

# 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

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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.

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**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:
  - Services for children whose disabilities significantly affect their lives
  - 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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