

**FINAL REPORT
OHIO TITLE IV-E
FOSTER CARE ELIGIBILITY REVIEW
September 27- 30, 2004**

INTRODUCTION

Staff from the Central and Regional Offices of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) conducted a review of Ohio's Title IV-E foster care program in Columbus September 27 through 30. The purpose of the review was to determine if payments made on behalf of children in foster homes and institutions were paid in accordance with Title IV-E (Sections 471 and 472) of the Social Security Act and Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 1356.71.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

A sample of 100 (80 and an over sample of 20) cases was drawn from Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data. The listing of cases was transmitted to State staff who verified that a foster care maintenance payment had been made in each case during the period under review, October 1, 2003 through March 31, 2004. Onsite, the Review Team evaluated 80 cases to determine Title IV-E eligibility for the child in care and to determine whether the foster home or institution was properly licensed.

This was Ohio's second primary review. Its initial primary review was held in March 2001. During the initial primary review, Ohio was found to be in substantial compliance with Title IV-E requirements because it had eight or fewer error cases. In the 2004 review, for a finding of substantial compliance, it was necessary to have no more than four error cases. Of the eighty cases reviewed, there was one error case and one case with an ineligible payment. Thus, Ohio was in substantial conformity and will not have to submit a Program Improvement Plan. The next primary review will be held in three years.

CASE RECORD SUMMARY

Sample Number 68 was an error case. In this case, a child was placed in the unlicensed home of a relative from October 18, 2003 through November 30, 2003. The ineligible payment amount is \$547; the ineligible administrative cost amount is \$1,444, for a total Federal Financial Participation (FFP) disallowance amount of \$1,991.

Sample Number 65 was a case with ineligible payments. In this case, a judicial hearing to finalize the permanency plan for the child was due in July 2003, but was not conducted until October 2003. Therefore, payments made in August

and September were payment errors. These payments were made outside the period under review. The ineligible payment amount is \$1,220; the ineligible administrative cost amount is \$1,416, for a total Federal Financial Participation (FFP) disallowance amount of \$2,636.

In accordance with Title 45 CFR 1356.71, Ohio was found to be in substantial compliance with the recipient and provider provisions of Title IV-E. The total disallowance in FFP is \$4,627, of which \$1,767 is maintenance payments and \$2,860 is administrative costs. Since the disallowed costs were included previously in federal payments to the State, Ohio is required to repay them by including a prior period decreasing adjustment on the Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Financial Report (Form ACF-IV-E-1) for the quarter ending September 30, 2004.

REVIEW TEAM OBSERVATIONS

As team members reviewed the cases, they noted both areas of strength in the State's system and areas for improvement.

STRENGTHS

- Four of the cases were voluntary placements. In all of these, there were ways to assure that the 30 day time limits for renewal of the agreements were followed. All cases followed the requirements and were very well managed.
- Cases were adjudicated within the first 60 days. The team has not seen cases where this took place as early in any other reviews of States in the region.
- Court orders with copies of complaints were attached. They were specific, timely, and contained appropriate language. Court orders contained the exact dates on which children were removed.
- One page expedited court orders and orders with the State's definition of abuse and neglect were attached for clarification.
- We were impressed by the overall excellence of the court orders in meeting Federal and State requirements.
- One excellent practice was the listing of specific services that had been provided to families to prevent removal. This was provided for a large number of cases.
- Automation of the Forms 1452 and 1452A. These forms, for the determination and re-determination of eligibility using Aid to Families with Dependant Children (AFDC) criteria have proven to be very helpful to new staff and have increased the accuracy of the determinations by the counties.

AREAS for IMPROVEMENT

- The language in some of the court orders was not clear. It was difficult to get an accurate idea of what was happening with the child and family.
- There was variation among the counties as to how complete the case histories were. Some were excellent and gave good descriptions of the child's situation and some were sketchy.
- In some cases, even when activities leading to permanency for a child were occurring (such as an adoption almost complete) agencies overlooked the necessity of formally making a permanency plan final.
- In some instances, the actual date that the child entered care was not in the record.
- In one case, there was a lapse of licensure. No payment was made in this specific instance, but if there had been, the case would have been ineligible.
- There should be better documentation in the case record of the location of the child at all times. We understand the State is in a transitional period now with some of its technological capability. It is hoped that this will improve with the implementation of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System.