



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Joe Smack

302.633.2605

Delaware is First State to Undergo New Child and Family Services Review

WILMINGTON – As part of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), federal government representatives from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children Bureau, recently conducted a week-long, on-site visit to evaluate Delaware’s child welfare system. This intensive review of the entire child and family services network, which includes the Delaware Children’s Department, Family Court and medical services, examines for safety, permanency and wellbeing by reviewing case records and interviewing families, stakeholders, service providers and case managers.

Using data from Federal Fiscal Year 2005 (October 1, 2004 thru September 30, 2005), the review found that Delaware met five of six national standards. Strengths were also highlighted for five of the seven systemic factors, which measure service delivery systems. Delaware was strong in agency responsiveness to the community, recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents, quality assurance, training, and information systems.

“This comprehensive federal review encourages states to truly examine key issues associated with providing timely and appropriate services for its children and families in crisis,” said Governor Ruth Ann Minner. “The review provides a clear picture of Delaware’s systemic strengths and offers guidance in areas where we can continue to improve services for the benefit of all Delawareans.”

Significant changes have been made to the new Federal review, including an increase in the number of cases reviewed from 39 in 2001 to 65 in 2006 and a focus on older children in care. Also, the case standard for “Substantial Compliance” rose from 90 percent in 2001 to 95 percent for this review.

“We believe the preliminary data shows we have made progress here in Delaware,” Children’s Department Secretary Cari DeSantis said. “Our progress is a direct result of the continued investment by the Governor and the General Assembly in the child welfare system, as well as the dedication of our staff and community partners to Delaware’s youth.”

Once the federal government provides a final report from the on-site review, Delaware will have 90 days to work on a program improvement plan to address the outcomes determined to be in need of improvement. The Children’s Department will collaborate with the federal CFSR team, Family Court and community stakeholders to finalize the program improvement plan and implement improvements over a two-year span. Quarterly progress reports will be provided during the program improvement plan period.

“Our agency continually strives for excellence by focusing on our mission to *Think of the Child First*,” Secretary DeSantis said. “This round of the CFSR incorporated higher standards and more a detailed analysis of the systems involved, which made comparisons more difficult from one year to the next. However, this year’s adjustments will allow us to continue internal assessments and improve our process for providing quality services to the state.”

On any given day, the Delaware Children’s Department provides services to approximately 9,000 children, who have been abused, neglected, abandoned, have mental health or substance abuse problems or have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts. Over 22,000 children receive services each year through the Children’s Department. Thousands more Delaware children received services from the Department through home, community or school-based prevention and early intervention programs and child care licensing. For more information, please visit www.kids.delaware.gov or www.thinkofthechildfirst.com.

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