Michigan

Office of the Auditor General

REPORT SUMMARY

Performance Audit

Children's Foster Care Program

Department of Human Services

Report Number:
43-278-03

Released:
August 2005

The Children's Foster Care Program provides placement and supervision for children who are temporary or permanent State or court wards. The mission of the Program is to provide care and supervision to children removed from their homes because of abuse and neglect while providing services to children and families to establish permanency. Foster care services are provided through a partnership between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and contracted agencies.

Audit Objectives:

1. To evaluate DHS's and the contracted service providers' compliance with material provisions of State laws and regulations related to the delivery of Program services.

2. To assess DHS's effectiveness and efficiency in monitoring the delivery of services by Program contracted service providers.

3. To assess the effectiveness of the Program in meeting its outcome goals.

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Audit Conclusions:

1. We concluded that DHS and the contracted service providers generally did not comply with material provisions of State laws and regulations related to the delivery of Program services. Our review disclosed three material conditions (Findings 1 through 3). In addition, our review disclosed two reportable conditions (Findings 4 and 5).

2. We concluded that DHS was generally not effective and efficient in monitoring the delivery of services by Program contracted service providers. Our review disclosed one material condition (Finding 6). In addition, our review disclosed two reportable conditions (Findings 7 and 8).

3. We concluded that the Program was generally not effective in meeting its outcome goals. Our review disclosed one material condition (Finding 9). In addition, our review disclosed one reportable condition (Finding 10).

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Material Conditions:

DHS did not ensure that its local office workers conducted and documented criminal history background checks and assessed the related risks prior to placing children in the homes of potentially unsuitable relative foster care providers. In addition, DHS procedures did not require periodic updates of the criminal history backgrounds of family foster care

licensees, nonlicensed providers who were relatives of the children in foster care (relative foster care providers), and adult household members residing in foster homes. (Finding 1)

DHS did not ensure that it obtained Interstate Compact on the Placing of Children agreements with other states for all children in out-of-State foster homes (Finding 2).

DHS did not ensure that its caseworkers had performed and documented required visits with children in foster care, their parents, and their foster parents or had facilitated visits between the children and their parents (Finding 3).

DHS did not sufficiently monitor contracted agencies to ensure that contracted agencies effectively delivered foster care services (Finding 6).

DHS did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven federally required child welfare outcomes pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being (Finding 9).

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Reportable Conditions:

DHS did not ensure that caseworkers prepared foster care service plans within required time frames and included required information in the service plans (Finding 4).

DHS did not ensure that children in foster care received required minimum basic health care services and that caseworkers documented the services received in the foster care case files (Finding 5).

DHS had not established a process to periodically evaluate contracted agency per-diem rates to reduce or eliminate disparities in program payment rates for agencies that provided the same or similar foster care services (Finding 7).

DHS's monitoring of foster care cases supervised by contracted agencies did not ensure that contracted agency staff consistently prepared foster care service plans and submitted them to DHS for approval within required time frames. In addition, DHS did not ensure that its local office monitoring workers approved and documented their approval of all contracted agency foster care service plans in compliance with DHS policy. (Finding 8)

DHS had not fully developed and implemented a comprehensive process to evaluate its effectiveness in delivering children's foster care services (Finding 10).

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Agency Response:

Our audit report contains 10 findings and 12 corresponding recommendations. DHS's preliminary response indicated that it agrees with 8 and disagrees with 4 of the recommendations.

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A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling 517.334.8050 or by visiting our Web site at: http://audgen.michigan.gov

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