

## 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

## **Summary of Available Services**

The Department of Child Services (DCS) makes every effort to offer an efficient and comprehensive array of services to meet the needs of the children and families they serve. Service needs vary greatly from region to region within the State. The present process is designed to more clearly identify areas of service availability and/or gaps that may require further attention from DCS. Service offerings detailed in Section H fall into one of two basic categories, *prevention* services and *intervention services*. Prevention services are utilized to prevent formal DCS involvement; Intervention services are characterized by a formal involvement of DCS in a case.

It is the goal of both the Department of Child Services and Juvenile Probation to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems, assisting families in resolving them, and returning children who have been removed from their homes to their families.

Services offered may be preventative or intervening and may include but are not limited to:

- education
- counseling
- visitation
- sexual abuse treatment
- parent aid
- homemaker services
- home-based family services

Additionally, the DCS offers other ancillary and support services, including adoption services, foster parent training and support services, and Independent Living services for children aging out of the system.

Prevention services may include services suggested by DCS, but not funded by DCS. Preventative services also include the Community Partners for Child Safety (CPCS) program and the Healthy Families Indiana program.

- Community Partners for Child Safety (CPCS) provides an array of child abuse and neglect prevention services. The program is available to families not actively involved with the Department of Child Services or Healthy Families. The CPSC program offers a service continuum that builds community support for families identified through self-referral or community agency referral by connecting these families to resources needed to strengthen the family and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Healthy Families Indiana is a voluntary home visitation program designed to promote healthy families and children (0-5 years of age) by reducing child abuse and neglect, childhood health problems, and juvenile delinquency through a

variety of services, including child development, access to health care, and parent education. The program systematically identifies families that could benefit from education and support services either before or immediately after birth. Families identified to have a need are offered the opportunity to participate in a voluntary home visiting program tailored to their individual needs.

- Other prevention services available include First Steps, Indiana Youth service Bureaus, ARC agencies, and domestic violence intervention. A listing of all services available to families and children in the region can be found in sections H. b. and e.

The table below indicates the types of DCS service priority for the region as reflected through their expenditure/purchase of services, and the number of families served. The top five DCS service type expenditures for the region from January 1 – August 31, 2009 were:

| Service Type                                   | Expenditure*   | # of families & clients served |
|--|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Home-based family centered casework services   | \$1,956,306.00 | 552                            |
| Home-based family centered therapy services    | \$1,720,662.00 | 510                            |
| Substance Abuse Assessment, Treatment, Monitor | \$1,556,780.00 | 902                            |
| Counseling – Individual / Family               | \$618,609.00   | 341                            |
| Diagnostic and Evaluation Services             | \$430,476.00   | 366                            |

\* The Expenditure/dollar amount next to the Service Type represents the funds reported by providers and billed to DCS during the period of 1/1/09 to 8/31/09. These figures do not include Medicaid billings or drug testing costs. This also holds true for the tables listed below.

The Region 1 workgroup reviewed all documents described in Section H. Data provided in these documents were analyzed and discussed. There were recurrent themes in the availability and accessibility of services for the region that were identified for those services that DCS has the capacity to purchase, and for services that are not purchased by DCS.

Region 1 concerns for DCS purchased services were identified as:

- The quality of a number of DCS purchased services is not acceptable
- There is a lack of sufficient options of service providers to meet all client needs
- The presence of language or cultural barriers between providers and clients

Region 1 concerns for services that are beyond the scope of the DCS purchased services were identified as:

- Lack of family shelters for the homeless
- Lack of services for families experiencing domestic violence
- Alternative service to suspension/expulsion from public school
- Transitional/supervised apartments for older youth

The Region 1 Action Plan attempts to address the above concerns as resources will allow.

## **Summary of Needs Assessment and Public Testimony**

Each region in the state conducted a needs assessment survey of local professionals who have experience with child welfare services. The intent of the survey was to evaluate local child welfare service needs. Results of the survey were to be used to assist in determining the Region 1 child welfare service needs and the appropriate service delivery mechanisms. Each Department of Child Services (DCS) Local Office Director (LOD) created an e-mail contact list of local child welfare professionals and other “key informants” within the county. (See Section F for a complete list of key informant categories.) An electronic version of the needs assessment survey was disseminated to all persons on the contact lists. The survey was comprised of 68 items, including both services funded through DCS as well as other community-based services that are not currently funded through DCS. Survey respondents were asked to rate each service in terms of availability of that service to children and families, and to rate the effectiveness of that service.

In Region 1, approximately 230 surveys were distributed by the LOD. There were 91 responses returned. 35% of the respondents were DCS staff, 27% of the respondents were Probation staff, and 17% contracted DCS service providers. The remaining 21% fell into a variety of respondent categories including 211 staff and foster and adoptive parents. There were no juvenile judges within the region who responded to the survey.

In general, DCS staff and DCS contracted provider respondents ranked the availability of services in the region higher than did the probation respondents and the courts/law enforcement agencies/Court Appointed Special Advocates/Guardian ad Litem respondents. DCS staff ranked availability higher than Probation for counseling, both office-based and home-based, and for alcohol and drug use testing. In terms of quality of services within the region, most services ranked higher in availability also received a higher ranking in the quality of service provided. On average, DCS staff, DCS provider respondents, probation and the courts/law enforcement agencies/CASAs/GALs respondent categories agreed on the degree of service quality that is provided.

Services rating the highest in availability in the region were:

- Office-based Counseling
- Home-based individual and family therapy
- Alcohol and drug use testing services
- Child Advocacy Center investigation services
- Home-based casework (in-home family preservation)

Services rating the lowest in availability in the region were:

- Support services for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth
- Gang prevention services (Note – this service was rated significantly higher by Probation staff than DCS staff)
- Family shelters for the homeless

- Transitional/supervised living apartments for older youth in foster care
- Alternative services to suspension/expulsion from public school

After review of all the survey findings, the workgroup noted the low ratings concerning service availability (a large number of Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses regarding the availability of a service) for a considerable number of services listed on the survey. The workgroup felt this could be caused by a lack of awareness, by staff within DCS and many external community partners, of the array of DCS contracted services and/or the resources in the community.

### Public Testimony

One service provider and two other persons spoke at the public hearing held in the region on September 21, 2009. Public testimony given at the public hearing focused on the need for continued support of preservation services that are successful in deflecting children and families from the DCS and Probation systems.

## **Summary of Spending**

Region 1 has historically spent a significant amount of its allocated funds on home-based services. This has been the predominate service delivery mechanism in the region. Home-based family centered therapy services, home-based family centered casework services, and homemaker / parent aid services have all been used extensively in working with families and children. The region has also spent heavily on counseling and diagnostic services. The predominance of this spending was verified in the responses from the Needs Assessment Survey. Results from Region 1's surveys showed counseling and home-based services rated as the most available services in the region. A summary of the top five region-wide service expenditures from January 1 – August 31, 2009 is as follows:

| Service Type                                   | Expenditure*   |
|--|----------------|
| Home-based family centered casework services   | \$1,956,306.00 |
| Home-based family centered therapy services    | \$1,720,662.00 |
| Substance Abuse Assessment, Treatment, Monitor | \$1,556,780.00 |
| Counseling – Individual / Family               | \$618,609.00   |
| Diagnostic and Evaluation Services             | \$430,476.00   |

\* The Expenditure/dollar amount next to the Service Type represents the funds reported by providers and billed to DCS during the period of 1/1/09 to 8/31/09. These figures do not include Medicaid billings or drug testing costs. This also holds true for the table listed below.

In a similar review of total service expenditures for the region, the following services were in the bottom five for the period January 1 – August 31, 2009, indicating little or no use of this service in the first 8 months of 2009.

| Service Type   | Expenditure |
|--|-------------|
| Adoption – Pre/Post Placement and Post Adoption Services | \$39,120.00 |
| Adoption – Family Preparation                            | \$ 1,465.00 |
| Adoption – Child Preparation                             | \$ 00.00    |
| Foster Parent Support Services                           | \$ 00.00    |
| Domestic Violence Services                               | \$ 00.00    |

Increasing services/allocations for all the above services is one of the priorities identified by the workgroup for improvement and was developed as action steps for this Plan.

There has been a marked difference in spending on institutional care and preservation services by child welfare and by juvenile probation within the region. Child welfare spending on preservation services, as a percent of the total dollars spent, is higher than juvenile probation spending on preservation services.

Below is a brief summary of spending on institutional care and preservation services per county, taken from annualized amounts for 2008 and 2009.

Total Amount Expended by Child Welfare and Probation  
Institutions vs. Preservation in Lake County in 2008\*

Total Expended: \$73,012,000

|              | Child Welfare |            | Probation    |            |
|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|
|              | Amount Spent  | % of Total | Amount Spent | % of Total |
| Institutions | \$39,072,000  | 54%        | \$15,659,000 | 21%        |
| Preservation | \$10,000,000  | 14%        | \$8,281,000  | 11%        |

Total Amount Expended by Child Welfare and Probation\*  
Institutions vs. Preservation in Lake County in 2009

Total Expended: \$60,469,000

|              | Child Welfare |            | Probation    |            |
|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|
|              | Amount Spent  | % of Total | Amount Spent | % of Total |
| Institutions | \$32,597,000  | 54%        | \$13,804,000 | 23%        |
| Preservation | \$9,322,000   | 15%        | \$4,746,000  | 8%         |

\*Dollar amounts taken from the Annualized amounts for 2008 and 2009 of the 2010 Budget by County document from the DCS Budget Section I. B.

## **Summary of Regional Plan**

The Regional Action Plan presented in this section is based on all data collected that addressed regional service needs. These data sources assessed the following areas:

- Service availability (through the needs assessment survey, Section E)
- Service effectiveness (through the needs assessment survey, Section E)
- Public perception of regional child welfare services (through public hearings, Section F)
- Practice Indicators (13-month summaries from Aug. 09 - Section G)
- Regional workgroup determination of service available/accessibility (service array table with codes, Section H)
- Additional input provided by the workgroup.

These data sources were considered by regional workgroups to determine service needs that were to be prioritized by a region for the relevant biennium. To address these service needs, regional workgroups formulated action steps, which included distinct, measurable outcomes. Action steps also identified the relevant parties to carry out identified tasks, time frames for completion of tasks, and regular monitoring of progress towards task completion.

The Region 1 workgroup, through analysis of the above data, group discussion, and individual knowledge and experience, developed the following Action Plan.

### **1. Improve quality of current services.**

Beginning in January 2010, there will be an administrative review of a random sample of monthly reports with feedback provided to the service providers and the RSC.

### **2. Expand/improve adoption services including Child Preparation and Family Preparation services**

During the first quarter of 2010 there will be in-service policy training for FCMs and supervisors regarding adoption services.

### **3. Expand/improve services to address Domestic Violence**

Contact current mental health providers, convene a meeting of interested providers and DV shelter staff, and determine need for training to improve services.

### **4. Reduce the length of stay of Substitute Care/Ensure Appropriate Level of Care**

Institute a quarterly review and staffing of all children in substitute care, review progress with placement team and review with Permanency Team.

### **5. Expand/improve foster parent support services**

Develop a Regional foster care plan during the first quarter of 2010.

## **Summary of Unmet Needs**

During the course of the planning process, there were a number of issues the workgroup identified that Region 1 lacked in adequately meeting the needs and challenges of many of their families and children. This discussion is summarized below:

Lake County is a large metropolitan community with high unemployment and generational poverty. There is a high use of public assistance and community services in many parts of the county. The population is perhaps the most diverse in all of Indiana. The urban influence, being less than forty miles from Chicago, is both positive and negative.

While there is a plethora of services available, the demand exceeds the supply in many areas. Respondents to the needs survey identified the following areas of need. These fourteen areas were rated very high as areas of need. These community issues affect children as well as adults in the myriad of communities in Lake County. The areas of unmet need contribute to the quality of life for the children and families in Lake County.

While the Biennial Plan for Region 1 addresses many areas of need, resources are simply not available to address all areas of need. As government struggles to meet the basic needs of its citizens in this floundering economy, the private sector will undoubtedly be looked to in beginning to address these identified areas of need.

Affordable child/day care:

Transitional/supervised apartments - older youth:

Adult-child mentoring programs:

After school, recreational or youth development

Support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual youth:

Sex offender treatment services - adult offenders

Sex offender treatment services - juvenile offenders:

Inpatient substance abuse services for youth:

Support programs for teen parents/pregnant teens

Alternative services to suspension/expulsion:

Job retraining, employment preparation services

Family shelters for the homeless:

Safe, affordable low-income housing:

Gang prevention services