

Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare
Period 5 Corrective Action Plan: Jeanine B. v. Doyle Settlement Agreement
January 22, 2009

I. INTRODUCTION

The Corrective Action Plan (CAP) identifies and describes the strategies the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW or the Bureau), working with its lead contract agencies, is taking, and plans to implement to address the following remaining enforceable Settlement Agreement provisions:

I.B.2 requires that at least 90% of children in BMCW custody reaching 15 of the last 22 months in out-of-home care during Period 4, shall have a termination of parental rights (TPR) petition filed on their behalf, or an available ASFA exception documented by the end of their fifteenth month in care.

I.C.1 requires that no more than 0.60% of children in BMCW custody shall be the victims of substantiated abuse or neglect within the period by a foster parent or staff of a facility required to be licensed.

I.D.7 requires the creation of Adolescent Diagnostic/Assessment Centers and limits the length of stay in Centers. The Bureau achieved compliance with the provision to create the Centers. During 2007, the Bureau did not meet the provision regarding time limits for stays in the Centers.

I.D.9 requires that 90% of children in the legal custody of the BMCW have no more than three out-of-home care placements.

In section II.E, the Bureau has also identified other related actions and quality initiatives that will be implemented as part of its continuing management and stewardship of the Bureau.

II. STRATEGIES FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare, in partnership with its lead contract agencies will implement the following actions and strategies to address the remaining enforceable provisions.

A. Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) I.B.2

This provision requires that at least 90% of children in BMCW custody reaching 15 of the last 22 months in out of home care shall have a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition filed on their behalf, or an available ASFA exception documented by the end of their 15th month in care.

BMCW's corrective strategies build on actions taken during 2007 which include: revision to the ASFA curriculum for ongoing case managers, updated training for case management staff and supervisors to clarify ASFA requirements, implementation of internal permanency staffings convened by State employed staff to focus on expediting permanency for children. Staffings will be convened for children in care more than 9 months.

BMCW will implement the following strategies to ensure ASFA compliance:

- 1) As part of our continuing focus on expediting permanency for children, the Bureau will continue to plan and implement internal permanency staffings of all children in care at least nine months and beyond, to identify barriers to permanency being achieved, to discuss resolution of those barriers. Assigned Program Evaluation Managers will track all cases until permanency is achieved. The PEMs are responsible for tracking the follow up and implementation of issues identified during the staffings.
- 2) Continue case staffings with the District Attorney TPR team captain and District Attorney staff prior to and following TPR referrals.
- 3) Continue to implement updated training for staff to clarify ASFA program and documentation requirements to support compliance with ASFA requirements. BMCW will monitor to ensure compliance.
- 4) Develop and implement follow-up strategies on concurrent permanency planning based on in-service and consultation conducted by Margaret Burt October 8-9, 2008 with BMCW and Children's Court Judges.
- 5) Add three new permanency consultant positions by March 31, 2009; for a total of eleven permanency consultants, and one supervisor.

B. Length of Stay in Adolescent Assessment Centers (I.D.7)

Provision I.D.7 requires the creation of Adolescent Diagnostic/Assessment Centers, and limits the length of stay in centers. Placement in centers cannot exceed 60 days for pre-disposition cases; and cannot exceed 20 days for children whose CHIPS case has reached disposition.

Adolescent Assessment Centers were created in December 2003.

The Bureau will implement the following actions:

- 1) Conduct internal specialized placement staffings for adolescents who are placed in an adolescent assessment center or a placement stabilization center, or who experienced a third placement within the previous 12 months. This staffing will be held within 10 business days of the placement. The purpose of the staffing for newly placed adolescents is to assess child and family circumstances, service and placement needs, and permanency goals; and to identify action steps to stabilize placements, provide necessary services and achieve permanency goals. The purpose of the staffing for children experiencing a third placement within 12 months is to evaluate the factors which led to the placement disruption and to identify services needed to minimize future disruptions and to stabilize placement.

Required participants for specialized staffings for newly placed youth: assigned case manager, supervisor, program manager, and foster placement supervisor.

Required participants for specialized staffings for adolescents experiencing a third placement within 12 months: assigned case manager, supervisor, program manager, clinical foster placement supervisor and the CEO or Chief Operating Officer of the case management agency.

- 2) Research and identify options for program models to provide group care for adolescents in a home-like setting whose needs cannot be met in a family home by March 31, 2009; including identifying the needs of the children who are placed in the adolescent assessment or placement stabilization centers, determining whether there are alternative approaches to assess their needs, and developing specific programs, services and placements to eliminate the needs for these centers.

C. Placement Stability of Children in Out of Home Care (I.D.9)

Provision I.D.9 requires 90% of children in out of home care have no more than three out of home placements.

In an effort to promote placement stability for children in out of home care, the Bureau will implement the following strategies:

- 1a) By April 21, 2009, in consultation with a national expert to be jointly agreed upon by the parties, the Bureau shall conduct an assessment of placements and services needed by children in the Bureau's care. The purpose of the assessment is to determine what additional placement resources and supportive services are needed to ensure the appropriate placement of children, to minimize the need for placement moves while in custody, to ensure that children are placed in the least restrictive most family-like setting appropriate for their needs and likely to ensure permanency for children as quickly as possible.

The assessment will utilize the findings of the Bureau's recent study of a sample of children experiencing placement movement and will include an assessment of a sample of children placed in assessment foster homes and children placed in adolescent assessment and placement stabilization centers.

- 1b) Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention:

The Bureau will make diligent and good faith efforts to implement the recommendations of the assessment regarding additional placement resources and supportive services. The Bureau, in consultation with a national expert to be jointly agreed upon by the parties, will develop a Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Plan 60 days from the completion of the Placement and Services Needs Assessment required above. The recruitment and retention plan will be driven by data concerning the needs and placements of the foster care population and mapping of the capacity and preferences of the pool of foster parents. The recruitment and retention plan shall include specific strategies to increase responsiveness and support to foster parents at all stages of recruitment, licensing, placement and throughout foster parents' involvement with the Bureau. The plan will include strategies for working with the foster parent organizations to support recruitment, retention and mentoring efforts. The plan shall include specific tasks and timeframes and

interim goals. In developing the plan, the expert should consider the Bureau's financial support of a foster parent organization and the establishment of a foster parent mentor program.

- 2) By December 31, 2009, BMCW will increase the number of foster homes by a net gain of at least 185 homes, for a total of 875 foster homes.
- 3) Phase out and no longer use assessment foster homes for children. Timeline: Completed by July 1, 2009.
- 4) Create and implement Relative Coordinator positions in each region to assist case managers in providing support to unlicensed relatives caring for children who are on a CHIPS court order. Timeline: By March 31, 2009.
- 5) Expand the implementation of MUTT for foster parents to include unlicensed relatives caring for children on a CHIPS court order; to provide interventions to address the behavior and crisis needs of children during the evening and after-hours when the Bureau office is closed. Mobile Urgent Treatment Team (MUTT) services will continue to be provided for foster parents to support foster parents by addressing the behavior and crisis needs of foster children during the evening and after hours when the Bureau office is closed.

D. Maltreatment of Children in Out-of-Home Care (I.C.1)

BMCW has taken a strong position and numerous actions to reduce maltreatment in out-of-home care and the number of substantiated cases of maltreatment in out of home care has declined significantly since the State took over control of Milwaukee Child Welfare. The Bureau will take these additional actions to continue to reduce maltreatment in out of home care:

Strategies to Reduce Maltreatment in Group Homes, Residential Care Facilities

In order to aggressively address this issue, BMCW will continue to formally partner with the Bureau of Permanency and Out-of-Home Care; the entity responsible to license and regulate group homes, residential care facilities, and with child placing agencies that license treatment foster homes to implement the following strategies:

1. Continue to implement increased monitoring visits and oversight by the Bureau of Permanency and Out-of-Home Care of group homes, residential care facilities, and child placing agencies caring for BMCW children. These efforts are designed to raise awareness of maltreatment and neglect issues, identify ways to prevent neglect and maltreatment of BMCW children by staff in licensed group homes and residential facilities, and to establish a stronger regulatory presence in licensed child caring facilities.
2. Continue to fund one position in the Bureau of Permanency and Out-of-Home Care. This position is dedicated to making increased visits to group homes, residential care facilities serving BMCW children, and child placing agencies that license treatment foster homes. This position also identifies child-specific information regarding placements, and recommendations regarding capacity for future placements.

Strategies to keep children safe and to improve the quality of care bureau children receive in treatment foster homes:

1. The Bureau will monitor implementation of the recently revised contract requirements for treatment foster care agencies to strengthen accountability and improve child safety outcomes.
2. The Bureau will continue working with treatment foster care agencies where substantiated maltreatment occurred to assess case specific practice and lessons learned, and to identify corrective actions needed to improve the quality of future licensing decisions and monitoring of treatment foster homes by Treatment Foster Care agencies.

Strategies for Reducing Maltreatment and Neglect in Foster Homes

BMCW will continue to:

1. Focus on preventing maltreatment and neglect of children placed in licensed foster homes monitored by BMCW and treatment foster homes licensed by child placement agencies where Bureau children are placed, as identified in the Period 3 CAP.
2. Implement the revised training content for new and existing foster parents to further emphasize prevention of abuse and neglect in foster homes, to eliminate use of corporal punishment and inappropriate discipline and to identify acceptable alternatives for foster parents to manage the child's behavior and provide quality care and supervision of children in their home.
3. Monitor the development and use of individualized support plans for licensed BMCW foster homes.

E. Other Initiatives

BMCW maintains its focus and commitment to our child welfare workforce initiative activities.

BMCW will continue its support of staff educational advancement as described in the 2007 CAP, including the part-time MSW programs evening courses at reduced tuition for Bureau staff pursuing a Master of Social Work degree at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; and stipends for the full time MSW program.

BMCW will maintain the pay schedules and career ladders for ongoing case managers, mentors and supervisors

The Bureau will continue participation in the statewide Qualitative Service Review (QSR). The next QSR of Milwaukee will be in spring 2010.

BMCW will ensure the initial health screen includes a developmentally appropriate mental health screen conducted by a qualified professional. Based on results of the mental health screen, BMCW will ensure follow up services are provided to address the child's needs.

As part of its continuing management and stewardship of the Bureau, we are in the process of implementing quality initiatives to strengthen day-to-day practice across all program areas.

III. EVALUATION OF PROGRESS AND FOLLOW UP

All proposed strategies will be formally tracked and analyzed by BMCW and reported on to Plaintiffs' counsel, including monthly data submissions as agreed upon by the parties.

Conference calls will be scheduled at the convenience of both parties to discuss CAP report items, and to respond to any questions or areas of concern. As has been the established practice, BMCW will promptly follow up and respond to questions or requests for additional information from Plaintiffs' counsel.

BMCW will also continue to report on the progress of achieving permanency for the remaining named plaintiff child, and to submit quarterly case file documentation regarding the child.