



Strategic Plan

SFY 2017-2018



Child Welfare
Services

DHS STRATEGY MAP

SFY 2017-2018

OUR MISSION

We improve the quality of life of vulnerable Oklahomans by increasing people's ability to lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

OUR VISION

DHS provides help and offers hope to vulnerable Oklahomans through stronger practices, involved communities and a caring and engaged workforce.

OUR VALUES

Safety • Integrity • Professionalism • Compassion



<p>We help Oklahomans who are vulnerable lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the well-being of the people we serve • Improve access to our services and benefits 	<p>Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote safe, healthy work environments • Improve the effectiveness of our workforce • Continue to improve employee engagement 	<p>We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans who are vulnerable.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and strengthen community partnerships • Help Oklahomans who are vulnerable access community resources 	<p>We have a culture of continuous improvement.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve the department's effectiveness, efficiency and accountability • Continue to evaluate the impact our services and benefits have on Oklahomans who are vulnerable
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Figure 1. SFY 2017-2018 Strategy Map

A Letter from the Director of Child Welfare Services

Courageous actions aimed at moving Oklahoma's child welfare system forward have occurred in the recent months and years. With the support of the Oklahoma Legislature and the community, tremendous progress in several key areas has been made. More of Oklahoma's children are being safely maintained in their homes, more children are exiting the system to permanency, and more children who require out-of-home placement are placed in foster homes as opposed to congregate care settings. The Pinnacle Plan established the direction, expectations and values from which the workforce will operate, resulting in more empowered families and a more empowered agency that knows where it's going and why.

A primary driver behind all of the change is the value we hold as a division and as a state that every child in Oklahoma deserves a safe, stable family every day. This value is represented throughout all of our work with families.

Safety is our priority and at the center of all of our decisions. We as a child welfare system strive for children to be maintained in their own homes whenever that is safely possible. When that is not possible, we work to place children with relatives first. If a relative placement is not possible, we seek to place children with foster families. It is our goal for every child who enters our system to be appropriately matched to a family who can care for their unique needs until such time that the child can return home. We seek to recruit foster families who understand that supporting children in foster care involves wrapping supports around the biological families so that, ultimately, reunification can be successful. When reunification is not possible, we seek to achieve permanency for children through adoption or guardianship in a timely manner.

A key Pinnacle Plan commitment established four years ago focuses on community engagement. DHS cannot do it alone. Effective partnerships are necessary for DHS to fulfill its responsibilities related to child safety, permanency and well-being. Over the last four years, a heavy focus has been on strengthening existing partnerships while simultaneously creating new ones. We have also watched our state begin to transform from primarily a single-state agency responsible for meeting the needs of children and families in the child welfare system to a collaborative approach with a multitude of public and private partners working together to effectively serve our children and their families.

We will continue to operate in a manner that exemplifies continuous quality improvement, working to create long-term sustainable change within our system so that every child in Oklahoma has a safe, stable family every day. I look forward to experiencing more growth within our system, within our workforce, and, most importantly, within our communities.

DIVISION OVERVIEW

Child Welfare Services (CWS) is the DHS division responsible for administering the state's child welfare services. The DHS mission is to improve the quality of life of vulnerable Oklahomans by increasing people's ability to lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives. The purpose of Child Welfare Services is to improve the safety, permanence and well-being of children and families involved in the child welfare system through collaboration with families and their communities. CWS is committed to:

- Equity where all children, youth and families have access to and receive unbiased treatment and services
- Keeping children safe with their families through prevention services, kinship placements and timely reunification, whenever possible
- Ensuring every child is safe while in out-of-home care and custody by recruiting, retaining and supporting resource families that best match the needs of the children and can provide for their safety, permanency and well-being
- Moving to a continuum of care that best meets the needs of children in out-of-home care and provides for the least restrictive family-like placements, except in extraordinary circumstances
- Recruiting, retaining and supporting the best child welfare staff through a commitment to ongoing staff development and ensuring manageable caseloads and workloads
- Engaging local communities and agency partners in improving child welfare outcomes – "CWS cannot do it alone"

Child Welfare Practice Standards serve as the guiding principles for all work within CWS. Our Practice Standards are:

1. We continually examine the use (misuse) of power, use of self and personal biases
2. We respect and honor the families we serve
3. We listen to the voice of children
4. We continuously seek to learn who families are and what they need
5. We believe in the value of "Nothing About Us Without Us"
6. We maintain a child's permanent connection to kin, culture and community
7. We conduct our work with integrity at all levels of CWS

The Child Welfare Executive Team, comprised of the nine deputy directors and the Child Welfare director, leads the state child welfare team. There is a deputy director for each of the state's five regions, each providing Child Protective Services, Family-Centered Services, and Permanency Planning Services. Reporting to the five regional deputy directors, and covering 27 state districts, aligned according to district attorneys' responsibilities, there are 47 district directors. To support the critical work in the five regions, four teams, each led by a deputy director, are responsible for Bridge, Programs, Quality Assurance and Staff Development, and Child Welfare Partnerships.

The Bridge Team is responsible for the policy, procedures and programs for Adoptions and Post Adoptions, which involves assisting in securing a safe, permanent home for children in DHS permanent custody through a comprehensive array of services that identifies, approves, matches and supports adoptive families. The Post Adoption Services Section is responsible for administering financial and medical benefits, child care, Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA), Confidential and Intermediary Search, Reunion and Paternity Registries, and providing case management service to all who finalized an adoption of a child who was in out-of-home placement. This team is also responsible for Foster Care, including the recruitment, retention and training of resource families. Finally, the Bridge Team is responsible for ensuring protection and services to children who are placed across state lines.

The Programs Team is responsible for policy, procedures and programs. This team also includes the DHS Centralized Abuse and Neglect Hotline director and the program supervisor for policy. This team handles Child Protective Services, Family-Centered Services, Oklahoma Children's Services, Appeals, and Child Abuse and Neglect Information System inquiries, Permanency Planning services, Independent Living services, Developmental Disabilities and Education related services, and Trauma-Informed Care services. The Programs Team is also responsible for residential placements and therapeutic foster care, and tribal partnerships.

The Quality Assurance and Staff Development teams are responsible for the DHS KIDS database management, including system development and maintenance, SACWIS compliance, KIDS Helpdesk, KIDS application training, and management reports. Additionally, they handle the development of CWS training programs, as well as the training of the CWS staff, Quality Assurance and the Child and Family Services Reviews.

The Child Welfare Community Partnerships Team is responsible for the policy, procedures and programs for the Community Collaborative, which is about empowering communities to develop a self-sustaining collaboration to solve specifically identified problems or needs in the community. This team also includes Community Nurses who assist with medical matters for children. This team engages and connects partners outside of CWS, including private, tribal, governmental and public, with each other and the appropriate CW staff to create a synergy that ensures positive outcomes for families and children.

OUTCOME 1: Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

Goal 1: We will improve the well-being of the people we serve.

Objective 1: We will improve placement stability through the use of Comprehensive Home-Based Services (CHBS) in targeted districts by September 2016.

Action Plan:

By July 2016, we will introduce placement disruption protocol into targeted districts.

By August 2016, we will train CHBS providers and DHS staff on the mandatory placement disruption process and protocol for the identified districts.

By January 2017, we will develop a feedback loop for district directors and CHBS providers regarding all possible placement disruptions, including methods of reporting placement disruptions on a regular basis.

Important Results:

- The increased number of children experiencing fewer than two placement moves in one year for the targeted districts

OUTCOME 1: Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

Goal 2: We will improve access to our services and benefits.

Objective 1: We will reduce the number of children on the Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) waiting list and the amount of time children remain on the list before moving to a TFC placement by January 2017.

Action Plan:

By January 2017, DHS and TFC contractors will develop a process that ensures each child in need of TFC placement will be assigned to a contractor for targeted placement or home development.

By January 2017, DHS will facilitate quarterly meetings between TFC and group home contractors in order to establish collaborative partnerships to aid in transition planning for children whose transition goal is to step down from group home to TFC level of care.

Important Results:

- The reduced number of children on the TFC waiting list
- The reduced average time children spend waiting for a TFC placement

OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.

Goal 1: We will promote safe, healthy work environments.

Objective 1: We will ensure graduated caseload standards and utilize Stay Interviews to support and retain new child welfare specialists by August 2016.

Action Plan:

By August 2016, district directors will review workload report and meet with supervisors on a weekly basis to monitor and assess progress.

By August 2016, deputy directors will review workload reports and meet with district directors to monitor and assess progress.

By December 2016, we will conduct a pilot project with targeted districts to implement the new Stay Interview protocol, develop Stay Action Plans for new staff, and create retention plans for each district.

Beginning January 2017, we will implement the Stay Interview process and protocol statewide.

Important Results:

- The reduced staff turnover rates
- The increased percentage of workers meeting workload standards
- The increased percentage of staff reporting being satisfied with their jobs
- The increased preparation of district directors to retain new child welfare specialists

OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.

Goal 2: We will improve the effectiveness of our workforce.

Objective 1: We will develop an ongoing safety-focused permanency consultation process for children with a goal of reunification by August 2016.

Action Plan:

By August 2016, we will develop permanency consultation tools focused on identifying safety throughout the life of the permanency planning case for use in expediting permanency for children with the case plan goal of reunification.

By September 2016, we will implement use of permanency safety consultations in targeted districts.

Important Results:

- The increased number of children exiting safely from DHS custody to permanency
- The decreased number of children in out-of-home care

OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.

Goal 3: We will continue to improve employee engagement.

Objective 1: We will develop and implement a Leadership Advisory Board to engage program and field staff in the decision-making process by October 2016.

Action Plan:

By July 2016, we will identify the board members and begin convening monthly to address statewide CWS needs.

By September 2016, we will create a system of feedback between the Leadership Advisory Board and the CWS Executive Team.

Important Results:

- Board members reporting improved engagement in the decision-making process.
- CWS leadership reporting improved communication between program and field staff
- The increased percentage of staff reporting that there are adequate opportunities for two-way communication between leadership and front-line staff within CWS

OUTCOME 3: We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans.

Goal 1: We will build and strengthen community partnerships.

Objective 1: We will, in collaboration with providers, develop a continuum of care by January 2017.

Action Plan:

By January 2017, level of care higher than foster care will be determined based on individual needs expressed through documented behavioral indicators.

By January 2017, we will facilitate quarterly meetings between TFC and group home contractors in efforts of establishing collaborative partnerships to aid in transition planning for children whose transition goal is to step down from a group home to TFC level of care.

By January 2017, contractors for group homes will be engaged in the assessment of child needs and appropriate level of care by developing intentional transition plans for children to step down from higher levels of care to placements which are less restrictive.

Important Results:

- The increased percentage of children placed in the appropriate level of care
- The reduced amount of average time children spend waiting for a TFC placement
- The reduced average time children spend waiting for group home placement

OUTCOME 3: We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans.

Goal 2: We will help Oklahomans who are vulnerable access community resources.

Objective 1: We will improve the participation of eligible youth in services and enhance the Successful Adulthood Program by January 2017.

Action Plan:

By July 2016, we will provide services for youth ages 17-22 through the expansion of services delivered by agency partners.

By January 2017, we will expand services to youth in four metropolitan sites across the state.

Important Results:

- The increased number of youth living at home with family or independently
- The decreased number of youth having trouble with the law
- The increased number of youth who are in school, graduated or are employed

OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.

Goal 1: We will continue to improve the department's effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

Objective 1: Beginning July 2016, we will improve professional competence and create a culture of continuous improvement with a focus on the agency's core values of Safety, Integrity, Professionalism and Compassion.

Action Plan:

Beginning July 2016, we will utilize core values in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) consultation and planning processes to reaffirm commitment to the Oklahoma Child Welfare Practice Model and related practice standards.

Beginning July 2016, we will utilize core values and practice standards to inform practice improvement consultations in identified regions and districts.

Important Results:

- An increased percentage of staff who report improved professional competence in daily practice aimed at positive outcomes for kids and families
- An increased percentage of staff who report their unit has a culture of continuous improvement

OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.

Goal 2: We will continue to evaluate the impact our services and benefits have on Oklahomans who are vulnerable

Objective 1: We will maximize the use of data across program areas consistent with the Oklahoma Child Welfare Practice Model, practice standards and core values beginning July 2016.

Action Plan:

Beginning July 2016, we will customize administrative data reports for program administrators and supervisory staff to help identify and address needed support in the field.

Beginning July 2016, we will put in place the infrastructure of ongoing assessment of strengths and needs of the child welfare system.

Beginning September 2016, we will produce enhanced Regional Data Profiles for regions and districts to use to guide local level Program Improvement Plans.

Important Results:

- Staff at all levels of CWS will report an enhanced capacity to use data to manage CW programs and services effectively and consistent with DHS core values and CE practice standards
- Staff at all levels of child welfare will report improved efforts are focused on DHS core values and child welfare practice standards

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