

Trial Home Visits

Effective September 2015, the Nebraska Legislature amended the statutes (Foster Care Review Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1301-1322) to authorize the FCRO to review cases of children in a trial home visit. NDHHS is now reporting on these children to the FCRO. Trial home visits are defined in Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1301 as **when a court involved youth goes from an out-of-home placement back to his/her parent/legal guardian, but remains a ward of the state and continues to receive services.** Trial home visits are intended to be short-term supports after reunification has occurred. Children really have not fully experienced “permanency” until there is no longer court involvement in their family’s lives.

In Nebraska, many children returned to the parental home remain under court-ordered NDHHS supervision for extended periods of time. Some of these are for longer than six months. Our Local Boards have started reviewing these cases. Through these reviews, we will be able to ensure that the necessary supports/services are in place for the family to prevent any further removals. We will also be able to collect and analyze the data to determine the reasons for Nebraska’s higher rate of re-entry into out-of-home care.

Probation Cases

Beginning in 2013, there have been significant changes to the Nebraska Juvenile Justice system. One of the key changes was transferring youth from the NDHHS Office of Juvenile Services (OJS) to the Office of Probation Administration. Following that change, there were conflicting interpretations of Nebraska law regarding whether the Foster Care Review Office had authority to conduct reviews of children in out-of-home care who were under the Office of Probation Administration. That was resolved by the Legislature in 2015 and the FCRO does now have authority to review probation youth in out-of-home care as of September 2015.

The Office of Probation Administration and the FCRO began collaborative work in late summer 2015 developing the FCRO case review processes including how documentation will be provided by the Office of Probation Administration. At the same time, we have developed a statistical collection tool and a Recommendations and Findings form. The probation review process was piloted in October 2015 and reviews are now occurring on a few select boards statewide. It is the intent of the FCRO’s to assist Probation in its internal CQI processes as well as providing oversight to the system.