

*New OKDHS Director Ed Lake held a series of listening sessions around the state in January 2013. These sessions were divided into mornings with key stakeholders (contract providers and associations, advocacy groups, etc.) and afternoons with OKDHS employees (separate sessions with front line workers and management). The sessions were held in Lawton, Enid, Oklahoma City (2), Broken Arrow and McAlester.*

*The following is a summary of comments and concerns raised during these sessions. The comments from stakeholders and employees have been combined in the categories below. Please note that some of these comments may not necessarily be reflective of issues statewide, but rather representative of issues brought up by the attendees of the listening sessions.*

Overall Agency Administration:

- Pay raises are critical for employees.
- Better communication is needed between the agency and stakeholders (providers, contractors and advocacy groups). Providers want a central point of contact at the agency to assist with contract and policy issues as well as handle complaints. All divisions need designated liaisons for providers.
- DHS forms and correspondence from divisions are written at too high of an educational level. Not user friendly or easy to understand.
- DHS needs to have better collaboration with other state and private agencies that serve the same clientele.
- Post reorganization, all divisions need to ensure their partner agencies know how to contact the staff they are used to doing business with or the new staff who have taken their place.
- Several DHS county offices are in poor condition and in need of repairs.
- Employees want leadership to reinstate the internal printed phone book, even if it is only printed once every few years.
- Phone systems at all DHS offices need the caller ID changed to reflect "DHS" instead of an unknown number. This is preventing workers from contacting clients.
- Each division has excessive and or redundant paperwork. Divisions need to review their paperwork to determine what is necessary for clients and staff.
- First and second payroll dates seem unnecessary. When new employees are brought onboard they must sometimes wait six weeks before getting paid. Explore the efficiency of the current two payroll system and the feasibility of switching to a bi-weekly payroll.
- OKDHS needs a career path outlined for workers in all areas of the agency, particularly for workers who get burned out working in one program. A career roadmap is needed to move between divisions and programs within the agency. Some employees have hit a "glass ceiling" in certain divisions. A defined career path will help DHS retain seasoned, trained workers within the agency.
- DHS supervisors need more management and leadership training.

- DHS needs to improve the hiring process for new workers to bring them onboard faster.
- Customer service training is needed for all employees.
- More state agents are needed in the Office of Inspector General to investigate fraud.
- Evaluate the use of the OPM-111 (employee evaluations). Many employees do not believe they have merit or are being used appropriately.
- Conduct exit surveys of employees retiring or resigning from the agency.
- Computer equipment is failing or continually breaking down causing delays in work in all divisions. Systems are old and do not work together (between divisions). Band width is a problem for some offices which affects online training.
- IMS system requires workers to use their own Social Security numbers when teleprocessing eligibility. This is antiquated and places employees at a personal security risk.

Adult and Family Services:

- Reinstate transportation contracts. DHS should coordinate with all the various entities that provide transportation to clients (Sooner Ride, private agencies, etc.) to ensure maximum services are being accessed.
- Community Action Agencies offered their support to help serve clients.
- Frontline workers are concerned about fraud related to increased use of technology vs. in-person applications. When support centers process renewals and change it to county workers, who is that error assigned to?
- Workers need manageable caseloads with reasonable expectations. Current deadlines and expectations are unreasonable for the number of workers left after downsizing and the reorganization. Demand for services is at all time high with fewer workers. Need more workers and a better way to measure workload standards.
- Frontline workers need more administrative support.
- Problems have been created by new administrative assistant positions (degrees not required) since these positions are paid more than worker positions requiring degrees.
- Need more security measures and/or space arranged differently at county offices. Employees do not feel they have a safe work environment in the event of an outside attack.
- All workers need customer service training.
- Need time to evaluate OKDHS Live, online enrollment, and the support centers to see what is working and what is not before it is expanded. OKDHS Live is reportedly not user friendly. Clients are often confused when submitting paperwork. OKDHS Live seems inappropriate for people receiving Aged Blind and Disabled (ABD) services.
- Hire temporary workers to help with imaging of documents to allow workers to focus on more important aspects of their job.
- Employees believe we should institute the asset test for SNAP eligibility to reduce fraud.
- Employees request cross training in other divisions' programs and services to be able to adequately serve and refer clients.
- Technology allows for cases to be worked in any county. This is reportedly causing confusion for clients.

- Policy is not being applied consistently, resulting in poor customer service.
- Child Care providers need a liaison to work through complaints and eligibility issues of people receiving assistance.
- Child Care Providers complained about workers losing parents' paperwork and not returning phone calls to parents or providers.
- Consider providing day care assistance for a few hours at a time to enable parents to search for jobs.
- Child care assistance co-pays and eligibility needs to be reviewed. Many eligible families are not using licensed child care because of the co-pays.
- Create a system which does not allow parents to leave a child care provider owing co-pays and move to another provider with no penalties. (Creek Nation has a system to prevent this with their child care providers).

Aging Services:

- Providers need rate increases
- OKDHS systems are old and do not work together. ASD nurses must use four different programs and ID numbers for one process.
- More nurses are needed for Advantage programs.
- More funding is needed for Adult Day programs.

Child Care Licensing:

- Providers need rate increases.
- Providers need a liaison within Child Care Licensing to help explain policy, work through complaints and compliance issues. Providers reported inconsistent application of rules and policy statewide among licensing workers.
- Instructions and forms for child care are written at too high of an educational level. Not user friendly or easy to understand.
- Providers need an online training system where they can check to see if their staff members have completed or need training (DDSD has a training system like this for providers).
- DHS licensing workers need to provide better customer service to parents and providers. Child care providers complained that workers are not returning phone calls to providers or to parents.
- Look into feasibility/efficiency of housing child care licensing workers together in one building in large metro areas rather than in separate county offices.

Child Welfare Services:

- Youth Services agencies do not like being equated with state-run shelters. They believe they are different and offer better services.
- A Youth Services agency said that insurance to provide foster care is unaffordable. This could affect our ability to contract with outside entities for foster care.
- County offices need to have one contact for our community partners that can accumulate Christmas wish lists and other needs of the children we serve.
- Cherokee Nation Child Welfare Services doesn't believe all child welfare workers fully understand the Indian Child Welfare Act. They would like to work with us and other tribes to help train workers, build collaborative working relationships.
- Ensure we continue to be a part of Systems of Care.
- Lions Boys Ranch and Oklahoma Boys Ranch in Perkins want to be involved in planning for transitions of youth to adulthood. They believe this is a gap in our current system.
- Oklahoma Baptist Home for Children wants to partner with Child Welfare to serve children and implement Pinnacle Plan.
- Continue to explore the use of technology for child welfare field staff.
- Problems have been created by new administrative assistant positions (degrees not required) since these positions are paid more than worker positions requiring degrees.
- Need supplemental funding for emergency day care for foster parents until day care assistance can be initiated. The lack of day care and immediate funding is causing delays in placing very young children.
- DHS needs to better manage the expectations of adoptive families. Many are frustrated with the lack of response of workers and the time it takes to match children with families. Some families think fostering is a "fast track" for adoption. Families who sign up for adoption are not always good recruits for foster care.
- Foster parents need a resource guide.
- Better communication is needed between workers and foster parents.
- More coordination is needed with State Department of Health on child welfare reports.
- Gladney Center for Adoption (OKC) wants to partner with child welfare services and private adoption agencies to find permanent homes for children.
- More funding is needed for agencies like Angels Foster Family Network.
- Citizens Caring for Children wants to partner with DHS for mentoring programs.
- Need more therapeutic foster homes. Therapeutic homes need to share funding for siblings placed in different homes (according to a CASA volunteer).
- Oklahoma Child Care Association and Family Builders voiced support for DHS and their desire to partner with the agency to serve children and families.
- Some child welfare workers want the agency to allow them to be allowed to take children home with them overnight in the event an immediate foster family cannot be found. Some workers expressed concern over the requirement to place young children immediately in foster homes rather than a shelter. Workers feel they end up moving children between several

temporary/emergency placements which is more detrimental than a night or two in a shelter until the right home can be found.

Child Support Services:

- Automatic referrals coming from the Health Care Authority on Medicaid applications are causing unnecessary work for Child Support staff and frustration on behalf of applicants who cannot “opt out” of a referral for child support on the applications.
- Workload – expectations are unreasonable for the number of workers left after downsizing and turnover. Demand for services is at all time high with fewer workers. Need more workers, a better way to measure workload standards and reasonable deadlines.
- Child Support workers hit the glass ceiling on pay and cannot advance in position or pay. This causes turnover of seasoned workers.

Developmental Disabilities Services:

- Providers need rate increases.
- Oklahoma Family Network wants to partner with DDSD to work the waiting list (Waiver request list) and offer support to families who are waiting for services.
- Parent Guardian Associations are still opposed to the closure of both NORCE and SORC. They want one facility left open.
- With the closure of NORCE and SORC, DDSD needs more community case management positions and more nurses.
- More funding is needed for Adult Day Services.