



CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

For the first time in its history, the U.S. Administration of Children and Families (Department of Health and Social Services) established child and family services reviews for each state. Delaware was the first state in the nation to undergo the new federal review, which assessed our child welfare services including foster care, adoption services and child safety status.

HOW DID DELAWARE DO? Overall, we were pleased with the results of the report, and based on our initial assessment of our services and programs, there were no surprises in the report -- meaning that our self-assessment indicated what our strengths and weaknesses would be. In addition, the regional administrator for our review noted that "Delaware can take pride in those areas found to be strengths in its child welfare system."

Our workforce was cited in the report as "excellent staff who are committed to working with the children and families who need their service," and that, "the efforts that Delaware has made to stabilize the workforce are commendable." The state's efforts to reduce its high turnover rates in recent years will be shared with other states as a "promising practice" by the federal Children's Bureau. "It is clear that this stabilization of staff turnover has produce significant improvement in Delaware' child welfare practice and service delivery."

STRENGTHS: The state's review compares favorably with that of other states that have completed federal reviews thus far. We met or exceeded five of the six national standards including: recurrence of maltreatment; stability of foster care placements; length of time to achieve reunification; incidence of child abuse or neglect in foster care; and foster care re-entries. Delaware did not meet the standard for "length of time to achieve adoption."

Delaware also met all seven systemic factors which included: a statewide information system; case review system; quality assurance; training; service array for children and families; our responsiveness to the community; and foster and adoptive parents licensing, recruitment, and retention.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: To achieve the national standard for safety, well-being and permanency outcomes, states had to achieve a 90% rating in 7 areas for children:

Receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	92%
Have permanency and stability in their living situations	89-90%
Receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	89%
Receive protection from Abuse	86%
Are safely maintained in their homes	83%
Have continuity of family relationships and connections preserved	81%
Their families have the capacity to provide for their needs	67%

Although Delaware only met one of these outcomes for children, we were very close in achieving most all of them, and we have made great strides in each of these areas over the past few years. The data collected from the government dates back to fiscal year 1999. We have worked hard in recent years to improve our safety measures, including regular and frequent contacts with families and children; safety assessments and safety planning; and timeliness of both our first responses and completion of investigations.

Thanks to all you who were a part of the federal review, to all employees who work to keep children safe, and to staff who support those on the front lines.

Cari DeSantis
 Cabinet Secretary
 Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families