and funding of home based services. As is the case statewide, Marion County's goal is to reduce residential placements and length of stay and thereby reduce costs and allocate those dollars to other services, particularly foster care related programs and services and Community Partners. Marion County anticipates an increase in the numbers of children and families served through 2013 and the estimated budget figures reflect the anticipated need. Additional monies have been allocated to address the need for increased timeliness of foster home licensure.