

## **Region 14**

# **Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan, Child Protection Plan and Early Intervention Plan**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ONLY**

**SFY 2012-2013**

**February 2, 2010**

## A.

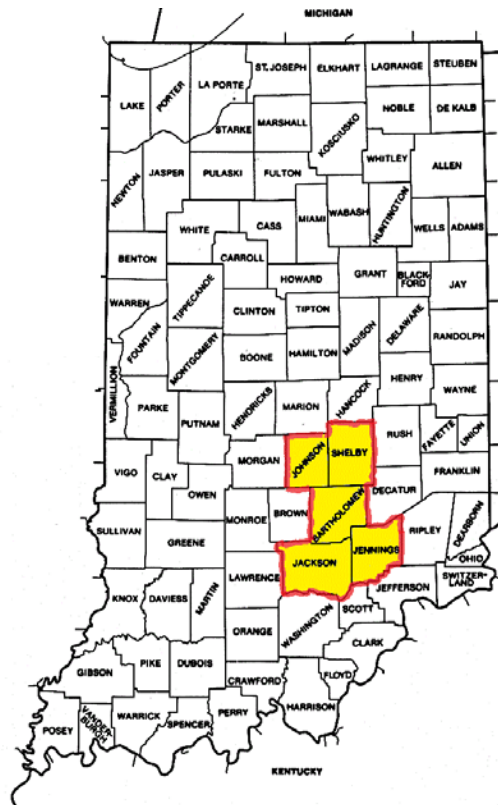
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

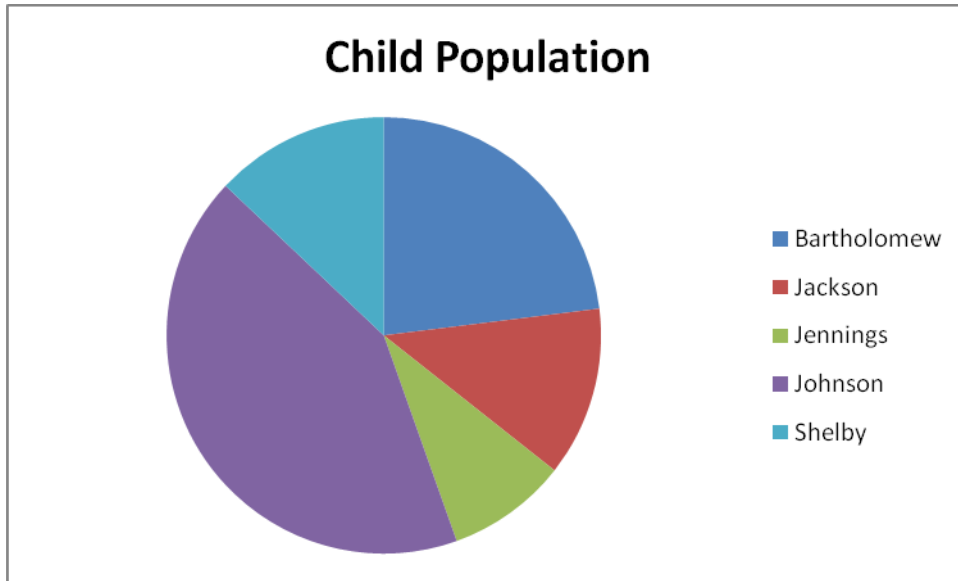
## REGION 14 DEMOGRAPHICS

Region 14 is located in south-central Indiana and includes the counties of Bartholomew, Jackson, Jennings, Johnson, and Shelby (illustrated to the right). The region is generally rural, with the exception of Johnson county, which includes the city of Greenwood at its northernmost border. Greenwood is located 10

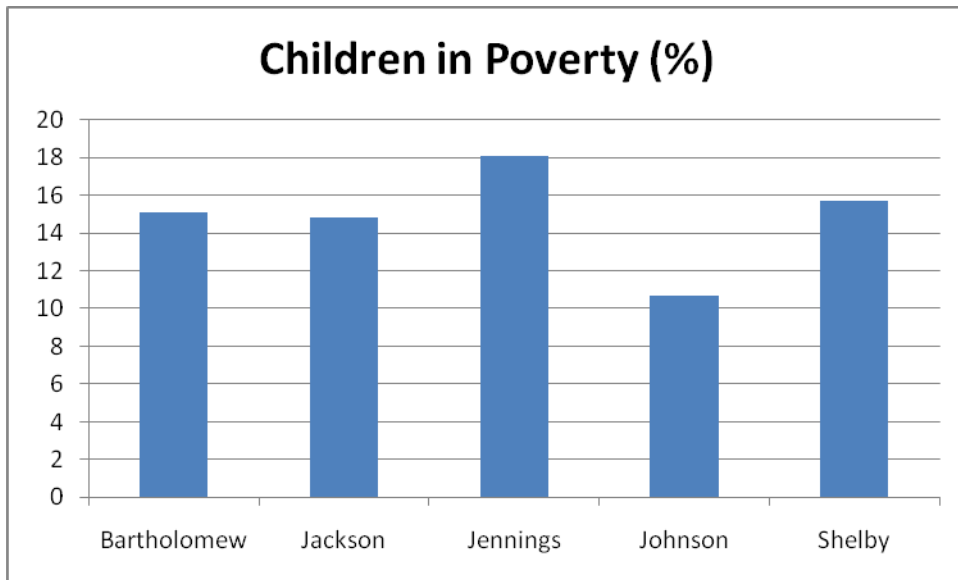


miles south of downtown Indianapolis and essentially of a suburb of the city.

Nearly ½ of the children in region 14 reside in Johnson county:



Most areas of region 14 are experiencing financial stress, as is much of the country. Jennings County has a higher unemployment rate and lower per capita income than the other regions in the county. This coincides with a higher rate of child poverty:



## DATA GATHERING METHODS

Data to assess service gaps was primarily collected by two methods, public testimony, and a needs assessment survey. The public testimony was advertised and was open to anyone who wished to voice an opinion. The needs assessment survey was open to anyone, but was sent directly to “stakeholders” via e-mail.

## PUBLIC TESTIMONY

The Public Testimony in Region 14 was held on September 29, 2009 at the United Way building in Columbus, Indiana. This location was chosen as it was centrally located within the region and also housed many other social service agencies<sup>1</sup>. It was held at 5:00 PM as it was believed this was a good fit for both person who would like to testify at the end of their workday, or just after the end of the workday. Notice of the public hearing was advertised in all the newspapers in the region for a total of 7 notices. It was also publicized locally through notices at all DCS offices.

Turnout was low with only 7 persons present at the meeting (other than DCS staff). Only two persons gave testimony. Four written testimonies were submitted, one of which was submitted subsequent to the meeting, but within the agreed upon guidelines.

The testimony given related to two specific issues, both of which involved provision of services, but were not directly indicative of service gaps. The first was a representative of the local women’s shelter who noted the the new requirement of domestic violence screening has increased the number of women coming to her shelter. The second was a local judge and RSC member. She had an opportunity to obtain funding for services to help women who have had children removed by DCS, and was seeking information on how to proceed through the current system.

Of the written testimonies submitted, 3 were from providers. Two of these were essentially a promotion of the services they offer. One was submitted by our Community Partner and discussed the problem of transportation in the more rural areas of our region. The final written submission was from Judge Jack Tandy (also and RSC member) and expressed his opinion on the input of non-custodial parents involvement in the DCS process, especially as it relates to family team meetings. The judge believes valuable input could be made by these parents if they are encouraged to participate in the case.

## NEEDS ASSESMENT SURVEY

Surveys were e-mailed to 711 individuals. The mailing list was compiled by the 5 local office directors based on their determination of who were the ‘stakeholders’ in the community. A total of 131 responses were returned. This is a similar result to the response in most other regions. The responses were evenly spread amongst the counties with the counties who submitted longer mailing lists receiving a better response.

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<sup>1</sup> This building burned on Christmas Eve 2009 and all tenants have since been relocated.

The best response was from DCS worker how comprised 40% of the returned total. This was expected as FCMs comprised the largest portion of the mailing list. We received a good response from the court system including 4 judges. Our response from probation was lower than expected. The response from foster and adoptive parents was also low, but this was expected as this group was difficult to contact via e-mail.

The survey results did not differ greatly from what most in the workgroup believed to be the service gaps. For the most part the survey validated the gaps identified by the workgroup.

### SERVICE ARRAY

A service array has been constructed and including in this plan. It includes both preventative services, which are primarily administered by our Community Partners; Intervention Services, which are provided through DCS contracts; and other services that are not necessarily funded by the DCS, but available in the community.

Once constructed, the service arrays were used not only to identify gaps in needed services, but as a tool to fill those gaps as possible solutions to some services gaps include using existing providers for new services or in new geographic areas. In some cases a needed service may be available through an unexpected or unknown source.

### FINANCIAL REPORTS AND PROJECTIONS

As part of the analysis of how to fill the identified service gaps, the financial effect of recommended changes was examined. Budgets from the past were used for prior-years data. Financial data submitted by providers based on the first 8 months of 2009 were used to gauge the most recent spending trends. The 2010 budget has been set and expected to remain static over the near term. Therefore, any increases in one service area would need to be offset by a decrease elsewhere in the budget.

The biggest change in the projected budget was a move away from residential care and toward foster care. This is a goal not only for region 14, but throughout the state. If changes can be made successfully in this area, the savings could be substantial. All of the other changes are relatively small in financial terms.

Funding was added to Domestic Violence, and Sex Offender treatment as this was identified as a need and was not funded in the past. At this time it is difficult to predict where the savings outside of residential care will take place. To balance the budget these additions were funded from programs that either had large funding balances, or that could possibly decline over time. In practice the savings may come from an area other than estimated in these projections.

### DISCUSSION AND IDENTIFICATION OF UNMET NEEDS

The conclusion of the workgroup was that the service gaps in region 14 are as follows:

- Foster Care – There is a need to recruit and retain foster parents.

- Drug Abuse Services – The problem with inpatient services is expense. In the case of outpatient services there are varying degrees of availability and quality from county to county.
- Interpretive Services – This is a problem throughout the region. The growth in Hispanic population has greatly increased the need for Spanish interpreters in particular.
- Youth Psychiatric Services – There is a shortage of doctors to prescribe medication to juveniles, especially those on Medicaid
- Safe Housing – Most counties have little shelter capacity.
- Perpetrator Services (Domestic Violence and Sex Offender) – Services are generally available for victims but not offenders
- Parent Education – This service is indicated as lacking according to survey respondents. The gap in this service may not be that great as clients don't always want the service, and it can be provided as a part of other service standards.
- Special populations (Ethnic, Sexual Orientation, Religion, etc.) – The need to address problems from the perspective of persons from different backgrounds was identified.
- Engaging Fathers – Getting fathers to participate in a positive way has been difficult and funding is not always available.
- Suspension Expulsion – Programs to deal with school attendance are not uniformly available throughout the region.
- Health Care – There is a lack of adequate medical and dental care for the uninsured. Even persons with Medicaid have trouble finding a local doctor
- Transportation – Since most of our region is rural in nature, public transportation is often unavailable.

### UNMET NEEDS

Many of the issues discussed involved services that were available, but not in the quantities needed or of the quality desired. The areas where the gaps need to be addressed were determined to be:

- Homeless Shelters in three counties - Johnson, Shelby, Jennings
- Interpreter services
- Support for Offenders, in domestic violence and sex offender cases

- Child Advocacy Center for Region 14
- Educational Advocates for all CHINS
- Public Transportation in all counties except Bartholomew
- Juvenile Psychiatric (medication prescribing) services
- Expanded drug and alcohol services in most parts of the region.