

# **PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT**

## **Placement of Abused and Neglected Children**

**A Report to the Legislative Post Audit Committee  
By the Legislative Division of Post Audit  
State of Kansas  
February 1987**

# ***Legislative Post Audit Committee***

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## ***Legislative Division of Post Audit***

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## **PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT**

### **PLACEMENT OF ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN**

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#### **OBTAINING AUDIT INFORMATION**

This audit was conducted by Mary Beth Green, Senior Auditor, and Rick Riggs and Curt Winegarner, Auditors, of the Division's staff. If you need any additional information about the audit's findings, please contact Ms. Green at the Division's offices.

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## **PLACEMENT OF ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN**

The 1982 Legislature enacted the Kansas Code for Care of Children to define the authority and responsibilities of the courts, law enforcement officials, and the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services in cases where a child is suspected of being abused or neglected. The Code also specifies the procedures that must be followed when the district courts determine that a child should be temporarily or permanently removed from the custody of his or her parents. In such cases, the child is often placed in foster care in the custody of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

State law and Department policy currently emphasize leaving abused or neglected children with their families whenever possible. When out-of-home placement is necessary, the Department's policy is to place children in the least restrictive setting possible. Legislative concerns have been raised recently about this increased emphasis on providing in-home and family foster care services and the decreased emphasis on placement in group and residential facilities. To address these concerns, the Legislative Post Audit Committee directed the Legislative Division of Post Audit to conduct a performance audit addressing these questions:

- 1. How have the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services' placements of abused and neglected children changed over time, and why?**
- 2. Do the Department's policies and procedures for evaluating and placing abused and neglected children appear to be effective?**

To answer these questions, the auditors reviewed State and federal laws and regulations and interviewed Department personnel. They reviewed Department records to determine how referrals to various types of homes have changed over time, and they examined records concerning the number of facilities available to care for abused and neglected children and the costs associated with those services. The auditors also visited a sample of the Department's area offices to review case files for abused and neglected children. Finally, they surveyed a sample of family foster homes and group and residential foster care providers.

In general, the auditors found that the number of abused or neglected children in Department custody has declined nearly 21 percent since fiscal year 1980. The most significant declines occurred in placements to group homes and residential centers, although placements did vary significantly from one area of the State to another. Reasons for these variations include the lack of available facilities and funds. The auditors' review of case files for abused and neglected children did not provide definitive information about the effectiveness of the Department's placement decisions because the circumstances of each case were unique. However, the review did show that the Department's placements generally conformed with its established policies and procedures. Department staff and foster care providers surveyed indicated that placements of children were generally appropriate, although they too cited problems with the lack of available facilities and funds.

These and other findings are discussed after the following overview of the Department's programs for abused and neglected children. In addition, summaries

of some case files reviewed during the audit are scattered throughout the report. Because records for children in the Department's custody are confidential, case summaries do not include actual names or other information that could identify individual children.

## **Overview of Services for Abused and Neglected Children**

The Code for Care of Children (K.S.A. 38-1501 et seq.) specifies that it is the State's policy to protect abused or neglected children and provide preventive and rehabilitative services to the children and their families, when appropriate, so that the families can remain together without further threat to the children. The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services is responsible for providing the necessary preventive and rehabilitative services. When these services are not sufficient or appropriate, the district courts may remove a child from the family home and award custody of that child to relatives or other individuals, a shelter facility, or the Secretary of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

Within the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, the Youth Services program provides preventive services to children and families, as well as foster care services to children in the Department's custody. Youth Services provides both types of services through a central administrative office in Topeka and 17 management areas across the State. In addition to the 17 area offices, the Department has an office in every Kansas county, and the area offices coordinate county-level activities. The boundaries of the area offices are shown in the map in Appendix A.

In fiscal year 1986, Youth Services had 35 central office employees and 422 area office employees, most of whom were social workers. In addition, approximately 130 part-time paraprofessionals were employed to provide in-home family services. These figures include personnel responsible for services to all children in the Department's custody, as well as personnel who investigate child abuse and neglect reports. Children in the Department's custody have generally been adjudicated as either children in need of care or juvenile offenders by a district court. Children in need of care generally have been abused or neglected or have been in conflict with their parents, school, or community. Juvenile offenders are youths 10 to 18 years old who have committed a misdemeanor or felony. This audit examined the Department's services for children in need of care only, but many of the Department's programs serve both types of children.

In fiscal year 1986, Youth Services spent \$42 million on seven major programs. This audit primarily focused on two of these: foster care and family support programs. Approximately \$22.2 million, or 52.7 percent of Youth Services' total expenditures, was spent on foster care for children in need of care and juvenile offenders. An additional \$1.4 million was spent on the family support program which provides in-home, preventive services. Finally, \$11 million was spent on salaries and operating expenditures for the 17 area offices, and personnel in these offices are responsible for providing services to abused and neglected children. These expenditures were generally funded with moneys from the State General Fund and various federal funds. Youth Services' actual sources and uses of funds for fiscal year 1986 are summarized in the table at the top of page three.

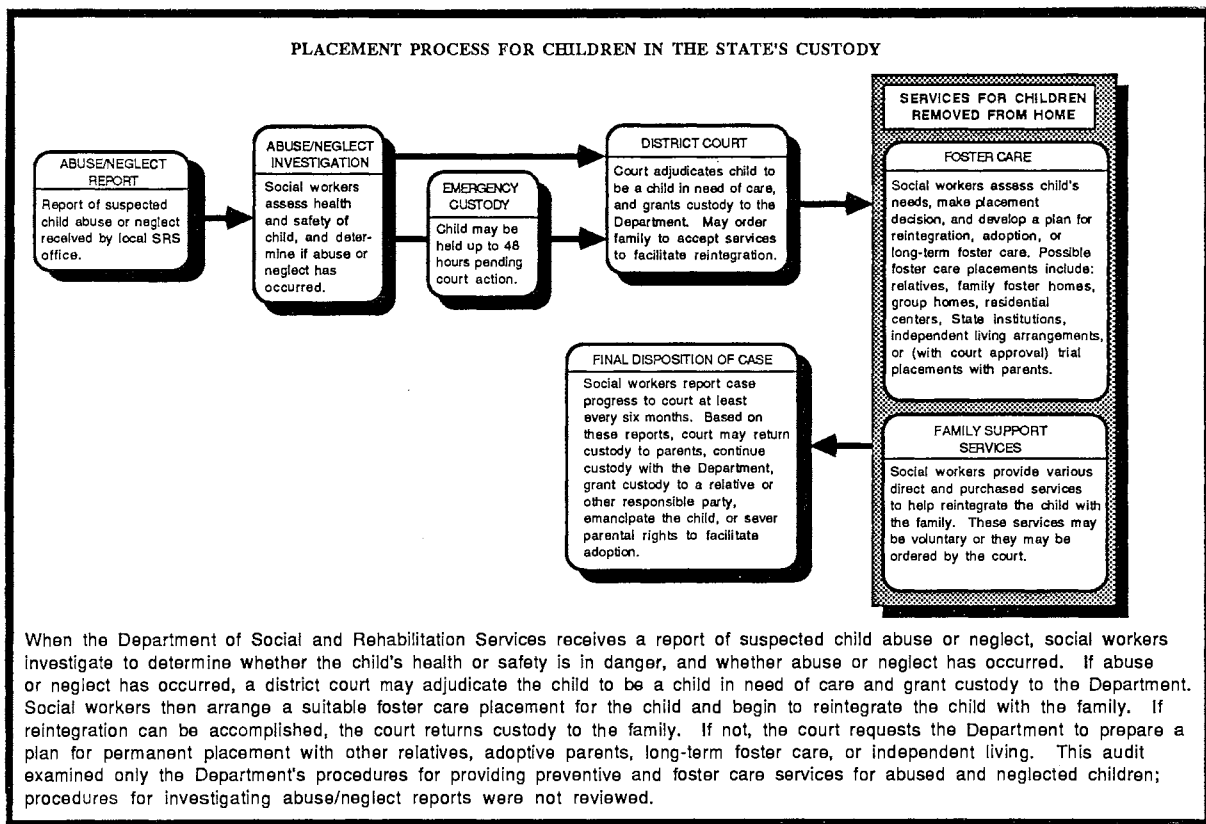
**Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Youth Services  
Sources and Uses of Funds  
Fiscal Year 1986**

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>Sources of Funds:</b>		
State General Fund	\$ 23,126,950	55.0%
Social and Rehabilitation Fee Fund	60,183	.1
Subtotal--State Funds	<u>\$ 23,187,133</u>	<u>55.1%</u>
Federal Block Grant, Social Services	\$ 12,456,038	29.6%
Federal Social Security Act, Title IV-E	3,625,929	8.6
Federal Child Welfare Funds	1,944,347	4.6
Other Federal Funds	696,828	1.7
Subtotal--Federal Funds	<u>\$ 18,723,142</u>	<u>44.5%</u>
Other Funds	<u>\$ 157,509</u>	<u>.4%</u>
<b>Total Sources of Funds</b>	<u><u>\$42,067,784</u></u>	<u><u>100.0%</u></u>
<b>Uses of Funds:</b>		
Administration	\$ 1,353,610	3.2%
Grants and Projects	1,325,055	3.2
Foster Care Program	22,180,503	52.7
Adoption Program	1,064,678	2.5
Day Care Program	3,695,836	8.8
Family Support Program	1,444,359	3.4
Field Social Services	<u>11,003,743</u>	<u>26.2</u>
<b>Total Uses of Funds</b>	<u><u>\$42,067,784</u></u>	<u><u>100.0%</u></u>

**How Have the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services'  
Placements Of Abused or Neglected Children  
Changed Over Time, and Why?**

To answer this question, the auditors reviewed Department records concerning placements of abused and neglected children in custody before and after the Code for Care of Children was enacted. They also examined the number of children served by the family support program and the costs associated with that program. Finally, the auditors examined records on the current number and location of facilities for abused and neglected children, and examined the cost and funding of placements in those facilities.

The auditors found that the total number of abused or neglected children in the Department's custody has decreased by nearly 21 percent since fiscal year 1980. At the end of fiscal year 1986, fewer children were being placed in all types of foster care which include relatives, foster families, group homes, residential



centers, and State institutions. The most significant decreases between 1980 and 1986 occurred in group homes, residential centers, and State institutions. At the same time, the Department has developed a family support program to provide preventive services and minimize foster care placements. In fiscal year 1986, this program served more than 5,000 children. The auditors also identified significant variances in current placements for the 17 area offices. Reasons for these variances include the lack of available facilities and funds. These and other findings are discussed in the sections that follow.

### **The Department Places Children In Different Types Of Foster Care Settings Depending On a Child's Individual Needs**

Once a district court awards custody of a child to the Department, social workers and supervisors in the area offices are responsible for deciding where to place the child. Placement decisions are made after employees consider the individual needs of the child. State law specifies that district court judges may make recommendations for placement but may not require specific placements. The Department's policy requires placing children in the least restrictive (most family-like) setting possible.

The most common foster care placements, in order of least restrictiveness, include the following:

- **Other relatives**, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. Although relatives do not have to be licensed by the Department of Health and Environment, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services often conducts a home study before making the placement.
- **Family foster homes** provide 24-hour care for up to four foster children. These homes are intended to provide an environment similar to a normal family, and are often built around existing families who accept foster children into their homes. Foster parents must be licensed by the Department of Health and Environment or approved by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, and they are required to complete at least six hours of training each year.
- **Group homes and residential centers** provide specialized treatment services and a structured environment for children with behavior problems or special needs. Group homes provide care for 5 to 10 children, and residential centers care for more than 10 residents. Each facility must be licensed by the Department of Health and Environment. Group homes and residential facilities are further classified into levels of care, ranging from level three to level six, based on the services provided.
- **State institutions**, such as mental health or retardation hospitals, provide care for children who cannot be treated in other types of facilities. In addition, children may be placed in State institutions for evaluations prior to permanent placement. Children in need of care cannot be placed in the State's youth centers.

In addition to the placements listed above, the Department often places children with their parents on a trial basis. This is generally done before asking the court to return legal custody to the parents. Less common placements for children

#### Licensing Foster Care Providers

Most foster care providers must be approved by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and licensed by the Department of Health and Environment. This includes family foster homes, group homes, and residential centers. In general, licensing requirements for group and residential facilities are more stringent than those for family foster homes.

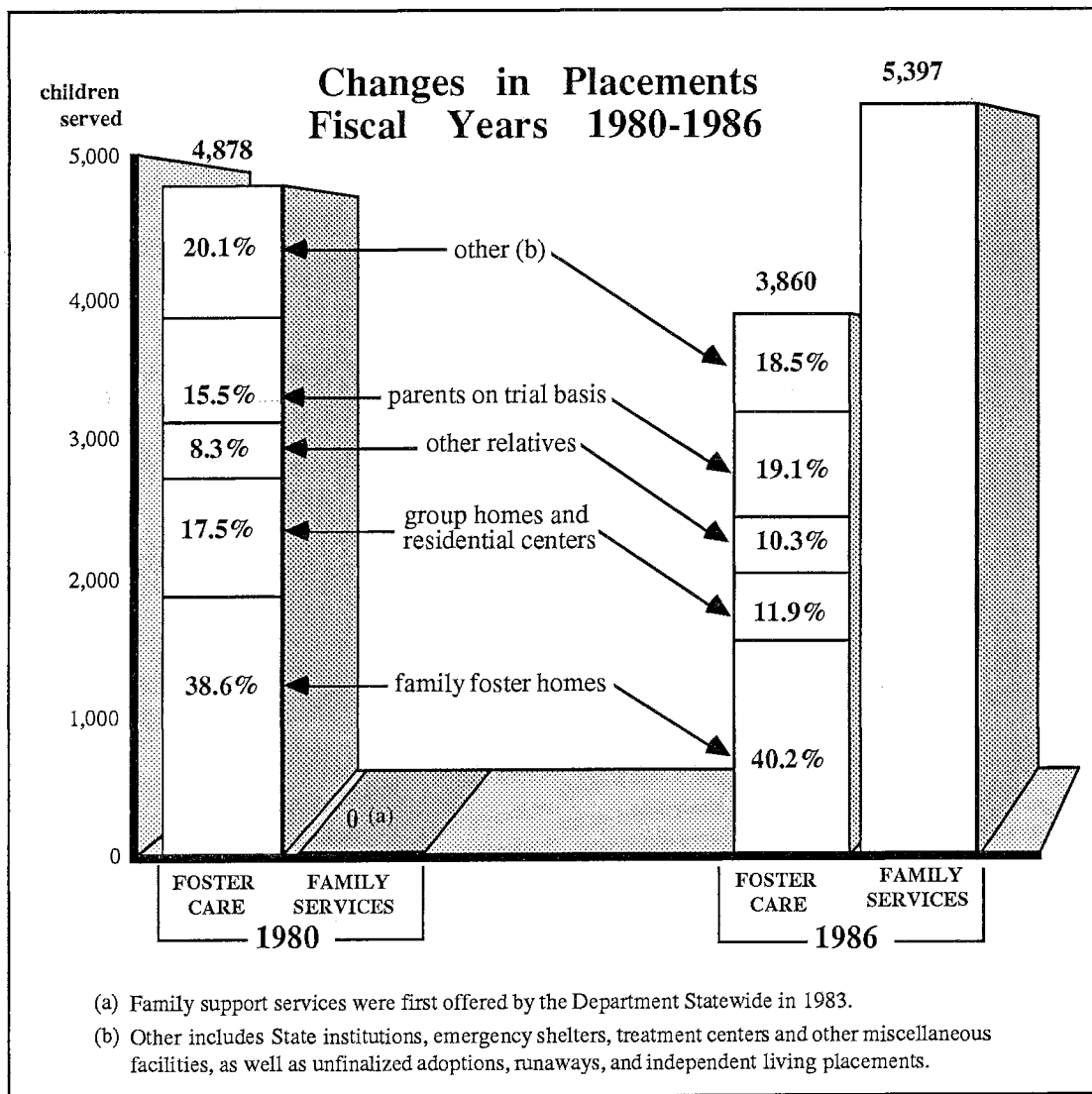
**Family foster homes.** Employees in the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services' area offices are responsible for receiving applications from prospective foster families, determining their suitability, and making licensing recommendations to the Department of Health and Environment. Health and Environment officials merely issue the license. Family foster homes are required to meet minimum standards for health, safety, cleanliness, and space. New foster parents must also complete six hours of training and orientation. Licenses are renewed annually following an inspection and six additional hours of training. All family foster homes, except those caring for relatives or children more than 16 years old, must be licensed. Homes caring exclusively for relatives and children more than 16 years old are not licensed but must be approved by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

**Group and residential facilities.** Officials from the Department of Health and Environment oversee inspections and licensure of group and residential facilities. Such facilities are required to meet minimum safety and health standards, and must have written policies for the services provided, discipline, admissions, dismissals, and medication. The facilities must also have written job descriptions and qualifications for employees. Group homes and residential centers are generally inspected annually by the county health inspector and the county health nurse under contract with the Department of Health and Environment. The State Fire Marshal and personnel from the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services also conduct annual inspections.

also include prospective adoptive parents, emergency shelters, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, independent living situations, and educational or vocational training programs. Finally, a small percentage of children in the Department's custody are classified as runaways and their whereabouts are unknown.

### The Number of Abused or Neglected Children In Department Custody Has Decreased Nearly 21 Percent Since 1980

As of June 30, 1986, the Department had custody of 3,860 children in need of care. This was a 20.9 percent decrease from June 30, 1980, when the Department had 4,878 similar children in custody. The 1980 figures represent placements of children before the Code for Care of Children was enacted and before the family support program was implemented. The number of children in custody, by type of placement, and the number of children served by the family support program, are summarized in the following chart for fiscal years 1980 and 1986.



Both the number and percentage of children in group homes and residential centers have declined. While the total number of children in Department custody decreased 20.9 percent from 1980 to 1986, the number of children placed in group and residential facilities decreased 46.3 percent, from 853 children to 458 children. Further, as the chart shows, 17.5 percent of all abused or neglected children were placed in group or residential facilities at the end of fiscal year 1980. As of June 30, 1986, only 11.9 percent of these children were placed in such facilities. In addition, the number of children in State institutions decreased from 311 in 1980 to 217 in 1986, a 30.2 decrease.

The percentage of children placed with their parents, other relatives, and family foster parents have increased since 1980. At the end of fiscal year 1980, 23.8 percent of children in Department custody were living with their parents on a trial basis or with other relatives. In 1986, 29.5 percent of children were in these placements. In addition, the percentage of children in family foster care increased from 38.6 percent in 1980 to 40.2 percent in 1986.

#### **In Fiscal Year 1986, the Family Support Program Served More Than 5,000 Children**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, national trends in child welfare policy began to shift from an emphasis on foster care programs toward increased emphasis on in-home, preventive services. The U.S. Congress passed the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, which provides financial incentives for states to minimize foster care placements and provide preventive services. In Kansas, the 1982 Legislature enacted the Code for Care of Children, which specifies that preventive and rehabilitative services must be provided for children in their own homes whenever possible. To implement these changes in State and federal law, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services developed the family support program.

The family support program was implemented Statewide in fiscal year 1983, and the program served approximately 5,400 children in fiscal year 1986. The

#### **Children Are Placed in the Department's Custody For Many Reasons**

Children who are adjudicated as children in need of care and placed in the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services' custody come from many backgrounds. Many, but not all, have been abused or neglected. Following are some examples of why children are placed in the Department's custody:

- A child was being sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend. Although the girl told her mother about the abuse, the mother did not believe her, and only when the mother started planning to move in with the boyfriend did a friend of the girl report the abuse.
- A baby was born to an unwed mother in Department custody. He was placed in foster care when she showed that she could not or would not care for him.
- A mother who was reported to the Department for child abuse said that she had beaten her son with a bullwhip because it was the only way she could get him to respond to her rules.
- A girl and her two sisters were removed from their father's home because he neglected them, and his girlfriend emotionally abused them.
- Police removed a girl and her brother from their father's home at the girl's request. The children reported being physically and verbally abused.
- A boy reported to police that his mother had beaten him with an electrical cord.
- A mother left her children with a babysitter and never returned.
- A mother told a Department worker that she felt overwhelmed by her children and was afraid of what she might do to them.

program is designed to prevent foster care placements for children who may have been abused or neglected, and services are generally offered to families when children are still in their parents' custody. Family support services are provided by part-time, paraprofessional family support workers who teach parenting and basic living skills to families. Family support workers also provide limited counseling and crisis intervention, and make referrals to community resources when appropriate. In fiscal year 1986, Youth Services spent approximately \$1.4 million on the family support program, and 74 percent of these expenditures were paid with federal funds specifically earmarked for preventive and reintegration services.

**The number of children served by the family support program has increased since 1983.** From January 1 through June 30, 1983, the program served 2,726 children. The first year for which complete data is available, fiscal year 1984, the program served 4,506 children. In fiscal year 1986, the program served 5,397 children, an increase of 19.8 percent from 1984. Department officials estimate that about 86 percent of the 1986 cases provided services to prevent children from being removed from their homes. In the remaining cases, services were provided to help reintegrate children previously removed from their parents' custody.

#### **Current Placements of Children in Foster Care Vary Significantly From One Area Office To Another**

The auditors compared placements of children in custody as of June 30, 1986, for each of the 17 area offices and found that the percentage of children placed in different levels of care varied significantly. For example, the Parsons area office had 28.6 percent of its children placed in family foster homes, while the Hays area office had 58.8 percent of its children in similar placements. The range of placements in the four most common categories is summarized below.

#### **Area Office Placements of Children As of June 30, 1986**

<u>Type of Placement</u>	<u>Percent of Children Ranged</u>		<u>Statewide Average</u>
	<u>From.....</u>	<u>To.....</u>	
Parents on trial basis	9.5%	32.3%	19.1%
Other relatives	5.5	17.5	10.3
Family foster homes	28.6	58.8	40.2
Group/residential facilities	2.0	18.7	11.7

The percentage of children placed in each category, by area office, is shown in Appendix B. The auditors identified a number of possible explanations for the variations among area offices. First, some area offices have relatively small numbers of children, which can affect the types of placements. For example, on June 30, 1986 the Pittsburg area office had 26 of its 139 children, or 18.7 percent, placed in group homes or residential centers. At the same time, Kansas City with 83 of its 619 children in similar facilities had a lower percentage of children in such facilities.

Other reasons for the variations include the influence of local judges and attorneys and local conditions that may affect the type of children in custody and the

placements made. These reasons are generally beyond the Department's control, and the auditors could not determine the effect of such factors. However, two factors that the auditors did analyze were the number of available facilities and the funds available for placements, by area office.

**Some area offices have more facilities located nearby than other offices.** The Department attempts to put children in foster care placements as close as possible to their own homes. This policy, Department officials say, allows more frequent visits with the natural parents and eases the transition of children back into their own homes. As of October 1986, there were more than 1,500 licensed family foster homes across the State. However, five counties had no licensed family foster parents and 59 additional counties had fewer than 10 licensed homes. The number of family foster homes, by county, is shown in Appendix C.

In addition to family foster homes, the Department contracts with group homes and residential centers to provide foster care. As of October 1986, the Department had contracts with only 69 group or residential facilities Statewide. The number and capacity of these group and residential facilities, by level of care, are summarized below.

**Group and Residential Facilities in Kansas, by Level of Care  
October 1, 1986**

Level of Care	Number of Facilities	Total Capacity
Level 3 (children have no serious behavioral problems but have problems with parental relationships)	3	25
Level 4 (children have some behavioral problems which may include difficulty with authority figures or drug abuse)	37	448
Level 5 (children have serious and frequent behavioral problems)	21	552
Level 6 (children have multiple, serious problems and require individualized treatment)	1	6
Unleveled (a)	7	481 (a)
<b>Total, All Facilities</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1,512</b>

(a) These facilities have residential or treatment facilities in addition to foster care services; capacity figures reflect total capacity, not just foster care capacity. Unleveled facilities include institutions such as the Capper Foundation and St. John's Military School.

The actual locations of all 69 group and residential facilities are shown on the map in Appendix D. More than half the group and residential facilities are located in the Kansas City, Olathe, Topeka, and Wichita area office boundaries. All four of these area offices place more children than average in such facilities. On the other hand, the area offices in Hays, Hiawatha, and Junction City do not have any group or residential facilities within their boundaries, and Hays and Hiawatha place fewer children than average in such facilities.

Some area offices spend more money on children in foster care placements. In fiscal year 1986, the 17 area offices spent approximately \$15.6 million on foster care for children in need of care. Of this amount, family foster parents received \$5 million, group and residential facilities received \$10.2 million, and \$400,000 went for other expenditures. The amounts spent, by area office, are summarized in the following table.

**Foster Care Expenditures By Area Office  
Fiscal Year 1986**

Area Office	Foster Care Expenditures				Average Number of Children in Need of Care(b)	Average Expenditure Per Child
	Group and Residential	Family Foster Care	Other(a)	Total		
Topeka	\$1,383,743	\$391,515	\$31,060	\$1,806,318	357	\$5,060
Wichita	1,602,845	520,380	26,232	2,149,457	436	4,930
Pittsburg	454,337	201,712	22,555	678,604	152	4,465
Hays	385,405	233,596	29,733	648,734	147	4,413
Salina	375,423	203,598	12,915	591,936	140	4,228
Olathe	818,143	338,985	20,851	1,177,979	279	4,222
Osawatomie	448,996	151,347	15,339	615,682	151	4,077
Kansas City	1,885,757	760,544	26,316	2,672,617	660	4,049
Garden City	473,777	351,449	27,251	852,477	220	3,875
Winfield	461,481	231,336	13,902	706,719	186	3,800
Parsons	328,817	120,525	29,617	478,959	131	3,656
Emporia	194,920	126,008	17,807	338,735	95	3,566
Junction City	401,686	270,915	17,906	690,507	200	3,453
Chanute	293,105	234,295	23,165	550,565	165	3,337
Hutchinson	447,931	321,912	26,428	796,271	255	3,123
Pratt	197,433	380,387	24,931	602,751	245	2,460
Hiawatha	71,843	170,977	20,386	263,206	123	2,140
Statewide	<u>\$10,225,642</u>	<u>\$5,009,481</u>	<u>\$386,394</u>	<u>\$15,621,517</u>	<u>3,942</u>	<u>\$3,963</u>

(a) Clothing, transportation, education, and other miscellaneous expenditures for some children.

(b) Average of the number of children in custody at the end of each month of fiscal year 1986.

As the table shows, the average expenditure per child was \$3,963. However, expenditures per child ranged from \$5,060 in Topeka to \$2,140 in Hiawatha. Eight area offices had per-child expenditures higher than average, and per-child expenditures in Topeka and Wichita were at least 20 percent higher than average. The nine remaining area offices spent less than average, and per-child expenditures in Hiawatha, Hutchinson, and Pratt were at least 20 percent below average.

The Department's foster care expenditures are based on daily reimbursement rates paid to foster care providers for services. In general, parents and other relatives are not paid for providing services to children in the Department's custody. Licensed family foster parents and group and residential facilities are paid an established amount for each day a child lives in their home or facility. The

Department's foster care reimbursement rates are summarized in the following table.

**Reimbursement Rates For Foster Care Providers  
Calendar Year 1986**

<u>Level of Care</u>	<u>Maximum Reimbursement Rate (a)</u>	
	<u>Daily</u>	<u>Annual</u>
<b>Family Foster Homes</b>		
Infant to 4 years	\$ 6.04	\$ 2,205
5 to 11 years	8.17	2,982
12 years and older	10.35	3,778
<b>Group/Residential Facilities</b>		
Level 3	25.85	9,435
Level 4	43.55	15,896
Level 5	57.00	20,805
Level 6	115.65	42,212

- (a) The reimbursement rate is intended to reimburse the provider for the child's maintenance (food, clothing, and shelter). The Department may also reimburse the provider for special therapeutic care, transportation, additional clothing, or other special needs. These reimbursement rates were cut by 3.8 percent effective January 1, 1987.

As the table indicates, the Department's cost for placing a 12-year-old child in a level three group home or residential center is two and one-half times as much as family foster care. Higher levels of group or residential care are reimbursed at even higher rates because such facilities provide more services and are more costly to operate.

In fiscal year 1986, the area offices that spent more per-child on foster care also placed more children in group and residential facilities. For example, Topeka and Wichita both spent more than average, per child, on foster care and also placed more children than average in group homes and residential centers. As of June 30, 1986, 11.9 percent of the State's children in need of care were placed in group and residential facilities. Area offices in Topeka and Wichita both had 16.6 percent of their children in these types of facilities. In contrast, Hiawatha and Pratt spent the least, per child, on foster care and placed less than three percent of their children in group and residential facilities.

**Allocations for foster care emphasize historical expenditures rather than the number of children served.** In fiscal year 1986, the Youth Services' central office in Topeka allocated a total of \$21.7 million to the 17 area offices to pay for the direct costs of family, group, and residential foster care. The auditors were unable to determine the exact amount allocated to each area office for abused and neglected children because each office received a single allocation to pay for foster care services for both children in need of care and juvenile offenders. These allocations, by area office, are summarized in Appendix E. In general, the area offices that spent more than average, per child, on foster care also received higher per-child allocations for foster care.

The Department's foster care allocations for fiscal year 1986 were based on each area office's expenditures for foster care during the past three years, percentage of children in need of care cases, percentage of the Statewide public assistance caseload, and percentage of Statewide aid to families with dependent children. This allocation formula gives three times as much weight to historical expenditures as it does to the number of children served by the area office. As a result, area offices that have historically spent more money, per child, on foster care continue to receive more money for foster care. This allows such area offices to continue placing more children in more costly foster care placements such as group homes and residential centers.

### **Recommendation**

To distribute foster care funds more evenly among area offices, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services should evaluate its allocation formula and consider placing more emphasis on the number of children served by the individual areas.

### **Do the Department's Policies and Procedures for Evaluating and Placing Abused or Neglected Children Appear To Be Effective?**

To answer this question, the auditors reviewed State laws and regulations, and interviewed Department officials. They examined the Department's written policies for evaluating and placing children outside their homes. The auditors also visited a sample of area offices to interview officials, review case files, and survey employees. In addition, they surveyed a sample of foster care providers and contacted community officials and child welfare advocates.

As discussed in previous sections of this report, Department policy and federal law require that children who are removed from their homes be placed in the least restrictive environment possible. For a variety of reasons, the auditors were not able to determine if the Department's actual placements of children were appropriate. First, no records are maintained of children's progress once they are no longer in the Department's custody. In addition, the auditors could not determine if individual placements were successful because the Department made appropriate decisions or because the child was able to adapt to the new living arrangement.

The auditors did find that the Department has established procedures for placing children outside their homes, and most placement actions they reviewed complied with those procedures. However, some area offices either did not follow all the established procedures or failed to document their compliance with the procedures. Finally, many area office officials and providers indicated that although out-of-home placements were generally appropriate, the lack of facilities and funding has affected placement decisions. Child welfare advocates also had concerns about the Department's procedures and funding.

## **The Department Has Established Procedures For Evaluating and Placing Children Outside Their Homes**

After the district court decides that a child should be removed from his or her home and placed in the Department's custody, area office personnel evaluate the child to decide what type of placement is most appropriate. Sometimes this evaluation is done entirely by Department staff. In other cases, an evaluation is obtained from a community mental health facility or a State institution.

Staff members use the evaluation results, as well as prior knowledge of the case and information submitted by relatives, teachers, and other individuals, to make placement decisions. At least three people participate in this decision-making process. Federal law and Department policy require that at least one of these three individuals not be directly responsible for deciding where to place an individual child. For example, the three-member team could include the social worker and supervisor responsible for the case plus another social worker or a psychologist who evaluated the child. The Department's initial placement decision and all subsequent changes in placement for a child must be reported to the district court.

To determine how area office personnel make out-of-home placement decisions, the auditors reviewed the Department's written policies and procedures for making these decisions. They also visited a sample of six of the 17 area offices to determine if employees generally followed the established procedures by examining a sample of foster care files. The area offices visited were Hays, Hutchinson, Kansas City, Pittsburg, Pratt, and Topeka. The areas visited are

### **Infants May Be Placed With Adoptive Parents Almost Immediately**

Melissa's (not her real name) mother was hospitalized with seizures about two weeks before she was born. The mother had no prenatal care, was unmarried, and had no resources for raising the child. She told hospital personnel that she wanted to give up her baby for adoption as soon as it was born. Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services' personnel were notified, and they assumed custody of Melissa and placed her in a family foster home when she was able to leave the hospital. The mother voluntarily relinquished her parental rights about a month later.

From the beginning of the case, the workers' plan was to place Melissa in an adoptive home. She was of partial Native American heritage, and Department personnel located an adoptive family with some Native American heritage. Melissa was adopted when she was about three months old.

### **Some Children Are Placed With Relatives**

In one case reviewed by the auditors, a petition was filed with the district court because a teenage girl refused to attend high school. The court adjudicated Mary (not her real name) to be a child in need of care and ordered a 30-day screening evaluation to assess her emotional and psychological needs. Based on the mother's history of emotional problems and inability to control the child, the evaluation recommended out-of-home placement, preferably with a relative. Mary was placed with her grandparents, where she remained for approximately two years, until released from custody at age 18. Case records show that during the two years of foster care, Mary adjusted well and made considerable progress; she not only completed high school, but became an honor roll student, and eventually enrolled in courses to become a court reporter. In a letter she later wrote to her case worker, Mary credited her accomplishments to "the judgements made on [her] case" by the social workers.

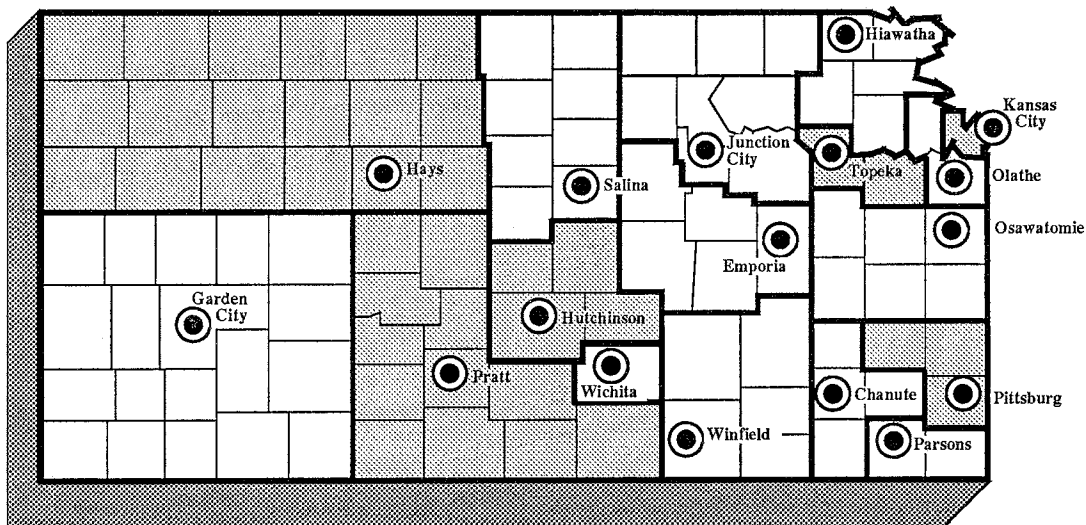
highlighted on the map at the bottom of this page. The auditors reviewed a total of 45 child-in-need-of-care cases in which the Department no longer had custody. The Department closed these cases between November 1985 and October 1986. The number of cases reviewed in each area office, as well as the final disposition of cases, is shown in the following table.

Children In Need of Care Cases Sampled, By Area Office

Area Office	Sample Size	Final Disposition		
		Custody to Parents	Independent Living	Adoption
Hays	5	3	2	
Hutchinson	7	5	2	
Kansas City	13	9	3	1
Pratt	8	5	3	
Pittsburg	5	1	2	2
Topeka	7	4	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>28.9%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>

As the table shows, 60 percent of the children in the auditors' sample were returned to their parents' custody and 28.9 percent were placed in independent living when they were 18 years old. The auditors also determined that none of these children had been returned to Department custody as of January 1987.

**State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services  
Boundaries of Management Areas and Location of Area Offices**



The auditors visited six of the Department's 17 area offices, shown by the shaded areas above. The offices visited were Hays, Hutchinson, Kansas City, Pittsburg, Pratt, and Topeka. As of June 30, 1986, the counties covered by the area offices in the sample serve approximately 1,800 children in need of care (about 47 percent of the State's total) in 40 counties.

The auditors concluded that the Department's policies and procedures for placing and evaluating children in need of care appeared to be reasonable. In the 45 cases examined, area office employees generally followed established procedures for making out-of-home placement decisions. Most children had three or four placements while in Department custody, and the documented explanations for changing placements generally appeared to be reasonable. However, some area offices were not following all the Department's placement procedures or failed to document their compliance. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

**Area office personnel generally followed established procedures for placing children outside their homes.** The auditors found that in 42 of the 45 cases sampled the Department's initial placement of the child complied with staff recommendations. In two of the remaining cases, area office staff wanted to place children in group or residential facilities, but no such facilities were willing or able to accept the child. In one case, the child was 17 years old and was placed in an independent living situation. In the other case, a 13-year-old child was adjudicated a juvenile offender by the court and placed in a youth center for 21 months. In the final case, the documentation was insufficient and the auditors could not determine whether the staff's initial recommendation was followed.

**Most children had three or four permanent placements while in Department custody.** Excluding temporary or emergency placements, children in the auditors' sample had an average of 3.4 placements. Placement changes were

#### The Family Support Program

During their visits to six area offices, the auditors examined a sample of 25 family service cases. Cases were reviewed to determine the types of services offered to families and the outcome of the case. The results of that review are summarized in the table below.

Area Office	Number of Cases	Result		
		Successful(a)	Unsuccessful(b)	Unknown(c)
Hays	3	1	2	--
Hutchinson	6	1	4	1
Kansas City	4	2	--	2
Pittsburg	4	2	2	--
Pratt	4	2	2	--
Topeka	4	1	3	--
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>12%</b>

(a) Goals achieved or significant progress made when the contract expired or was terminated.

(b) Either the Department or the client terminated services without significant progress being made.

(c) In two cases, the auditors could not make a determination due to insufficient documentation; the remaining case had been reopened and the outcome was pending.

As the table shows, in nine of the 25 cases reviewed by the auditors the family met the established goals or made significant progress. However, in 13 cases services were terminated and no significant progress was made. In 3 of these 13 cases, the Department abandoned plans for reintegrating children into their parents' home. In the three remaining cases, the auditors could not determine the outcome because of insufficient documentation or ongoing services being provided to the family.

generally made when the child had conflicts with providers or siblings, completed a treatment program, or returned to his or her home. The actual number of out-of-home placements ranged from 0 to 12. The child with 12 placements was in Department custody for about 10 years and ran away at least six times.

**In Some Cases, Family Support  
Services Fail To Keep Families  
Together**

For a year before Department personnel took Jerry (not his real name) out of his home, they had worked with his mother to improve the family's living conditions. Case material showed that the home was filthy, with four dogs living in the home and the children sleeping in the same bed as the mother. Department workers offered family support services to the family, but those services did not do enough to improve the home environment. Finally, in October 1981, the Department social workers filed a custody petition; the court ordered 16-year-old Jerry removed from his home and placed in Department custody.

Because the Department staff had already worked extensively with the mother, they held no hope of reintegrating Jerry with his family. The staff planned to place Jerry in long-term foster care until he turned 18, and then institute vocational training along with an independent living arrangement. This plan was followed, and Jerry was placed with a foster family until he was 18 years old.

While in foster care, Jerry received some needed medical and dental care and finished high school and vocational training. After that, he was placed in independent living and was continuously employed until the case was closed. By that time he had reached age 21 and was discharged from the Department's custody.

**Some area office personnel did not follow all the established procedures.** Officials in two of the six area offices visited indicated they did not use the assessment form required by Department procedures for any group or residential placement. This assessment form is designed to help area office personnel determine what level of care a child needs, once staff members decide group or residential care is necessary. Further, officials in the Department's central office in Topeka were not aware that the area offices were not using the assessment form. In other cases, area office personnel could not document that the established procedures were followed. For example, employees sometimes did not document that they reported the results of required semi-annual reviews to the district courts.

**Child welfare advocates expressed concerns about the Department's procedures for evaluating and placing children.** The auditors contacted a sample of representatives of child welfare agencies to obtain their opinions about State services for abused and neglected children. In general, the individuals interviewed said the Department's staff work hard to provide the best care possible for abused and neglected children within the limits of their available resources. However, two mental health professionals contacted said the Department often does not obtain

complete and timely evaluations of children. They said that social workers do not have the training to make accurate mental health evaluations, and that in some cases the Department is unwilling or unable to act on evaluations that are done by mental health professionals. Further, one professional indicated that some children have been discharged from an inpatient psychiatric unit and have been immediately admitted to a State hospital screening unit. The purpose of the screening unit admission, he suspects, was not screening but housing.

### Recommendation

To ensure that services for abused and neglected children are delivered uniformly across the State, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services should take steps to see that:

- a. Area office personnel follow all established procedures when making placement decisions for children in need of care,
- b. Area office personnel document their compliance with established procedures for making placement decisions, and
- c. Central office administrators ensure that area office personnel comply with established procedures and document such compliance.

### Many Area Office Employees and Foster Care Providers Indicated That Placements Were Generally Appropriate, But Decisions Were Affected by the Lack of Facilities and Funding

In the six area offices visited, the auditors surveyed area office personnel responsible for evaluating and placing children in need of care to get their opinions about whether placements were appropriate and in the best interests of the children. The employees surveyed included social workers, family support workers, and supervisors. The auditors surveyed a total of 211 area office personnel and received 145 responses. The number of employees surveyed and the response rate, by area office, are shown in the following table.

Employees Surveyed, By Area Office

Area Office	Number of Employees		Response Rate
	Surveyed	Responded	
Hays	24	18	75.0%
Hutchinson	28	23	82.1
Kansas City	58	33	56.9
Pittsburg	23	21	91.3
Pratt	32	22	68.8
Topeka	<u>46</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>60.9</u>
Totals	<u>211</u>	<u>145</u>	<u>68.7%</u>

The auditors also surveyed a sample of 100 family foster homes and all 69 group homes and residential centers under contract with the Department to provide foster care services. Of these providers, 47 percent of the family foster homes and 79.7 percent of the group and residential facilities responded to the survey.

In general, 51 percent of the employees responding to the auditors' survey said that the Department's policies and procedures for making out-of-home

placements allowed them to make placements that were in the best interests of the children. However, 23 percent of the responding employees disagreed and indicated that policies did not allow them to make decisions that were in the best interests of children. In addition, 54 of the 145 respondents (37 percent) specifically mentioned that the availability of facilities or funds affected placement decisions. For foster care providers, 68 percent of the respondents indicated that children placed in their facilities recently had been placed appropriately. Survey responses from the employees are summarized in Appendix F, and survey responses from the foster care providers are summarized in Appendix G.

**The lack of foster families or group and residential facilities may affect the area offices' placement decisions.** To encourage family visitation and ease the transition of children back into their homes, the Department attempts to put children in need of care in placements as close to their homes as possible. Nearly 26 percent of the employees responding to the auditors' survey indicated that the lack of foster care providers affected the quality and appropriateness of their placement decisions. Some area officials also indicated that this lack of appropriate facilities is a problem in many parts of the State. For example, officials in the Kansas City area office said that to make an appropriate placement, they are sometimes forced to place children in facilities as far away as Pittsburg or Dodge City. In other areas, officials reported that they do not have a shortage of group or residential facilities, but they do have a shortage of family foster homes or adoptive homes for children. Department officials said this lack of

#### **Appropriate Placements Are Not Always Available**

In one case reviewed by the auditors, the district court ordered an out-of-home placement for a 17 year old arrested for shoplifting and stealing his parents' car. Social workers initially wanted to place John (not his real name) in a family foster home, but were unable to find one willing to accept a 17-year-old boy. They then tried to place John in a group home or residential center. In all, staff contacted 30 facilities throughout the State, but all refused to accept him. Many facilities had no openings available, while others refused to accept John due to his age or because he was not classified a juvenile offender. The social workers considered having him adjudicated as a juvenile offender to increase the number of placement options available, but local authorities and John's parents refused to press charges. Because the Department was unable to find a suitable placement, the court relieved the Department of custody and placed John in an independent living arrangement under the supervision of court services staff.

#### **Some Children Have Only One Long-Term Placement**

Michael (not his real name) was born with multiple physical problems in the late 1960s. He had spina bifida and hydrocephalus, serious conditions that can cause crippling and retardation if not treated. Soon after birth the district court found him to be dependent and neglected, and gave his custody to the Department. His parents' rights were terminated a few months later. The Department arranged and paid for the boy's medical treatment.

Michael lived in one family foster home from the time the Department took custody until he turned 18. At that time, the court approved his independent living arrangements and relieved the Department of custody.

The social worker who originally handled the case said that everyone involved thought that the baby would die, or at least be severely crippled and retarded. However, today the young man is walking, no longer hydrocephalic, and living independently.

providers is compounded by some facilities' refusal to accept some children. The officials noted that even though providers have contracts with the Department, they may refuse to accept a child they think is inappropriate for the facility. Officials say they may try to prohibit this right of refusal in future contracts with providers.

**A lack of funding may also affect placement decisions.** Thirty-one employees (21.4 percent) who responded to the auditors' survey indicated that the lack of funds for foster care affects their placement decisions. One employee stated that his or her area office supervisor had recently announced that placements in group homes and residential centers had to be reduced by 20 children due to the lack of funds. In addition, 51 percent of the responding employees indicated that at least one of their recent placement decisions had been overruled at the area office level because of insufficient foster care funds. During the auditors' visits to area offices, officials also mentioned concerns about funding. One area chief of social services, for example, told the auditors that although financial considerations were not allowed to overshadow the needs of the children, money was often a major factor in placement decisions. Other officials echoed these comments, noting that the relatively high cost of a group home or residential facility has required officials to make such placements only after careful review of all other options.

### **Children May Have Numerous Placements Because of Behavioral Problems**

Jane (not her real name) was 14 years old in 1983 when she was admitted to a local hospital after attempting suicide. She told the psychiatrist assigned to her case that two months earlier her mother's boyfriend had beaten her with a belt. She reported the incident to the police, but the mother and boyfriend were still living together. The psychiatrist recommended that the Department assume temporary custody of the girl; Department staff agreed. The area office team decided that Jane needed a "level five home where she will receive the structure and therapy she needs." Jane was moved from the hospital to a local level five group home in March 1983.

Counting emergency and temporary placements, Jane was placed a total of thirteen times at nine different homes and facilities, including four group homes. The reasons for her frequent moves from these facilities included three instances of Jane assaulting other residents and staff. Because of the last of the three assaults, the court found her to be a juvenile offender in September 1985, and ordered her to be transferred to the county youth center in her home town. In November, she was put on supervised probation.

At some point while Jane was in Department custody, her mother moved out of state. When Jane was released from the youth center, the Department social worker, with the permission of the court, transferred Jane's supervision to her mother.

**Child welfare advocates also said that financial pressures may encourage inappropriate placements.** The representatives of one advocacy group told the auditors that by shifting already strained resources, the Department has tried to avoid asking the Legislature for increased funding. Advocates are also concerned that because some unspent foster care funds can be used for in-home services, the Department has a financial incentive to restrict foster care placements even when such placements may be necessary or appropriate. Another advocate indicated that although the Department's allocation system has reduced the number of children "falling through the cracks" of the foster care system, it has forced area offices to make placement decisions based on available funding. Another representative from a mental health center said social workers are under "tremendous pressure" to move children to lower levels of care. The representative

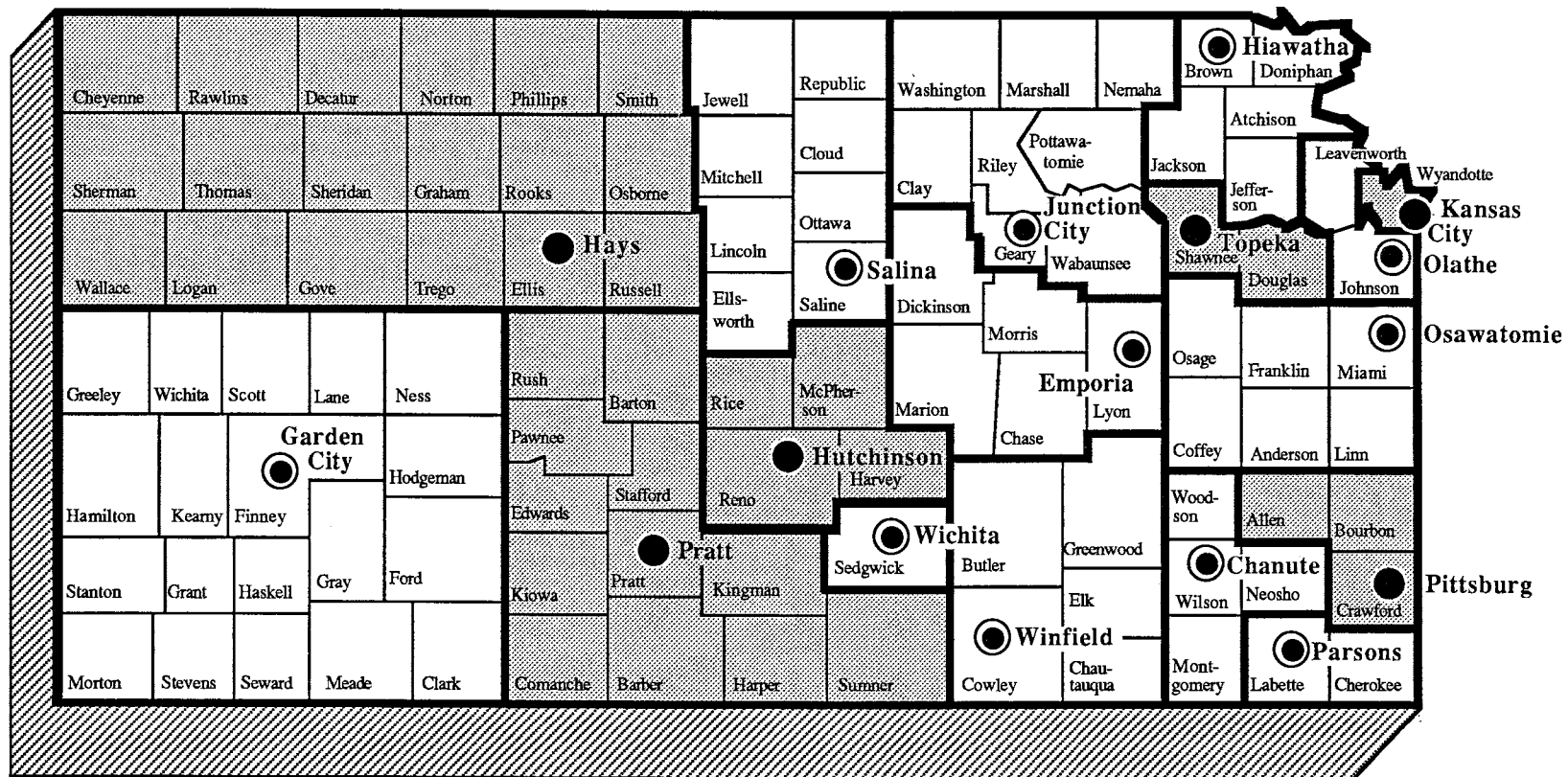
said that many children seen at the center in the last two years needed intensive services in a level six facility, and either no such placements were available or the Department would not use available services.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services Boundaries and Locations of Area Offices**



## Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services Boundaries of Management Areas and Location of Area Offices



The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services' Youth Services program serves abused and neglected children through a central administrative office in Topeka and 17 area offices. In addition, the Department maintains an office in each county. The staff in each county office are responsible to officials in the respective area offices. The auditors visited six of the 17 area offices; the counties served by these offices are highlighted on the map.



**APPENDIX B**

**Placements of Children in Need of Care  
As of June 30, 1986**

**Placements of Children in Need of Care  
Statewide and By Area Office  
As of June 30, 1986**

<u>Area Office</u>	<u>Placed With:</u>					
	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Other Relatives</u>		<u>Adoptive Homes</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Chanute	45	28.7%	18	11.5%	7	4.5%
Emporia	10	10.5	15	15.8	10	10.5
Garden City	35	16.0	12	5.5	7	3.2
Hays	14	9.5	12	8.1	2	1.4
Hiawatha	35	30.4	16	13.9	7	6.1
Hutchinson	67	25.5	46	17.5	4	1.5
Junction City	43	23.5	11	6.0	3	1.6
Kansas City	102	16.5	69	11.2	40	6.5
Olathe	47	19.2	26	10.6	22	9.0
Osawatomie	34	24.1	12	8.5	14	9.9
Parsons	43	32.3	21	15.8	4	3.0
Pittsburg	25	18.0	8	5.8	6	4.3
Pratt	49	19.5	35	13.9	9	3.6
Salina	23	17.8	10	7.8	5	3.9
Topeka	58	15.3	24	6.3	30	7.9
Wichita	57	13.0	47	10.7	29	6.6
Winfield	<u>51</u>	<u>25.0</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>8.3</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>5.4</u>
<b>Statewide</b>	<u><b>738</b></u>	<u><b>19.1%</b></u>	<u><b>399</b></u>	<u><b>10.3%</b></u>	<u><b>210</b></u>	<u><b>5.4%</b></u>

(a) Other includes children left with their parents awaiting placement, and children placed in developmental-disabled facilities, emergency shelters, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, independent living, and educational/vocational training programs.

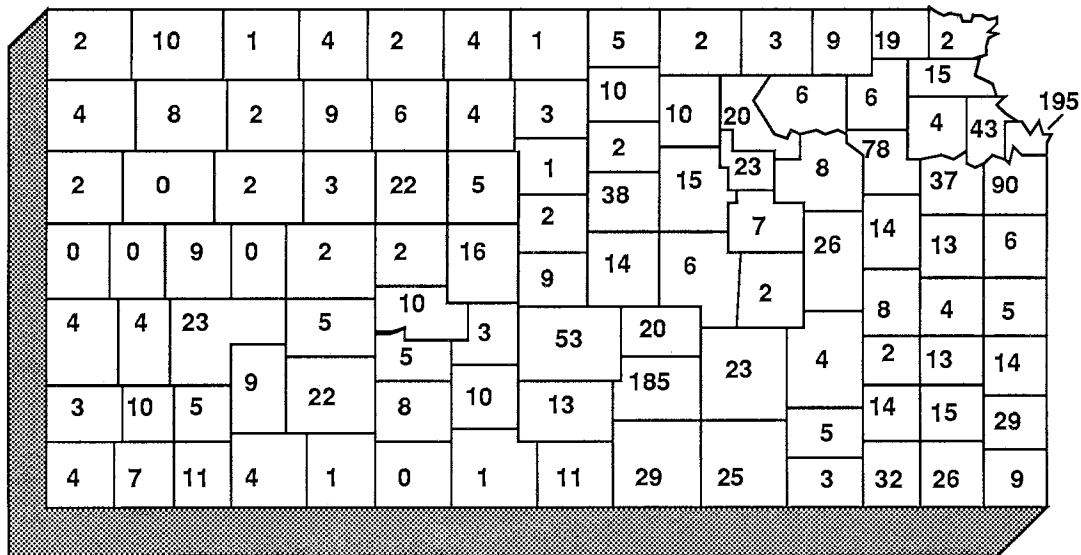
Placed With:

<u>Family Foster Homes</u>		<u>Group Homes/ Residential Centers</u>		<u>State Institutions</u>		<u>Runaways/ Other (a)</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
59	37.6%	13	8.3%	8	5.1%	7	4.5%	157	100.0%
37	39.0	12	12.6	8	8.4	3	3.2	95	100.0
123	56.2	17	7.8	13	5.9	12	5.5	219	100.0
87	58.8	14	9.5	7	4.7	12	8.1	148	100.0
40	34.8	3	2.6	4	3.5	10	8.7	115	100.0
99	37.6	18	6.8	10	3.8	19	7.2	263	100.0
92	50.3	22	12.0	7	3.8	5	2.7	183	100.0
211	34.1	83	13.4	51	8.2	63	10.2	619	100.0
92	37.6	42	17.1	9	3.7	7	2.9	245	100.0
47	33.3	18	12.8	12	8.5	4	2.8	141	100.0
38	28.6	15	11.3	6	4.5	6	4.5	133	100.0
58	41.7	26	18.7	6	4.3	10	7.2	139	100.0
126	50.2	5	2.0	11	4.4	16	6.4	251	100.0
66	51.2	12	9.3	4	3.1	9	7.0	129	100.0
139	36.7	63	16.6	33	8.7	32	8.4	379	100.0
153	34.8	73	16.6	19	4.3	62	14.1	440	100.0
<u>83</u>	<u>40.7</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>10.8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>5.4</u>	<u>204</u>	<u>100.0</u>
<u><u>1,550</u></u>	<u><u>40.2%</u></u>	<u><u>458</u></u>	<u><u>11.9%</u></u>	<u><u>217</u></u>	<u><u>5.6%</u></u>	<u><u>288</u></u>	<u><u>7.5%</u></u>	<u><u>3,860</u></u>	<u><u>100.0%</u></u>



## APPENDIX C

### Locations of Family Foster Homes



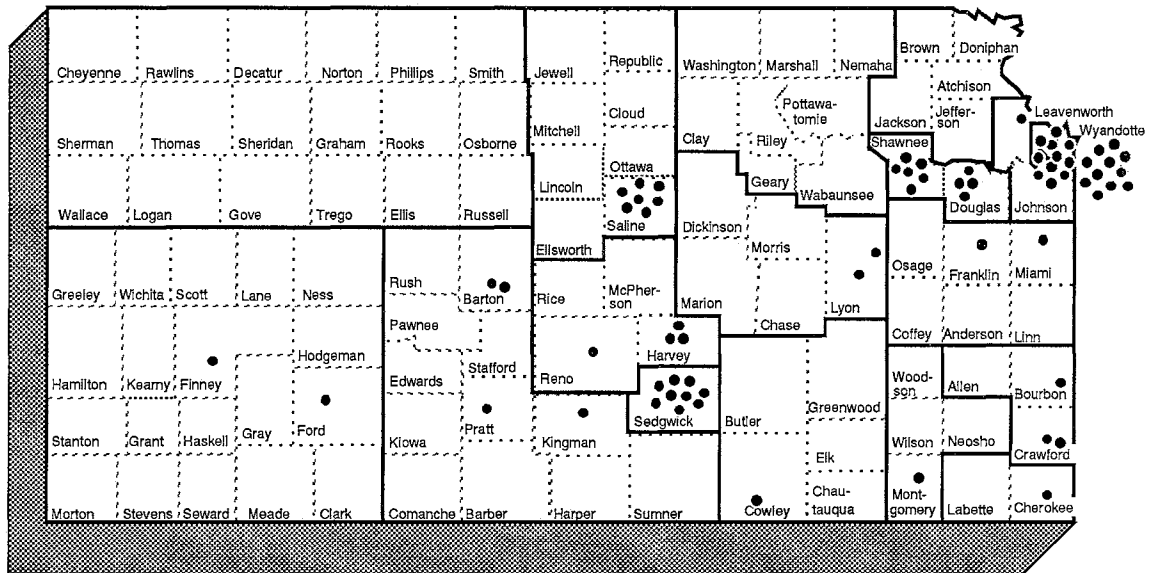
As of October 1, 1986, there were 1,554 licensed family foster homes in Kansas. The map above shows the distribution of these homes around the State. The following table lists the number of homes in each county.

County	No. of Family Foster Homes	County	No. of Family Foster Homes	County	No. of Family Foster Homes	County	No. of Family Foster Homes
Allen	13	Finney	23	Logan	0	Rooks	6
Anderson	4	Ford	22	Lyon	26	Rush	2
Atchison	15	Franklin	13	Marion	6	Russell	5
Barber	1	Geary	23	Marshall	3	Saline	38
Barton	16	Gove	2	McPherson	14	Scott	9
Bourbon	14	Graham	9	Meade	4	Sedgwick	185
Brown	19	Grant	10	Miami	6	Seward	11
Butler	23	Gray	9	Mitchell	3	Shawnee	78
Chase	2	Greeley	0	Montgomery	32	Sheridan	2
Chautauqua	3	Greenwood	4	Morris	7	Sherman	4
Cherokee	9	Hamilton	4	Morton	4	Smith	4
Cheyenne	2	Harper	11	Nemaha	9	Stafford	3
Clark	1	Harvey	20	Neosho	15	Stanton	3
Clay	10	Haskell	5	Ness	2	Stevens	7
Cloud	10	Hodgeman	5	Norton	4	Sumner	29
Coffey	8	Jackson	6	Osage	14	Thomas	8
Comanche	0	Jefferson	4	Osborne	4	Trego	3
Cowley	25	Jewell	1	Ottawa	2	Wabaunsee	8
Crawford	29	Johnson	90	Pawnee	10	Wallace	2
Decatur	1	Kearny	4	Phillips	2	Washington	2
Dickinson	15	Kingman	13	Pottawatomie	6	Wichita	0
Doniphan	2	Kiowa	8	Pratt	10	Wilson	14
Douglas	37	Labette	26	Rawlins	10	Woodson	2
Edwards	5	Lane	0	Reno	53	Wyandotte	195
Elk	5	Leavenworth	43	Republic	5		
Ellis	22	Lincoln	1	Rice	9		
Ellsworth	2	Linn	5	Riley	20		
						<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>1,554</u></b>



## APPENDIX D

### Locations of Group Homes and Residential Centers



As of October 1986, the Department had provider contracts with 69 group homes and residential centers. As the map shows, the facilities were generally clustered in the east and east-central parts of the State; 11 of the facilities in the Kansas City area were located in Missouri. The following table shows the number of facilities, and levels of care, by area office.

<u>Area Office</u>	<u>Level of Care Provided:</u>					<u>Total Facilities In the Area</u>
	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Unleveled</u>	
Chanute	1	--	--	--	--	1
Emporia	--	1	--	--	1	2
Garden City	--	1	1	--	--	2
Hays	--	--	--	--	--	0
Hiawatha	--	--	--	--	--	0
Hutchinson	--	1	3	--	--	4
Junction City	--	--	--	--	--	0
Kansas City	--	5	--	--	--	5
Olathe	--	4	2	1	--	7
Osawatomie	--	1	--	--	1	2
Parsons	--	1	--	--	--	1
Pittsburg	--	2	1	--	--	3
Pratt	--	4	--	--	--	4
Salina	1	2	1	--	3	7
Topeka	--	9	--	--	1	10
Wichita	1	5	2	--	1	9
Winfield	--	1	--	--	--	1
<i>Kansas City, Missouri:</i>	--	--	11	--	--	11
<b>Total:</b>	<u>3</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>69</u>



## APPENDIX E

### Foster Care Allocations By Area Office Fiscal Year 1986

In fiscal year 1986, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services allocated a total of \$21.7 million to the 17 area offices to pay for the direct costs of family, group, and residential foster care. Each area office received a single allocation to pay for foster care services for both children in need of care and juvenile offenders. The average foster care allocations per child in 1986, by area office, are summarized below.

<u>Area Office</u>	<u>Total Allocation</u>	<u>Average Number of Children (a)</u>	<u>Average Allocation Per Child</u>
Wichita	\$ 3,824,044	711	\$ 5,378
Topeka	2,675,800	519	5,156
Olathe	2,022,642	403	5,019
Pittsburg	875,364	192	4,559
Osawatomie	827,730	183	4,523
Hays	728,784	171	4,262
Winfield	973,535	247	3,941
Kansas City	3,291,552	840	3,919
Salina	739,632	202	3,662
Chanute	728,960	222	3,284
Garden City	1,013,382	311	3,258
Parsons	499,520	155	3,223
Junction City	806,842	258	3,127
Emporia	465,853	151	3,085
Hutchinson	1,105,170	375	2,947
Pratt	813,500	327	2,488
Hiawatha	317,780	147	2,162
<b>Statewide</b>	<b><u>\$ 21,710,090</u></b>	<b><u>5,414</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 4,010</u></b>

(a) Includes both children in need of care and juvenile offenders.



## APPENDIX F

### Summary of Department Staff Survey Responses

The auditors surveyed the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services staff in the area offices visited during the audit. In all, they distributed survey forms to 211 workers and administrators, 145 of whom responded. Following is a summary of the survey responses:

1. Since you have been employed by the Department in a child-welfare capacity, how have the factors influencing placement decisions changed?

<u>FACTOR</u>	<u>INCREASE</u>	<u>DECREASE</u>	<u>NO CHANGE</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Best interests of the child:	33%	29%	38%	100%
Availability of funds:	76%	13%	11%	100%
Lack of appropriate/adequate services:	47%	18%	35%	100%
Emphasis on family support services:	78%	4%	18%	100%
Emphasis on foster care services:	26%	40%	34%	100%
Other factors:	79%	7%	14%	100%

2. In your opinion, what effect have these changes had on the quality and appropriateness of the Department's placement decisions?

Much more appropriate:	18%
Somewhat more appropriate:	29%
About as appropriate:	14%
Somewhat less appropriate:	22%
Much less appropriate:	7%
Not sure/no opinion:	10%

3. Have you ever had a placement decision overruled or changed because of insufficient funds to pay for the provider services you thought were necessary?

Yes: 51%    No: 49%

If yes, how many times?

Minimum: 1    Maximum: 24    Average: 4.97 *In addition, some respondents gave answers such as: "too many to remember," "most," or "two times a year."*

4. In general, how would you rate the quality and appropriateness of the placement decisions you have been involved with?

Generally favorable rating:	55%
Generally unfavorable rating:	16%
Unclear, equivocating, or unresponsive:	18%
No answer:	11%

5. In your opinion, do current Department policies and procedures generally permit you to make placement decisions that are in the best interests of the child? Please explain.

Generally positive response:	51%
Generally negative response:	23%
Unclear, equivocating, or unresponsive:	16%
No answer:	10%

6. In addition to the survey questions above, the survey asked respondents for "any additional comments, concerns, or explanations." Following are some excerpts of the workers' comments:

- "Foster home providers are accepting increasingly more destructive and violent children. [We are] taking greater risks to our [foster care] families but are losing funds to purchase support services for the children."
- "People who really care about helping children and families should be handling the money...How can we help a child who requires special services if the funding is denied."
- "I believe the Family Support Program needs to become a high priority for funding, especially in the rural areas where there is absolutely no access to other services."
- "Extreme western Kansas has no placements for shelter or group care without extended travel. Many of the children in custody are not suitable for foster care placement in family foster care homes. Most foster homes are full and workers [are] unable to recruit suitable homes due to lack of time. Overly large caseloads diminish time for foster children contacts and recruitment. Long travel times ...further cut into time for casework."
- "It has been traumatic to bring youth home from group homes before the treatment was complete. This was done several times because money ran out."

## APPENDIX G

### Summary of Foster Care Provider Survey Responses

The auditors surveyed 100 of the 1,500 family foster care providers and all 69 group homes and residential centers under contract with the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. In all, 104 of the 169 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 62 percent. In addition to asking for data on the facilities' services and capacities, the survey asked providers for information on their funding, the nature of their referrals, and their relationships with Department personnel. Following is a summary of the survey responses.

**1. Please indicate what percentage of your total foster care funding comes directly from each of the following sources:**

Federal: 4%      State: 84%      City/County: 2%      Charity: 3%      Fees: 3%      Other: 4%

**2. Based on your experiences as a foster care provider for the State,**

**a) do you think that your facility's total funding is:**

More than adequate: 0%    About right: 39%    Insufficient: 56%    Not sure/no opinion: 5%

**b) do you think that your facility's State funding is:**

More than adequate: 0%    About right: 33%    Insufficient: 61%    Not sure/no opinion: 6%

**3. How would you rate the quality and appropriateness of SRS placement decisions for children placed in your facility during the last two years?**

Very good: 17%    Good: 33%    Adequate: 18%    Fair: 16%    Poor: 13%    Not sure/no opinion: 3%

**4. Since you began providing foster care services for the State, how have the children referred to your facility changed?**

**a) The number of foster children with behavioral or adjustment problems is:**

Smaller: 4%      About the same: 30%      Greater: 51%      Not sure/no opinion: 15%

**b) Behavioral and adjustment problems of children in foster care are:**

Less severe: 3%      About the same: 19%      More severe: 64%      Not sure/no opinion: 14%

5. In recent years, have the children referred to your facility by the State generally come from homes that are:

Closer: 8%      Same distance away: 64%      Farther away: 14%      Not sure/no opinion: 14%

6. If you said that children are now coming from closer or farther away, what effect has this change had on the children's well-being and their ability to reintegrate successfully with the family?

Significant positive effects:	4%
Some positive effects:	14%
No effect:	33%
Some negative effects:	18%
Significant negative effects:	4%
Not sure/no opinion:	27%

7. Since you began providing foster care services for the State, how has the number of referrals to your facility changed? Has your facility in the last year or two:

Received more referrals:	15%
Received about the same number of referrals:	29%
Received fewer referrals:	39%
Not sure/no opinion:	17%

8. In recent years, have the children referred to your facility by the State stayed:

Greater length of time:	7%
About the same length of time:	36%
Shorter length of time:	39%
Not sure/no opinion:	18%

9. Based on your experiences as a foster care provider for the State,

- a) do you think the quality of SRS support services you have received is:

Good: 37%      Adequate: 36%      Poor: 23%      Not sure/no opinion: 4%

- b) do you think the quantity of SRS support services you have received is:

More than adequate: 11%      About right: 57%      Insufficient: 29%      Not sure/no opinion: 3%

**10. *In addition to the above specific questions, the survey asked for "any additional comments, concerns, or explanations." Following are examples of the providers' comments.***

- "One [of the five infants we have cared for in the past eight years] died just...nine days after he had been returned to the natural parents...Legislation or SRS policy should require a full medical evaluation of failure-to-thrive children before these children are returned home...parents of failure-to-thrive infants should be observed and evaluated on their ability to 'parent' failure-to-thrive children...The courts should clear the medical and psychological status of the children before targeting the dates of return."
- "We feel that the parents of the foster child should be liable for a portion of the child's care in the foster facility as an incentive for more parent concern."
- "...both the quality and quantity of support services provided by SRS varies greatly according to area offices and individual workers."
- "Some redefinitions are indicated as to what realistically constitutes the 'acceptable' family for youth we serve to return to."
- "[Department] expectations [of] foster parents have been outrageous."
- "Money received [from the Department] is sufficient for basic necessities, but any extra things the kids get in our home are provided by us--we always come up short financially."
- "There are so many youth needing help and parents trying to find help for their youth, but due to shortage of funds they cannot get help...If these young people do not receive the right kind of help now our lockup facilities are really going to be overflowing in the future. The girls we have worked with the past year and a half have [more severe problems] than ever before...if these [cannot be put in a foster care facility] we will see many more suicides,...child abuse, parent abuse, stabbings,...stealing, trouble in schools...What seems like a lot of money now may be a big savings in lives and money--not counting heartache and pain--if these young people can receive the help they desperately need now."
- "The policy of attempting least intensive services until [the children] fail leads to greater adjustment problems...Children should be given the appropriate treatment intervention at the time they enter the system."
- "The ...trend is more disturbed youth remaining in treatment centers/ treatment-oriented programs for a shorter period of time, such as one year or less...this means more youth come and go, but it doesn't necessarily mean that their needs...are appropriately served...The State is either unwilling or simply unable to finance adequate residential services and thus is choosing to allow many youth to become young adults occupying our mental hospitals and penal institutions. Truly, it is a matter of pay me now or pay me later. The State cannot avoid the expenses [of these youth]...they will be forced to pay for them as criminals and mental patients."



## **APPENDIX H**

A copy of the draft audit report was sent to the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services for its review and comment on February 18, 1987. The Department's written response to the audit is presented in this Appendix.





STATE OF KANSAS

MIKE HAYDEN, GOVERNOR



STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

YOUTH SERVICES

February 24, 1987

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Meredith Williams  
Legislative Post Auditor  
Legislative Division of Post Audit  
109 West 9th, Suite 301  
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Dear Mr. Williams:

Youth Services staff have reviewed the draft copy of the completed performance audit report, Placement of Abused and Neglected Children.

We appreciate the thoroughness with which your staff conducted the audit. Once the final report is available, we anticipate giving the recommendations contained in the report our immediate attention.

I would like to offer the following comments for your review:

1. On Page 9, our records indicated that as of October 1, 1986 we purchase services from 21 Level V facilities, with 552 beds available to SRS; one Level VI facility with six beds available; and only 481 unlevelled beds are available. Total facilities remains at 69, with 1512 beds available.

We also purchase emergency services from 11 facilities with a total bed capacity of 141.

2. Page 13, in the first paragraph it is stated that "an evaluation is obtained from a community mental health facility or a state psychiatric hospital". We believe the reference to state psychiatric hospital is a reference to Topeka State Hospital Screening Unit. There are two screening units, with one other being at the Beloit Youth Center.
3. A chart on page 15 indicates a sample of 25 family service cases "52%" had unsuccessful outcomes. We believe a sample of such a small size is not particularly helpful in evaluating this program. We would like to bring to your attention that of 1480 family support cases closed in FY-86, 64.2% were closed following attainment of their program goals or custody of the child(ren) was returned to the parents.

Again, we appreciate the highly professional manner in which this study was conducted.

Sincerely yours,

*Robert C. Barnum*

Robert C. Barnum  
Commissioner

RCB:MJC:br



