

## Child welfare reform and citizen review



Local board members and others serving children have lots of questions regarding the child welfare reform. One of the first questions is what is the reform?

According to DHHS, child welfare reform is DHHS' effort to partner with outside organizations to better serve

families. The chart below, derived from the DHHS operations manual, shows how this is to occur ([www.dhhs.ne.gov/Children\\_Family\\_Services/CWJS/index.htm](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/Children_Family_Services/CWJS/index.htm)).

In summary, DHHS is using state and federal dollars to obtain services and placements for state wards through a system of contracts with a select group of contractors referred to as lead agencies.

Local boards and staff will now need to consider information from an additional source, the Lead Agencies' Service Coordinator.

Regardless of how the services are delivered, reviews keep the system focused on meeting the

needs of the children and families. Reviews are a source of needed information for the legal parties to the children's cases, and detail if critical documentation was missing.

It has been reported that there has been some role confusion at the case level. Local boards can point out how this impacts individual children's cases and children's well-being.

Local board members provide this information through their comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, child centered reviews that review the record and information provided by participants at reviews.

Foster Care Review Board staff continues to ensure that children are tracked and reviewed, and that the findings from reviews are compiled, analyzed, and shared with those who can impact the system. The Foster Care Review Board's focus on ensuring the best interests of children in out-of-home care are being met has not changed, and remains vital – especially in a system that is in flux.

During this time of transition it is important we review the topics required to be in a case plan/court report (see next article).

<b>DHHS' Role (case manager)</b>	<b>Lead Agency Role (service coordinator)</b>
Remains ultimately responsible for the care, custody, and control of state wards.	Is responsible to DHHS for the services agreed to in their contract with DHHS. Cannot subcontract for service coordination.
Determines safety threats, assesses protective capacities and determines whether the child needs an out-of-home placement.	Obtains children's placement (either their own or through a subcontractor). Supports and monitors the placements.
Works with families to determine permanency objective and concurrent plan, and prepares the case plan.	Provides all supports and services for children and families as written in the case plan (either in house or through a subcontractor).
Attends all court hearings and testifies in court as needed. Manages adherence to all court orders.	Provides documentation of parental compliance with visits and children's services to DHHS that forms evidence for the court documents that DHHS prepares.
Provides monthly contact with parent and child. Maintains formal case file.	Assures its subcontractors are meeting expectations.



# Reviewing the case plan

The child's case plan is the road map to addressing issues that must be resolved in order for the child to achieve and maintain permanency.

The basic requirements of a case plan have not changed. Per Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1312, the relevant case plan/court report must contain:

- the purpose for which the child has been placed in foster care,
- the estimated length of time necessary to achieve the purposes of the foster care placement,
- a description of the services which are to be provided,
- the persons who are directly responsible for the implementation of the plan,
- a record of previous placements and
- the name of the school the child shall attend.

Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-285 requires DHHS to prepare this plan. Federal guidelines require goals, objectives, and timeframes for both the primary and concurrent plan.

If the youth is age 16 or older, the plan must contain specific goals and objectives for gaining independent living skills.

Local board members play an integral role when they review the child's plan and bring to the legal parties' attention any deficits in that plan.

With the reform, it has been identified that children and families will only receive what the court orders. Therefore, **use the "top concerns" section of the recommendation to effectively identify the issues and the solutions proposed by the local board.**

**Be clear when identifying issues and recommending specific action steps to address each of those issues.**

**Make sure plans for the children are complete, have measurable outcomes, and are reasonably achievable. The child's educational, medical, and therapeutic needs should be specifically identified in the plan.**

**Issues involving the safety and appropriateness of the child's placement should always be in the top concerns.**

**Also consider:**

- the mixture of children in the placement,
- the number of children in the placement,
- intakes and assessments on the placement,
- the child's individual needs,
- the number of restraints and if restraint was conducted correctly,
- if the placement is allowing unauthorized contact with the parent or anyone else not approved,
- if the placement has been following through with the medical, dental, vision, or therapy needs of the child,
- if the placement is not working with the permanency plan, and
- if the child's plan or concurrent plan is adoption and the placement is not willing to adopt.

**Note any safety issues with transportation or visitation supervision** and discuss those in top concerns, when such documentation exists.

As you know, there are a lot of details involved in children's cases. Judges and other legal parties use the board's recommendations to prioritize the most critical issues to be addressed.

**Thank you for your work in assuring serious case issues are identified for the legal parties.**

## Visit the redesigned Foster Care Review Board website!

This spring, we restructured our website, which now includes more information and an easier to use format. The new website address is:

**[www.fcrb.nebraska.gov](http://www.fcrb.nebraska.gov)**

(You might want to look under resources for materials specific to local board members.)



# A Word From the Chair of the Board of Directors of the State Foster Care Review Board...

## 2010 State FCRB Board of Directors

**Alfredo Ramirez,**  
LCSW, LADC  
Chair  
Local Board Member  
Executive Director, Odyssey  
III Counseling Services  
Norfolk

**Mario Scalora,**  
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Child Clinical Psychologist,  
Associate Professor of  
Psychology UNL  
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**Georgina Scurfield,**  
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**Gay McTate,**  
LCSW, ILMHP  
Therapist at Family Enrichment  
Omaha

**Mary Jo Pankoke,**  
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Statewide Advocate,  
Executive Director of  
Nebraska Child and  
Families Foundation  
Lincoln

**David Schroeder**  
Local Board Member  
Reporter, Host KRVN Radio  
Lexington

**Acela Turco,**  
Business Representative  
Co-owner of Tuffy Auto  
Service Center in West Omaha  
Omaha

*At the May 21, 2010, State Board meeting, Mr. Alfredo Ramirez was elected State Board Chair. Mr. Ramirez brings a wealth of experience to this position. He has been a local board member for over 20 years; is a Certified Master Social Worker and Licensed Mental Health Practitioner in the State of Nebraska; and is a Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor. Mr. Ramirez currently is the Executive Director of Odyssey III Counseling Services, P.C. in Norfolk, Nebraska.*

Having served on the local Norfolk foster care review board for over 20 years, and now being elected as the Chair of the State Board, humbles me and comes as an honor. I am filled with energy and excitement to now serve the foster children of Nebraska in two capacities.



**Alfredo Ramirez**  
Chair of the Board of Directors of the State Foster Care Review Board

It is by design that we work with a number of partners in the child welfare system. This includes the Governor's office, the legislature, the Chief Justice and the Courts.

My goal as Chair is to bring about a collaboration and cooperation among agencies and providers who have responsibility for the welfare of foster children. It is important to make sure children are being

served and don't become lost in the system, so we must all work together at this difficult time of transition for foster children.

The challenges in the child welfare system are many, to the point there must be a common language and common vision which will alleviate the tragedies children experience in their lives.

On behalf of the State Board, I thank my fellow citizen reviewers for their time and dedication to the children of Nebraska. I have no doubt that, together with our dedicated staff members, we can continue to track children in out-of-home care, review their cases, report on issues affecting children in foster care, and help achieve better outcomes for foster children.

**Welcome to new members of the State Board of Directors:**



**Marcia Anderson**

Marcia has served on a local board since 1995, and she represents the 2nd Congressional district.



**Gay McTate**

Gay is in private practice with a group called Family Enrichment. She works with individuals and families and provides consultation.



**Acela Turco**

Acela is co-owner of Tuffy Auto Service Center in West Omaha. She has extensive history in accounting, finances, quality assurance and auditing.

**Boys Town Pediatrics Foster Care Clinic will review children's medications**

Children in foster care are often faced with a variety of challenges. The Foster Care Clinic at Boys Town Pediatrics in Omaha meets some of those challenges by addressing the need for a medical home. As a medical home provider, the Foster Care Clinic ensures that children in out-of-home placements receive ongoing and comprehensive medical care from a primary care physician that includes working with foster parents, case workers and specialists to cover medical and non-medical issues.

According to the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 80% of children in out-of-home care have at least one chronic medical condition and nearly a quarter of these children have three or more chronic illnesses. The need for long term, comprehensive care strategies is acute, so the clinic provides each child with a medical home assessment that includes physical exams, immunizations, referrals for dental care, screening for mental, emotional and developmental problems, monitoring of school reports and social monitoring to see how the child is coping with life changes.

**Currently prescribed medications are also thoroughly evaluated. Children and youth in foster care are at risk for "medication creep" and drug interactions often fail to produce the desired effect and can**

**even produce significant side effects.**

Changes in diet and attention to other issues such as sleep history can make it possible to take a child off some medications.

Each child receives a Personal Health Record that contains a medical history, family medical history, immunization record and current medical status. Chronic illnesses are addressed through a detailed care plan that includes proposed treatments, suggestions for managing care at home and information on specialists who may be involved in the child's care.

The clinic accepts referrals of any child or adolescent in out-of-home care and is especially interested in providing services to children who have chronic illnesses or who have been in multiple placements. Consider a referral on a child who is moving from their second to third placement. Often a full evaluation and attention to the special health care needs of the child will improve the success rate of the next placement. By providing a medical home, the Boys Town Pediatric Foster Care Clinic helps ensure that children in out-of-home placements lead happier, healthier lives.

For more information: call 402.778.6900 or go to [boystownpediatrics.org](http://boystownpediatrics.org).

# Budget issues impact the Foster Care Review Board

The State of Nebraska is mandated by statute to balance its budget, and cannot do deficit appropriations. State revenues were down again for June, and the economy remains in flux. In the past few years the Foster Care Review Board's budget has undergone significant reductions (a total of about 16 percent). Personnel costs are our largest expenditures. **Due to these previous cuts, we lost four reviewers and one supervisor, thus losing the ability to conduct about 1,300 reviews each year.**

It is against this background that the FCRB is preparing for what is likely to be more funding cuts in the next year.

Like all state agencies, the FCRB is now drafting its budget request for fiscal year 2011-2012. As part of this process, all state agencies have been asked to describe the impact of a possible 10 percent cut to the state funding amount they currently receive, and to describe cost-savings initiatives underway.

On July 16th, the Governor issued a directive that all state personnel who are covered by the union contract (all who are not in management) have to take two mandatory unpaid days off between July and the end of the year. Most FCRB staff fall into this category. Management employees were not included because they had already been subject to a mandatory pay freeze.

FCRB staff members are looking at a number of ways to reduce expenses now and in the future.

- We are using the state's printshop and

this type of paper for this newsletter because it is less expensive than photocopying in-house.

- We improved our website ([www.fcrb.nebraska.gov](http://www.fcrb.nebraska.gov)) so that fewer publications need to be printed and mailed to requestors.
- We are exploring the possibility of using email to send some notifications and final reports as a way to reduce copying, postage, and faxing expenses.
- We are maximizing necessary travel to reduce transportation expenses.
- We are using telephone and video conferencing when we need to have staff meetings in order to reduce staff travel expenses.
- We are reducing the size of our next annual report.
- We are considering if volunteers could assist us with certain functions.

No one knows when the economy will rebound, whether further furloughs will be necessary, or whether there will be a special session of the Legislature between now and January to address budget issues. We do know that senators will be making difficult budget decisions in the next legislative session.

Some of you have had senators at your local board meetings, other senators may be attending over the next few months. This gives the senators the opportunity to see the important work being done by our local boards and staff.

## Statistics From 1983 through the end of 2009 26 Years of Amazing Work!

\* FCRB **tracked 91,194 individual children** who have been in foster care. Many of these 91,194 children had been in care multiple times.

\* FCRB **conducted 104,063 comprehensive reviews** of children's cases.

\* Local board members **volunteered over 528,534 hours of service** to Nebraska's children in foster care (at least a \$10.5 million contribution.)

# Progress on child welfare and juvenile service reform



**Todd Reckling**

**Director DHHS Division of Children and Family Services**

Better outcomes for children and families is at the heart of ongoing efforts to reform child welfare and juvenile services provided through the Division of Children and Family Services (CFS). It will result in a more responsive and accountable child welfare and juvenile services system and better oversight of contractors, too.

Nebraska's reform began in July 2008, when DHHS moved from having over 100 contracts to contracting with five lead agencies for in-home and safety services to children and families like intensive family preservation, transportation, foster care, family support, parenting education, and supervision of court-ordered visitation. In September 2008, DHHS announced the framework for adding out-of-home care to the service array for a continuum of care inclusive of safety, in-home and out-of-home care so all would be together in the future. CFS obtained great feedback from various stakeholders and the public through emails, a website account, community forums, and other community or individual meetings. There was a provider selection process and then in November 2009 contracts were signed and implementation began. Full, statewide implementation was achieved on April 01, 2010.

Using a performance-based approach, our contracts now include in-home and safety services and non-treatment care, and coordination of services for CFS clients. The current three lead agencies are: Boys and Girls Home serving the Western, Central and Northern Services Areas; KVC Behavioral Healthcare Nebraska serving the Eastern and Southeast Service Areas; and Nebraska Families Collaborative, a partnership among Boys Town, Child Saving Institute, Heartland Family Service, Nebraska Family Support Network, and OMNI Behavioral Health, serving the Eastern Service Area.

We're continuing to refine the differences in the roles of CFS and our contractors so there's no duplication and children and families receive quality, comprehensive services. CFS staff maintain case management, and we're not transferring our cases to the private agencies. We're giving the lead agencies responsibility for coordinating services for children and their families, and day-to-day tasks like arranging for visits and working with foster families. CFS staff will focus on the 'big picture,' like seeing if the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being for each family are being achieved.

I'm confident that the partnerships being built with our contractors and other partners will make it possible to get more children to permanency and reduce the number of children in out-of-home care. We want to "flip the pyramid" so in the future, 70% of children will be served in the home with in-home services rather than 70% being served out-of-home. By working together as partners, the public and private sectors in collaboration with the many system stakeholders can achieve improved outcomes for children and families.

## Phone numbers to note:

- \* **Foster Care Review Board 402.471.4420 or 1.800.577.3272**
- \* **Nebraska Family Helpline** for help accessing behavioral health services **888.866.8660**
- \* **Boys Town Pediatrics** for medication checks **402.778.6900** (see article in this newsletter)
- \* **Right Turn** for post-adoptive/guardianship assistance **888.667.2399**

## FCRB staff continues to focus on the needs of children identified through tracking and reviews and report the issues

The following are some of the collaborative activities that the FCRB has undertaken in order to promote children's best interests, using local board recommendations as a core component.

### With lead agencies:

- Meeting with representatives of KVC, NFC, and Boys & Girls to discuss the issues being identified with cases for which they provide service coordination.
- Sending recommendations to the lead agency's service coordinator and his/her supervisor, as well as to the legal parties to the case.
- Reporting to the lead agencies and DHHS on documentation that is missing or incomplete in the DHHS files.
- Working with KVC, NFC, and Boys and Girls to get representatives to attend local board meetings on a routine basis.
- Providing training to service coordinators in some areas on what is required in a case plan.
- Sharing statistical and other information gathered each month during the review process.
- Communicating issues identified by bio-families, foster families, and subcontractors that have been shared with the FCRB.
- Drafting a memo of agreement to strengthen communication.

### With the courts and legal system:

- Sending courts the recommendations from the 400 reviews conducted each month.
- Attending court hearings on about 50 cases of concern each month.
- Coordinating the date of the review with



FCRB staff (l to r): Executive Director Carol Stitt, Administrative Coordinator Heidi Ore, Program Coordinator Mary Furnas, Omaha/Northeast Supervisor Pauline Williams, Lincoln/Southeast/Central-West Supervisor Marci Athey-Graham and Data Coordinator Linda Cox

the court hearing dates so we can provide fresh information.

- Providing data on court issues, such as GAL issues, or outcome data.
- Continuing to have staff serve on Through the Eyes of a Child teams.
- Inviting judges, county attorneys, and GALs to FCRB trainings.
- Meeting with GALs and County Attorneys on cases with issues

that they can impact.

- Meeting with the Chief Justice to communicate court issues and issues impacting the documentation received by the courts.

### With DHHS:

- Sending DHHS caseworkers and supervisors the recommendations from the 400 reviews conducted each month.
- Forwarding reported issues with foster payments for DHHS to resolve.
- Alerting DHHS administrators when files do not contain critical documentation.
- Holding joint staff meetings with DHHS to problem-solve on cases where serious issues have been identified.
- Meeting with DHHS staff and administration to address regional/statewide issues.
- Inviting DHHS staff to FCRB trainings.
- Meeting with the DHHS Director and top administration to communicate issues.

In addition, staff continue to track children in out-of-home care, gather statistics from reviews, analyze the outcome data, and create reports for the Governor, Courts, Legislature, and other parts of the child welfare system.

# FCRB conducts state-wide training sessions for local citizen volunteers...



**State Foster Care Review Board of Directors member Dr. Mario Scalora, standing right at the Lincoln session, introduces: (l to r) State Senator Kathy Campbell, Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Heavican, State Senator Colby Coash, and State Senator Tony Fulton.**

FCRB summer workshops were held at six sites across the State in May and June with extraordinary presenters that enlightened, encouraged and provided best practices for working with children involved with the foster care system and their families. Over 450 participants took time out of their busy schedules to join us for these all day events. The diverse audience included: community-based service providers, foster parents, DHHS staff, out-of-home reform agency staff, attorneys, therapists, judges, prosecutors, CASA volunteers, local FCRB board members, FCRB staff and many others.

Of great interest at each conference were the Out-of-Home Reform panels on which the Lead agencies providing the contracted services for children and their families and DHHS were represented. DHHS Service Area Administrators and Lead Agency Administrators were also present at many locations. Feedback from audience members personally impacted by the reform or representing the children and families they serve that are being adversely affected was welcomed.

Foremost on the foster parent's list of concerns were issues with getting phone calls returned, transportation, visitation, payment for services (reduced and late payments), changes in DHHS and Service Coordinator staff, lack of

communication, poor service coordination, and a lack of clear roles. Judges, prosecutors and attorneys shared their concerns regarding many contracted service coordinators lack of case knowledge, child welfare knowledge, lack of knowledge with regard to gathering and documenting evidence to support their cases, and lack of training to prepare them for testifying in court.

Legal training included the role of the legal system in permanency planning, aggravated circumstances, the role of the GAL, grounds to terminate parental rights, and documentation and the evi-

dentiary needs of the court. Depending on the location of the workshop, legal training was provided by Judge Douglas Johnson (Omaha), Judge Robert Ide (Holdrege), Judge Kent Turnbull (North Platte), Judge Donna Taylor (Madison), Judge Linda Porter (Lincoln), Judge James Worden (Scottsbluff), Attorney Christine Constantakos (Omaha), Attorney J. Leef (Sidney), County Attorney Rebecca Harling (Lincoln County), and Deputy County Attorney Robert Cashoili (Hall County).

Dr. Gregg Wright from the Center for Children and the Law (CCFL) presented at the Lincoln workshop. He explored the characteristics of drug environments that endanger children from the manufacture, use, possession, or trafficking of drugs legal and illegal. We will offer this again in the future due to the interest from across the state.



**Judge Douglas Johnson**



**Judge Linda Porter**

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# ...in partnership with the legal system, executive branch, and the legislature.

Nancy Thompson M.S., L.M.H.P. - Child and Family Therapist in Private Practice provided insight into how to serve the best interests of children and youth in foster care, how to help children in transition, and the importance of attachment and stability for a child's brain development.



**Nancy Thompson**

Nancy had the audience laughing and crying from her heartfelt true stories one moment to furiously writing notes on how to recognize issues and help children in transition the next.

Summer workshops are an extension of the FCRB's training opportunities provided year round to expand the knowledge base of local

Foster Care Review Board staff and local board members, as well as our many community partners. By providing this opportunity we improve the overall knowledge and performance of those who make decisions and provide services for children and their families. Together we can help children move to permanency without unnecessary delays.



### Sen. Tom Hansen

is pictured here with FCRB Executive Director Carol Stitt at the North Platte training session. Sen. Hansen was instrumental in introducing legislation to allow foster parents to share information with the courts via the Caregiver Information Form. Judges from all areas have commented on how this information assists the Courts.

## Some of the persons giving greetings and comments—



**Chief Justice Mike Heavican**



**Sen. Mike Flood**  
Speaker of the Nebraska Legislature



**State Senator Kathy Campbell**



**State Senator Colby Coash**



**State Senator Tony Fulton**



**DHHS Director Todd Reckling**

## Some FCRB staff members who gave invaluable support:



Left to right: Abby Webben, Heidi Ore, and Karie Dey who took registrations, prepared the information packets, assured needed supplies and so much more.



Mary Furnas, who facilitated panels, compiled invitation lists, and numerous other tasks to make the workshops a success.

# State of Nebraska celebrates its first Annual Reunification Day

On Saturday, June 12th, Nebraska had its first celebration of Annual Reunification Day. The event was brought to Nebraska by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Douglas Johnson, of the Separate Juvenile Court of Douglas County, serves as president of that organization. He organized the committee who planned the event.

It was an emotional day.

The event was held in Omaha, and attended by Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Heavican, Judge Christopher Kelly, Judge Wadie Thomas, DHHS Service Area Administrator Barry DeJong, and representatives of KVC and NFC.

A highlight of the day was four different mothers retelling their stories of their children being placed in foster care and of their work to get their families back together. They were truly successful stories. Each woman identified someone who believed in her, whether a mentor, a case-worker, husband, or some else who helped her put her life back together one step at a time.

One mother spoke of serving prison-

time, getting sober, and working her plan.

One mother thanked her judge who kept faith in her and placed her children with her after her parental rights were severed. She

thanked the prosecutors for keeping her children safe when she could not. She stated her life wouldn't be where it was today without her work with the CPS system.

One mother has been sober for several years now due to the Family Network.

The day was very well planned, with health booths,

"bouncy houses" for the children, gift bags, food, etc. The event was a celebration of family.

In addition to Judge Johnson, the committee who facilitated this event consisted of representatives from DHHS, County Attorneys, Public Defenders, FCRB, CASA, Nebraska Families Collaboration, and KVC.

Special kudos goes to FCRB Omaha Supervisor Pauline Williams, and Douglas County Juvenile Court Bailiff Mary Vlcek who each went above and beyond to make this a special day for the families involved.



**Some mothers gathered to tell their stories about their journey to be reunified with their children.**



**One of the children enjoying Reunification Day**

# From me to you ...

First, thank you for your continued service to children. Without citizen reviewers, staff, and partners coming together throughout our history, there would have been far fewer accomplishments for children.

All of us in the child welfare system are currently faced with new challenges due to the shift to Lead Agencies providing services and placements for children in out-of-home care.

A top priority for our local board members remains a focus on advocating for individual children and youth's best interests through our reviews. This is critical.

From citizen volunteers who review cases, to FCRB staff, to our state board of directors, we need to maintain our focus. That focus was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 1982, and it has remained the same over the intervening 27 years.

**We will continue the extra work necessary to independently track children in out-of-home care**, compiling data on the performance of the entire Nebraska child welfare system, which includes the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, its lead agencies and the Courts. We will continue providing statistical information and analysis to members of the child welfare system, researchers, and the public.

**We will continue to provide comprehensive external reviews of individual children's cases** from the perspective of the child's best interests, and working to review more children while following up on cases reviewed. Review staff members are working hard to obtain documentation to provide for reviews. If, for example, cases you are reviewing lack documentation or have other patterns of concern, please have your review specialist communicate those concerns to us.

**Under Governor Heineman's direction, we continue partnering with DHHS to identify and address issues with children's cases.** Our priorities are working with the Lead Agencies, improving documentation, securing payments for foster parents and communicating their concerns, and communicating issues regarding visitation or



**Carolyn K. Stitt**  
Executive Director

transportation or other case issues.

As statute requires, we are working to address issues impacting:

1. **Placements** (by reviewing homestudies and the caregivers ability to care for the children, and whether children are receiving the placement stability needed to grow and thrive.)

2. **Services** (by monitoring whether or not needed services are being provided for the children and families.)

3. **Permanency** (by addressing a lack of documentation of parental compliance which affects

whether good decisions can be made, and by addressing changes in caseworkers and supervisors which affects case continuity.)

**We continue to work with the Courts** to address issues related to guardian ad litem performance, children's safety and stability, complete and appropriate case plans, and clear orders delineating what should be carried out regarding the case plans, services, and placements, complete with timeframes.

## Looking forward...

Everyone in the system, both private and public must focus on obtaining a better first placement for children (one that is safe and appropriate), increasing awareness of case history, improving documentation and obtaining permanency considering all relevant information, and making sure people are receiving prompt payment.

Over our quarter-century plus history, the Foster Care Review Board has faced many challenges. We are still here, caring for Nebraska's children. We will continue to be here, as the inscription on our state capitol, which reads,

**"The salvation of the state is watchfulness in the citizen."**

Thank you.

Foster Care Review Board  
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*Summer 2010 Review*

## Nuts & Bolts info for local board members ...



During this transition there is a lot of change in the child welfare system. **Let's remember to commend those who "are doing it right"** and acknowledge their efforts. You can do so in the recommendation, through a note, or both.

**Please point out problems and make specific recommendations** on the best means to address the problem. Be specific on what needs to be included in the court order.

Each month, volunteer foster care case reviewers spend hours poring over case file materials prior to local board meetings. In doing so, there are questions that jump out, such as "why in the world don't they just do X, Y or Z to get this child some help, and to get this child into a safe, permanent, loving home?"

Take that frustration and turn it into an opportunity, writing down those "why don't they's" to share at the board meeting. Doing so provides vital information to the Courts and other legal parties from the local board's unique and valuable perspective as a multi-disciplinary group focused specifically on the best interests of the child.

At the FCRB statewide training sessions the past few weeks, everyone heard from judges, DHHS staff members, and others who were ask-

ing for the FCRB's Top Concerns and Recommendations to help them make the best decisions for the child. They look at what we have identified as top concerns to help them sort out what services are being provided, what services are still needed, compliance with what has been provided, and what is necessary to move the child to permanency.

In addition, the findings and barriers you identify are coded, input onto the FCRB's tracking system, and used to provide regional and statewide data that is shared with the Governor, State Senators, Courts, DHHS, and other policy-makers.

Thus, the work done by local board members positively impacts individual children's cases and help the larger system to improve.

**Also, encourage foster parents to share information with the courts using the Care-giver Information Form** that courts developed for that purpose. Go to our website, [www.fcrb.nebraska.gov](http://www.fcrb.nebraska.gov), under resources, foster parent resources, for a copy.

**Thank you, citizen reviewers, for everything you do for the children. You make a difference.**