

PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

Kansas' Foster Care Program, Part III: Staffing and Funding Levels

**A Report to the Legislative Post Audit Committee
By the Legislative Division of Post Audit
State of Kansas
April 1991**

Legislative Post Audit Committee

Legislative Division of Post Audit

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

KANSAS' FOSTER CARE PROGRAM, PART III: STAFFING AND FUNDING LEVELS

OBTAINING AUDIT INFORMATION

This audit was conducted by Leo Hafner, Allan Foster, and Ron Green, Senior Auditors, and Murlene Priest, and Tom Vittitow, Auditors, of the Division's staff. If you need any additional information about the audit's findings, please contact Mr. Hafner at the Division's offices.

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KANSAS FOSTER CARE PROGRAM, PART III: STAFFING AND FUNDING LEVELS

Summary of Legislative Post Audit's Findings

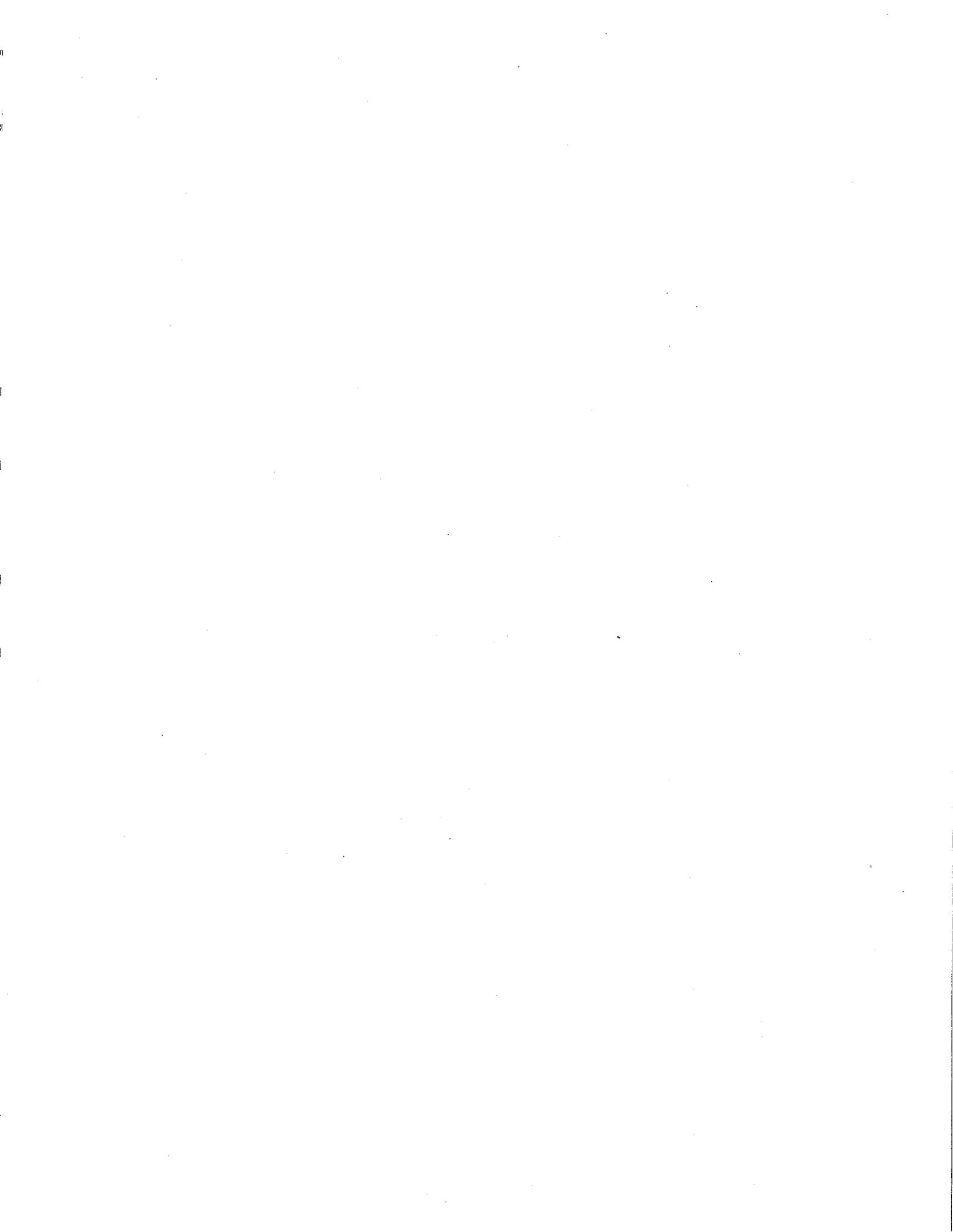
The first report in this series of audits provided an overview of the foster care system. In the second report we examined case files in 10 area offices to identify the number and types of placements and services the children had and also examined how well the cases were managed. This third report addresses the following questions:

How have staffing levels affected the management of foster care cases? The number of children in foster care has increased significantly in recent years, but the number of social workers available to manage those cases has not changed appreciably. The Department has assigned few of the new social worker positions it received in recent years to the foster care program. It also has failed to create as many social worker positions as it has been authorized to create. However, in recent Departmental reorganizations it has transformed some supervisor positions into social worker positions. Although the Department could not provide information showing changes in social workers' foster care caseloads over time, we estimated that, as of January 1991, their average foster care caseloads were more than double the standard proposed by the Child Welfare League of America. Finally, a significant amount of social workers' time is spent performing duties that could be done by lower-paid employees. Besides being inefficient, this situation reduced the amount of time social workers have to manage cases.

How has funding affected placement and service decisions for children in foster care? The amounts the area offices spent for foster care did not appear to be limited by the amounts allocated to them in the budget process. Expenditures over the amounts allocated have been covered by supplemental appropriations. It appeared that the lack of available facilities and services was the actual limiting factor in placement and service decisions. Most of the foster care providers we surveyed told us the reimbursement rates they received from the State did not cover their costs, but this did not appear to be a major reason for them leaving the system. The rates were well below the U.S. Department of Agriculture's estimate of the cost of raising a child. However, the rates paid in Kansas have kept pace with inflation during the last five years, and the rates paid to family foster homes are above the average of the surrounding states. The Department and the Legislature will need to look for new, innovative, and cost-effective ways to ensure that appropriate facilities and services are available for the children and families that need them.

The report makes recommendations for addressing the shortages of staff and foster care facilities described in this audit. We would be happy to discuss the audit findings with any legislative committees, individual legislators, or other State officials. These findings are supported by a wealth of data, not all of which could be included in this report. These data may allow us to answer additional questions about the audit findings or to further clarify the issues raised in the report.


Meredith Williams
Legislative Post Auditor



Kansas' Foster Care Program, Part III: Staffing and Funding Levels

Kansas' foster care program is administered by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. The program is charged with protecting children who may be physically or mentally abused or neglected. The Department may provide preventive services to families when child abuse is suspected, with the goal of keeping the child in the home. However, if preventive services are not successful, or if the danger to the child appears to warrant action, the Department may ask the county or district attorney to petition the court to place the child in the custody of the Secretary of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

After a court order puts a child in the custody of the Secretary, the child may be placed back with the family with the written permission of the court or with relatives or friends of the family, with a foster family, in a group home, or in an appropriate State-operated facility. A major goal of the program is to reunite the child with his or her family. If that is not possible, then adoption or other stable, family-like options are to be considered.

Legislative concerns have been raised about numerous aspects of the State's foster care program. To address these concerns, the Legislative Post Audit Committee directed the Legislative Division of Post Audit to conduct a comprehensive audit of the foster care program. The audit is being conducted and reports are being issued in several phases. The first report provided a history and overview of the foster care program and reviewed trends in funding, staffing, the number of children in custody, and the number of foster care providers. In the second report, we examined case files for 200 children in the Department's custody to identify the number and types of placements those children had while in foster care, the amount of time they spent in each type of placement, and the number and types of services provided to those children and their families. The report also examined how effectively those foster care cases were managed. This third report addresses the following questions.

- 1. How have staffing levels affected the management of foster care cases?**
- 2. How has funding affected placement and service decisions for children in foster care?**

To answer these questions, we reviewed how the Department allocates foster care moneys among the various area offices across the State. We collected caseload information for all social workers who handle foster care cases and compared it with existing foster care staffing standards. We examined the social worker turnover and vacancy rates. We reviewed placement and service delivery decisions made in 200 foster care cases in 10 geographically dispersed counties across the State and attempted to relate decision patterns in certain areas to funding and staffing levels in those areas. We surveyed current and former foster parents, group homes, social

workers, and judges who handle foster care cases. We also examined trends in foster care provider reimbursement rates and compared them with published costs of supporting a child and also to changes in the consumer price index.

In conducting this audit, we followed all applicable government auditing standards set forth by the U.S. General Accounting Office except the one requiring verification of computer-generated data. We did not verify the accuracy of the cost data produced by the Department's computer systems for the foster care program.

We found that the number of social workers available to handle foster care cases in Kansas has not kept pace with the growth in the number of children coming into the system. The Department has received some new social worker positions over the last few years, but few have been used to handle foster care cases. Although the Department could not provide information showing changes in social workers' foster care caseloads over time, we estimated that, as of January 1991, their average foster care caseloads were more than double the standard proposed by the Child Welfare League of America.

A significant amount of social workers' time is spent performing duties that could be done by lower-paid employees. Besides being inefficient, this situation reduces the amount of time social workers have to manage cases. Finally, the Department does not appear to be providing sufficient training to allow social workers to effectively carry out their duties.

We also found that the amounts area offices spent for foster care placements and services did not appear to be limited by the amounts allocated to them in the budget process. Expenditures over the amounts allocated have been covered by supplemental appropriations. The actual limiting factor appeared to be the lack of appropriate placements and services. Most foster care providers we surveyed thought the reimbursements they received from the State did not cover their costs, but those reimbursements rates have kept up with inflation, and rates for family foster homes are above the average of the surrounding states. The Department is encouraging the creation of new facilities and services by offering grants for programs addressing underserved populations.

These and other findings are discussed in more detail after a brief overview of the costs of the foster care program.

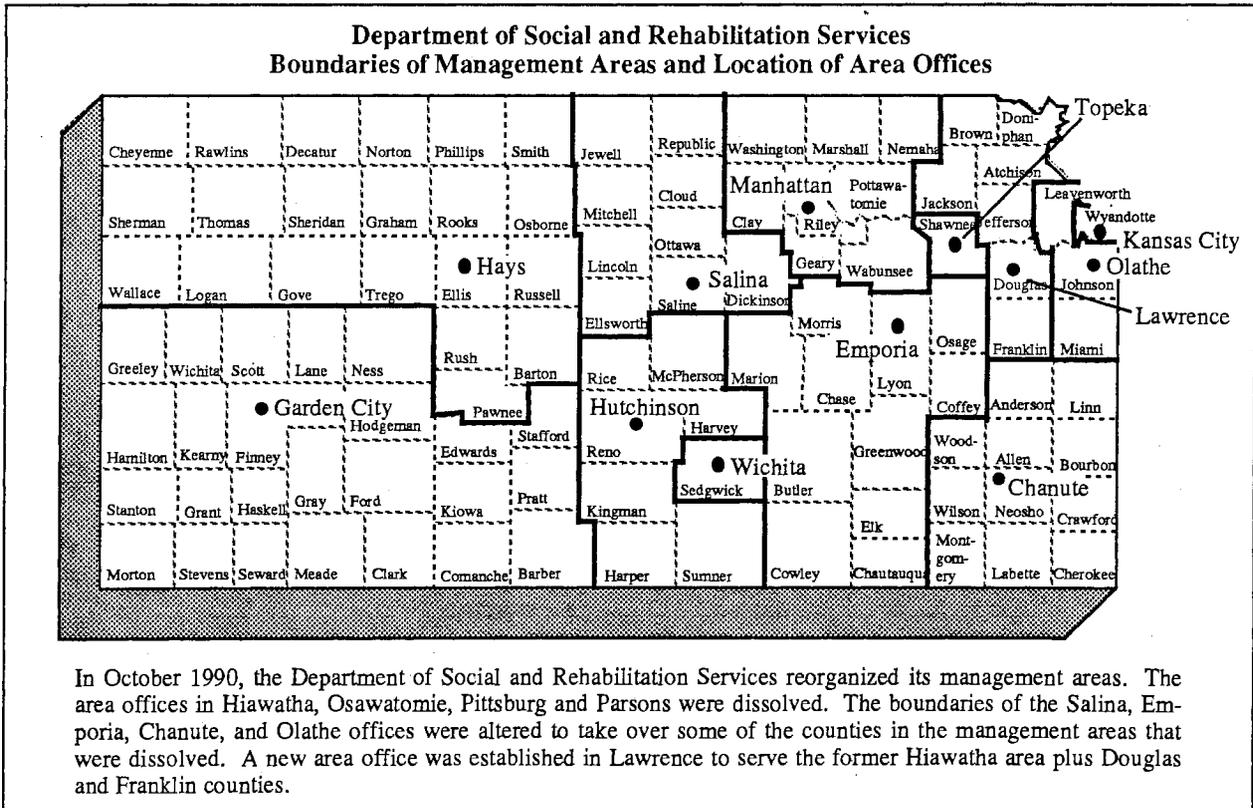
An Overview of the Costs of the State's Foster Care Program

The foster care program in Kansas is administered by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services through its Youth and Adult Services branch (these services were separate before February 1991). During fiscal year 1990, the Department operated the program out of its administrative offices in Topeka and 15 area offices throughout the State. In addition, the Department has established offices in each county. Most client contact work is performed through the area and county offices.

During the first half of fiscal year 1991, the Department began a consolidation effort that resulted in 12 area offices. The accompanying map shows the locations of the 12 area offices and the counties included in each area.

In Part I of This Audit Series, We Noted That the Department Did Not Compile Data on the Total Costs Of the Foster Care Program

In the first audit in this series (Part I: An Overview of the Program), we found that the Department collects and assembles cost data on the basis of funding sources—not on the nature of the client served. For example, part of the cost of a fos-



ter care case will be accounted for in the foster care budget. Other costs may be paid from the Medicaid program. In addition, salaries and wages of the social workers who handled foster care cases are included with other workers in other parts of the Department's budget. As a result, expenditures for the foster care program, as shown in the Department's budget document, are primarily for direct payments to foster care providers and do not account for the total cost of the program. In fiscal year 1990, that figure totaled \$32.7 million, and the total expenditure shown for the program was \$35.7 million.

Without accurate expenditure information about the cost of the foster care program, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services is unable to accurately plan for and project the costs of the additional children coming into the foster care system. To obtain more complete cost information, we tried to pull together major cost items from a variety of Department sources.

To obtain direct salary costs for the foster care program, for example, we used information produced by the Department's Random Employee Sampling Technique system, otherwise called its REST system. The Department developed this system to allocate overhead costs to various programs to obtain reimbursement from the federal government. As such, the system provides a basis for allocating staffing costs for foster care. We also were able to obtain fiscal year 1990 information about medical costs for children in the Department's custody, from the Kansas Medicaid Management Information System.

We did not obtain cost information for children in the Department's custody who were housed at the State's youth centers, nor for the families who received therapy and other services while their children were in custody. We also excluded indirect costs for clerical staff, top administrators, rent and utilities, and the like. In addition, because the costs for children in the Department's custody may be spread out over several programs, we cannot be certain we captured all those costs. Thus, the estimated cost figures presented in the sections that follow should be viewed as a minimum one-year cost for the program.

For Fiscal Year 1990, We Estimated the Department Spent At Least \$64.9 Million on the Foster Care Program

Using a variety of sources, we estimated the costs of the foster care program for children in the Department's custody for fiscal year 1990. That estimate is presented in the table on the next page.

As the table shows, direct payments to foster care providers accounted for only about half the estimated foster care expenditures in fiscal year 1990. Medical costs in private and State hospitals accounted for about \$23 million, or another 35.4 percent of the total. The Department spent just over \$6.2 million on salaries and wages for social workers and others who handle foster care cases directly. These three major categories accounted for almost \$62 million, or about 95 percent of the estimated foster care program costs.

**Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Estimated Fiscal Year 1990 Foster Care Program Costs, By Category (a)**

<u>Expenditure Categories</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Direct Payments to Foster Care Providers (includes room & board, clothing, education, and transportation costs for children in foster homes or group or residential facilities)	\$32,738,947	50.4%
Medical Costs (includes therapy, in- and outpatient treatment, physician services, and the like)		
In State hospitals	10,313,941	15.9
Outside State hospitals	12,679,101	19.5
Salaries and Wages (b) (includes prorated salaries for social service employees who provide foster care services to children in SRS custody and their families)	6,243,573	9.6
Grants and Projects (includes start-up moneys for Level V & VI homes in Wyandotte Co., foster parent training & juvenile offender aftercare programs, and a crippled children's nursery school)	1,931,018	3.0
Contractual Services (includes a contract with Missouri schools to educate Kansas foster children housed in Missouri facilities, and the foster parent insurance program)	639,592	1.0
Other (includes commodity and capital outlay expenditures of \$7,704, and payments for preventive services in some area offices, according to SRS officials)	<u>383,814</u>	<u>0.6</u>
Estimated Foster Care Expenditures	\$64,929,986	100.0%

- (a) Excludes room and board for children in the Department's custody placed in the State's youth centers. In fiscal year 1990, an average of 489 children were in the youth centers.
- (b) This figure excludes the salary costs for time spent by employees conducting child abuse and neglect investigations or reports, or providing preventive services or initial screening of children and families to determine the need for foster care before children are placed in the Department's custody. For fiscal year 1990, these costs are estimated to be about \$3 million.

We were unable to compute changes in the program's costs over time because the foster care salary figures captured through the Department's REST system data were for fiscal year 1990 only.

Excluding the children housed in the State's youth centers during fiscal year 1990, an average of 5,705 children were in the Department's custody that year. Using the \$64.9 million estimated cost figure, we calculated that the Department spent an average of at least \$11,381 on each of these children in the Department's custody that year.

We asked the Department to provide us with direct expenditure information for the 200 children in our sample. The data the Department provide were somewhat incomplete, but are included in Appendix A for informational purposes.

The Focus of This Audit Is on Identifying Staffing or Funding Issues That May Have Contributed to the Types of Problems We Identified in Previous Audits of the Foster Care Program

Part II in this series of reports, Placement of Children and Delivery of Services, identified a number of problems with the foster care system. Our major findings are summarized briefly below:

- In some instances, children were not placed in the types of facilities recommended for them, were placed in environments that were not safe or nurturing, or were returned home before the underlying problems had been resolved at least to a minimally acceptable level.
- Some children and many of their families did not receive or complete the services recommended for them. In addition, the Department did not always recommend services for those who may have needed them.
- Some courts did not actively monitor cases, as required by law.
- Department staff did not effectively manage some foster care cases. Administrative reviews and written case plans (which are designed to assess and record children's placement and service needs, goals, and objectives, and their progress toward meeting them), were sometimes inadequate and incomplete, based on insufficient information, or untimely. In some cases, inadequate supervision or failure to act on a timely basis may have contributed to children remaining in the system longer than necessary.
- Some social workers apparently had very limited direct contact with foster care children and their providers, and sometimes withheld important information about children's problems from foster care providers.
- The Department did not have the basic information it needed to effectively manage and monitor foster care cases.

During earlier phases of this audit, a common theme we heard in our interviews or surveys with Department staff and foster care providers was that a lack of adequate resources prevented them from carrying out their jobs. For this phase of the audit, we examined the foster care program's resources to determine whether they may have significantly contributed to these kinds of problems within Kansas' foster care program.

How Have Staffing Levels Affected the Management of Foster Care Cases?

The number of social workers available to handle foster care cases in Kansas has not kept pace with the growth in the number of children coming into the system. The Department has received some new social worker positions over the last few years, but most of them have been used for preventive services or abuse and neglect investigations, rather than ongoing foster care case management. Average caseloads for social workers handling foster care clients as of January 1991 significantly exceeded standards proposed by the Child Welfare League of America.

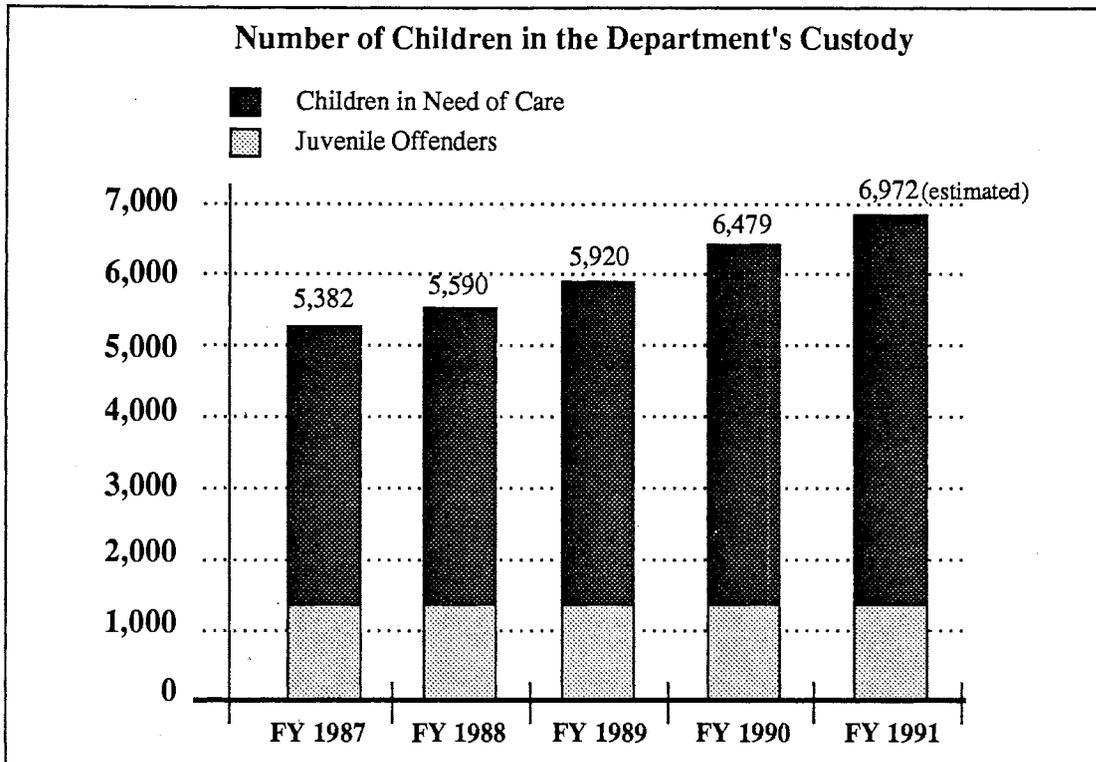
Social workers spend a significant amount of their work time performing duties that could be performed by lower-paid employees. This in turn reduces the amount of time that social workers have to effectively manage foster care cases. Finally, the Department does not appear to be providing sufficient training to ensure that social workers are effectively carrying out their duties. These and related findings are discussed in the sections that follow.

The Number of Children in the Department's Custody Has Increased Significantly in Recent Years

Part I of this audit showed that the number of children coming into the Department's custody declined by about 9.6 percent from 1981 to 1986, then began to increase substantially. From fiscal years 1987 to 1990, the number of children in the Department's custody increased by more than 20 percent, from 5,382 to 6,479. As of the end of February 1991, another 329 children were in the Department's custody, for a total of 6,808 children.

Children in the Department's custody include both juvenile offenders and children in need of care. Juvenile offenders may be committed to State institutions such as the Youth Centers at Topeka, Beloit, or Atchison, or they may be placed in the same type of placements as children in foster care. The number of juvenile offenders the courts have placed in the Department's custody has grown at a much slower rate than the number of children in need of care. In fact, during the first eight months of fiscal year 1991, the number of juvenile offenders in the Department's custody actually dropped by 26. The chart at the top of the following page shows the growth of these two types of children in the Department's custody over the last several years.

As the chart shows, the rate of increase for children in need of care has accelerated each year, from a 4.2 percent increase in fiscal year 1988 to a 10.4 percent increase in fiscal year 1990. For fiscal year 1991, that rate of increase will be about 11 percent if the increase for children in need of care coming into the system during the first eight months of the year holds true for the last four months.



In The Last Five Years, the Number of Social Workers Has Not Kept Pace with the Growth in The Number of Children Coming into Foster Care

Between fiscal year 1987 and February 1991, the number of children in the Department's custody grew by 1,426 children, or 26.5 percent. During that same time, Department budget documents show that the Department's social services field staff has increased by a total of 48 positions, or 8.5 percent.

Within this group, the number of social worker positions has increased by a total of only 3.5 positions, or less than one percent. Social workers are the ones who have the most contact with foster care children and their families. The table on the next page shows changes in the number of social services field staff and social worker positions during the last five fiscal years, according to Department budget documents.

The Department was specifically authorized 30 new social worker positions in fiscal year 1989, but many of those positions were reallocated into administrative positions. The Department requested new social worker positions in four of the last five fiscal years. It also requested a large number of new program technicians, or paraprofessional staff who do such things as conduct investigations, determine eligibility, provide some Department services, and prepare preliminary legal documents. The Legislature authorized new positions in two of those five years.

**Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Field Staff Positions: 1987-1991(a)**

<u>Position Title</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>Net Change 1987-1991</u>
Social Worker V	4.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-4.0
Social Worker IV	22.0	22.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	-10.0
Social Worker III	84.5	84.5	84.5	86.5	86.5	+2.0
Social Worker II	121.5	121.5	129.0	138.0	144.0	+22.5
Social Worker I	312.5	312.5	330.0	309.0	305.5	-7.0
Total Social Worker Positions	544.5	544.5	553.5	544.5	548.0	+3.5
Program Technician	11.0	11.0	11.5	12.0	12.0	+1.0
Program Worker II	1.5	1.5	1.0	2.0	2.0	+0.5
Program Worker I	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	—
Social Service Admin. III	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0	9.0	+9.0
Social Service Admin. II	2.0	2.0	12.0	12.0	7.0	+5.0
Social Service Admin. I	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.5	3.5	+2.5
Admin. Officer III	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—
Admin. Officer II	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	—
Admin. Officer I	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	+0.5
Volunteer Service Coord.	0.0	2.0	2.0	9.0	9.0	+9.0
Income Maint. Worker III	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	+1.0
Office Assistant III	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	+1.0
Family Preservation Program (b)	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0	+15.0
Total positions	562.0	565.5	590.5	605.5	610.0	+48.0

(a) Years 1987 through 1990 are actual positions established in each fiscal year, as shown in the Department's budget documents. Fiscal year 1991 figures are the Department's estimates as of late summer 1990.

(b) In fiscal year 1990, the family preservation program was begun as a pilot project in three areas: Miami County, Reno County, and the Salina area. Personnel shown here include 13 social workers and two program technicians. These individuals have limited caseloads and work with families in an attempt to keep children from being placed outside of their homes. In addition to the positions shown in the table, there were two clerical workers assigned to the project who are counted in the Department's budget under "administration." Also, the Department did not show seven family support worker positions in its budget because the language in the original appropriation said these positions would not be counted against the Department's position limitation.

The positions requested and authorized are summarized in the table at the top of the next page. In reviewing the table, it is important to remember that not all Department social workers handle foster care cases. Some do not handle any foster care cases, some handle foster care cases exclusively, and others handle a combination of foster care cases and other cases such as adult services or KanWork.

**Social Service Positions Requested by the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and
Authorized by the Legislature
Fiscal Years 1987-1991**

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>New Positions Requested</u>	<u>New Positions Authorized</u>
1987	5 social workers 10 program technicians	no additional positions
1988	no new positions requested	no additional positions
1989	11 social workers 1 volunteer service coordinator	30 social worker positions
1990	58 social workers 49 program technicians	24 positions for the family preservation pilot project
1991	13 social workers 56 program technicians	no additional positions

As the table shows, the 1988 Legislature authorized 30 new social worker positions for fiscal year 1989. These social worker positions were to deal with increased child abuse and neglect caseloads. The 1989 Legislature also authorized 24 new positions beginning in fiscal year 1990 for a family preservation pilot program to be established in three areas of the State. The types of positions authorized were unspecified. The profile on the next page describes this pilot program in greater detail.

Department budget documents show that, in fiscal year 1989, only 25 positions were added to the social services field staff even though 30 new social worker positions had been authorized. In addition, only nine of those 25 newly established positions were social workers; the remainder were primarily social services administrator positions. Department officials told us the remaining five positions were reallocated to other areas of the Department's budget.

**Social Workers May Be Responsible
For a Variety of Types of Cases**

In some of the more urban Kansas counties, social workers are assigned to work exclusively on cases dealing with children in the Department's custody. These workers often deal with other members of the child's family in order to address the problems that caused the child to be placed in the Department's custody.

At the other extreme, some social workers in rural counties are responsible for all types of social services the Department provides for children and adults. In addition to handling the cases of children in the Department's custody, these workers might also handle investigations of alleged abuse or neglect, family services, adoption cases, day care cases, homemaker services, adult community and home-based programs, and the recruiting and licensing of foster homes.

Thus, depending on the staffing level and organization of the area office, a social worker's duties may be very broad or very specialized.

The Department has shifted positions internally to have fewer supervisory social workers and more social workers involved with direct client contact. As the table on page 9 shows, the total number of social worker positions has increased by only 3.5 positions since fiscal year 1987. However, internal shifts within the Department have resulted in more social workers being available for direct client contact.

Generally, social worker I and II positions are the ones most directly responsible for daily case management. Social worker III, IV and V positions generally are supervisory positions. Between 1987 and 1991, the Department eliminated 12 supervisory social worker positions and added 15.5 social workers involved in direct case management.

We did not attempt to determine the right "mix" of social workers and supervisors. However, social worker supervisors do provide an important check over other social workers to ensure that their judgments are sound, and that their actions are consistent with Department policies and procedures and are in foster children's best interests.

Recent changes have had little effect on the total number of social worker positions in local offices, but have increased the number of social workers who directly handle cases. In the Fall of 1990, the Department reorganized and restructured its area offices. According to a Department press release, the changes were intended to reduce administrative costs, increase services in the areas of child protective services and foster care, and improve accountability and coordination. The press release announced that the number of area offices would be reduced from 15 to 12, and that approximately 15 administrators would be reassigned to perform direct client service in social work and income support in field offices. It also said that about \$600,000 would be reallocated to area field offices to increase staffing levels and provide needed service.

The changes made in recent months included the elimination of the Social Worker III job classification, which was a supervisory level for Social Worker I's and II's. Social Worker III positions were reallocated to either Social Worker II or IV. The Department also made other internal changes to increase the number of social workers who directly handle cases. It is difficult to pin down the number of positions established at any one time, because the Department frequently reallocates positions within the agency and does not keep good records to track those positions. The results of changes made by the Department in fiscal year 1991 are summarized in the table at the top of the next page.

The Department's Family Preservation Project Attempts To Keep Children In Their Homes

The goal of the Department's family preservation project is to prevent children from entering the foster care system by addressing a family's problems before foster care becomes necessary. The project was approved by the 1989 Legislature and originally operated in three locations: Reno and Miami Counties, and the Salina area. In 1990, the project was expanded into Franklin County.

The project has a staff of 24 comprising social workers, family support workers, program technicians, and office assistants. In addition to the regular staff, each area has an outside consultant available to provide assistance as needed. The staff works exclusively on this project and each caseworker's caseload is limited to 8-10 families at a time. The work with each family is short-term—generally 90 days or less—and is designed to be a comprehensive in-home therapeutic counseling program. In addition, families may be referred to other types of long-term treatment, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or psychiatric counseling.

Department officials indicated that in fiscal year 1990, 400 children and their families were referred for family preservation services. As of January 10, 1991, 366 of those 400 children were still in their own homes. Department officials estimate that if those 366 children had been put into out-of-home placements, the associated costs would have been nearly \$2 million, while the cost for family preservation services was about \$534,000—a savings of approximately \$1.4 million.

**Changes in the Number of Established Social Worker Positions
in the Social Service Field Staff**

<u>Position Title</u>	<u>Budgeted FTE Positions Fiscal Year 1991</u>	<u>Number of FTE Positions in March 1991 (a)</u>
Social Worker I	305.5	312.2
Social Worker II	144.0	170.5
Social Worker III	86.5	0.0
Social Worker IV	<u>12.0</u>	<u>71.0</u>
Total	548.0	553.7

(a) This information was supplied by the Department's personnel division.

As the table shows, the Department apparently has increased the total number of social worker positions by almost six during the last nine months. The number of line workers (Social Worker I's and II's) has gone from 449.5 to 482.7, or an increase of 33.2 positions. At the same time, the number of supervisory positions (Social Worker III's and IV's) has gone from 98.5 to 71, or a decrease of 27.5 positions. As of March 1991, each Social Worker IV supervised an average of 6.8 line workers.

On one hand, increasing the number of social workers who handle cases would reduce the average caseloads of those workers. On the other hand, reducing the number of supervisors would diminish the level of review, guidance, and quality control that supervisors could provide.

**Foster Care Caseloads Have Increased
Over Time, but No Data Exist
To Determine By How Much**

Obviously, when the number of foster care children entering the system increases significantly while the number of social workers stays relatively constant, as it has over the last several years, social workers' caseloads must increase. But determining caseloads is not simply a matter of taking the total number of children in the Department's custody divided by the total number of social workers. Many social workers handle only adult services or other types of social services cases, and many social workers who handle foster care cases also handle other types of cases as well. Therefore, the mix of cases a social worker is responsible for handling and the time required for each type of case also need to be taken into account.

When we attempted to obtain information from the Department about social workers' foster care caseloads over time, we found that the Department did not have this information, nor has it defined a "case" for the purpose of determining social worker caseloads. Without a standard definition of a case, it has had no uniform way of determining what actual caseloads are.

Department officials said that area offices reported "caseload" information to the Central Office, but acknowledged that those offices used different definitions.

For example:

- some area offices may count a child and family as one case, while others may count them as two cases
- some area offices may count a child placed with the parents while in Department custody as a case, while others may not
- some area offices may count recruitment of a foster care family as a "case"

With inconsistencies of this magnitude being reported just for foster care cases, it is likely that any reported caseload figures the Department may have are inaccurate and are inconsistent between area offices. For these reasons, we were unable to obtain or develop information about changes over time in caseload data for social workers handling foster care cases or any other types of cases.

As of January 1991, we estimated the Department's foster care "caseload" was more than double the standard established by a national child advocacy group. For this audit, we looked for a standard measure to compare the foster care caseloads in Kansas against. The only standard we were able to locate was developed by the Child Welfare League of America.

The League is currently in the process of lowering its ideal standard for foster care cases from 20-30 children to approximately 12-15 children per full-time foster care social worker. According to the League official responsible for developing and revising the standard, child welfare practice has become much more involved in recent years, including providing more services to the child and working more closely with the children's families. The recommended caseload is being revised to account for social workers' higher level of involvement with foster children's families.

To compare foster care caseloads in Kansas with the League's standard of 12-15 children per social worker, we asked all 311 social workers who handled any foster care cases to estimate the amount of time they spent on all aspects of their work related to children in the Department's custody and to those children's families, as of January 1, 1991. We asked them not to count any time spent before a child came into the Department's custody.

On average, these 311 social workers estimated they spent a total of 61 percent of their time handling children in the Department's custody and their families. This information allowed us to estimate that Kansas had the equivalent of 190 filled social worker positions handling just foster care cases as of January 1, 1991. These full-time-equivalent social workers had an average "caseload" of 35 children each (the number of children in custody divided by the number of full-time-equivalent foster care social workers). If the 10 full-time-equivalent foster care social worker positions that were vacant on January 1, 1991, had been filled, the number of children per worker would have been 33 instead of 35. (Because of various hiring freezes within the Department, social worker positions in the area offices generally have stayed vacant for long stretches of time. For example, during the first six months of 1991, 58 social worker positions were vacant for an average of about two months each.)

Why Caseload Figures In This Report Cannot Be Compared With the Standard of 30 Children Per Social Worker

Caseload information provided by Department social workers cannot be accurately compared with the Child Welfare League of America's standard of 20-30 children per full-time foster care social worker. According to a League official this old standard did not take into account any work with a child's family. Therefore, to compare caseloads to that standard we would have had to obtain estimates from social workers only of the amount of time they spend with children in the Department's custody and not their families. Because families and children's cases are often intertwined, we thought it would be more difficult for social workers to provide accurate estimates of the time they spend solely on the children's cases. If we had taken this approach, the number of full-time-equivalent social workers handling foster care cases in Kansas would have been smaller, and the number of children per full-time foster care social worker would have been correspondingly higher.

Average caseloads in Kansas are more than twice the ideal standard of 12-15 children currently being proposed by the Child Welfare League. To bring social workers' caseloads down to that level would require filling all social worker positions that were vacant as of January 1, and adding 244 full-time-equivalent social worker positions assigned exclusively to foster care. To add that many social worker I positions at the entry level salary would cost approximately \$4.9 million dollars per year, plus fringe benefits and significant costs to house, equip, and train those workers. We did not attempt to estimate these additional costs.

Foster care "caseloads" were much higher than average in some areas of the State. The accompanying table shows the average number of children in

custody per full-time-equivalent social worker handling foster care for each of the Department's 12 area offices as of January 1, 1991.

**Average Foster Care "Caseloads" By Area Office
As of January 1, 1991**

<u>Area Office</u>	<u>Estimated FTE Foster Care Social Workers (a)</u>	<u>Number of Children in Custody</u>	<u>Average # of Children per FTE Foster Care Social Worker (b)</u>
Kansas City	26.0	1,206	46
Wichita	26.0	1,079	42
Topeka	14.0	587	41
Salina	6.0	241	40
Olathe	10.5	411	39
Garden City	14.5	486	33
Hutchinson	19.0	623	33
Lawrence	13.5	424	31
Chanute	17.0	515	30
Emporia	19.5	512	26
Hays	13.0	327	25
Manhattan	11.0	255	23
Total/Average	190.0	6,666	35

(a) The number of full-time-equivalent social workers is an estimated figure based on the total number of social workers who handle the cases of foster care children or their families. The numbers are rounded to the nearest half position.

(b) Average caseload assumes that all cases are evenly distributed among social workers that handle foster care. Because some social workers handle only foster care cases and other handle a variety of other cases in addition to their foster care duties, actual foster care caseloads per social worker will be higher or lower than the average.

As the table shows, foster care "caseloads" are highest in Kansas City, Wichita, and Topeka, the urban areas that have experienced the most rapid growth in the number of children in custody in recent years. From June 1987 to June 1990, the number of children in need of care increased by about 70 percent in the Kansas City area, 52 percent in the Wichita area, and 39 percent in the Topeka area. Individual social workers from these areas reported handling as many as 70-80 foster care cases each.

The table also shows that "caseloads" are much lower than average in the Emporia, Hays, and Manhattan area offices. Although social workers in rural offices may have greater distances to travel in handling foster care cases, such wide variations would not seem warranted. The Department has reorganized and restructured its area offices several times over the last few years, but Department officials told us they have done little to reallocate social worker positions among area offices to help equalize workloads Statewide.

One way some urban offices have tried to deal with higher caseloads and the lack of additional staff to handle them has been to contract with private vendors to provide some services that social workers might otherwise have provided. For example, officials from the Kansas City area office told us that they contract with private social services agencies to complete adoption studies and to provide family assessments and evaluations. Officials in the Wichita and Kansas City area offices told us that they contract with private agencies to provide family services. The Wichita office has also provided cab fare or bus tickets so that clients could get to needed services without using a social worker as a driver.

Surveyed social workers cited heavy caseloads as a factor contributing to problems they have managing foster care cases. During this audit, we surveyed social workers from the 10 counties we visited. In all, 78 percent of the social workers responding said their caseloads were larger now than they were three years ago. These social workers and the foster care providers we surveyed also made numerous comments about the effect of heavy caseloads on their work. Their sample comments are shown at right.

Social Workers and Foster Care Providers Express Concerns About Social Worker Caseloads

Many of the social workers and foster care providers we surveyed commented about high social worker caseloads. Some typical comments we received are shown below.

Social Worker Comments:

"It is difficult for me being a social worker and not having the time to properly work with my clients."

"There are too many children, too few workers, too few resources, and too much responsibility."

"Good social workers are overworked and are leaving - the agency loses experience and good resources - it is worse than it has ever been."

"We need more workers and smaller caseloads in order for us to adequately meet our client's needs. Worker turnover is very high because of low pay, large caseloads, and high stress caused by caseloads."

Foster Care Providers:

"The reality is that the only time we see a worker is when we plan a review of a child. This is not a function of bad workers but simply that they are overworked by the numbers."

"The caseworkers are so overloaded and burned out that it makes it difficult and next to impossible to get out to see their clients and provide actual social work services."

"The social workers have too many cases to give the appropriate care that these children need."

"I know social workers are burned out in some cases because of their workloads. I don't know what the solutions are, but Kansas is not helping its foster children."

"Social workers are swamped and their time goes to put out fires."

Most comments pointed out such problems as social worker “burnout” and the lack of time to devote to foster care clients.

During this audit we also reviewed a survey of former social workers that was conducted by the Kansas State University Social Work Department. In all, 44 percent of the former social workers surveyed by Kansas State gave excessive caseloads as a reason they left the Department. This was the most common reason given by the 42 social workers who answered this question. Their comments included the following:

- I had an unmanageable caseload, jeopardizing the safety of children and my professional security.
- I had too heavy a caseload. I think I just wore out emotionally.
- I was becoming anxious and dissatisfied with the agency and workload. I felt I needed to detach from SRS to review career goals, and gain new perspective on social work and SRS.

The Department Is Not Using Its Social Workers In the Most Cost-Effective Manner

When we surveyed social workers from the 10 counties we visited, we asked if some aspects of their work for the Department could be handled by someone with a lesser level of training or experience than a licensed social worker. In all, 78 percent of those responding said “yes.”

Some of the things social workers said could be done by employees with less training included filing, copying, and other clerical tasks, driving clients to appointments, and supervising visits between the child and parents. The 32 social workers who responded to the question reported spending an average of 13.9 hours per social worker per week—or one-third of their time—on these types of activities.

Using social workers to do these types of tasks means that these 32 social workers have 445 fewer hours available each week for things like developing and evaluating case plans, locating placements for children, and arranging for services for children and their families. It also increases the overall cost of foster care. For these 32 social workers to do these tasks costs the Department approximately \$72,700 a year more in salary costs than it would cost to have those tasks done by automobile drivers or clerical staff. If similar relationships hold true for all social workers who handle foster care cases, the Department is spending about \$400,000 more than it would need to to get this level of services. Given the apparent need for more social workers, it appears the Department could provide more social worker time at less cost by hiring drivers and clerical staff to do tasks that do not require a social work degree.

The Department Apparently Has Not Provided the Training Social Workers Need to Handle Foster Care Cases

Part II of this audit identified a number of problems with how foster care cases were supervised and managed. For example, the Department has numerous proce-

Respondents to the Kansas State survey also were somewhat more positive about their ongoing training. About three-fourths said they were able to acquire workshop training, and most of the respondents (72 percent) said the workshops they attended were beneficial.

Inadequate training is compounded if social worker turnover is high, because high turnover means that the on-the-job experience and judgment gained over time are lost as well. The Department has experienced a relatively high rate of turnover in recent years. In fiscal year 1989, the turnover rate for social workers and vocational rehabilitation counselors combined—the only information the Department was able to provide—was about 25 percent. In fiscal year 1990, the rate declined to about 16 percent, and for 1991, the Department projected the rate will decline to about 14 percent.

Conclusion

Part II of this series of audits (Placement of Children and Delivery of Services), pointed out that the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services was not effectively managing or monitoring foster care cases in Kansas. A contributing factor cited in that audit was that the Department did not have the basic management information it needed—from the cost of the foster care program to the number, types, and length of placements foster care children have—to carry out its management responsibilities.

This question explored the extent to which staffing levels may have contributed to the management problems identified in that earlier audit. From all indications, it appears there is a serious shortage of social workers to handle foster care cases. Something will have to be done to help lessen their workloads and improve their ability to address the needs of foster care children and their families. The Department has not provided as much assistance in this area as it could have. It does not have an accurate count of social workers' caseloads or of how they have changed over time. It has not tried to even out social workers' workloads across the State. In addition, the Department apparently has not created as many social worker positions as it has been authorized to create, or as it indicated it would create with the latest reorganization.

We estimated Kansas would need to add the equivalent of 244 new social worker positions assigned exclusively to foster care cases to meet the Child Welfare League's ideal standard of 12-15 children per full-time foster care social worker. That number may be much higher than is really needed, and it may not be feasible given the competing demands for State tax dollars. The Department will need to work closely with the Legislature, and provide accurate and consistent information, to determine how many positions are needed and can be funded to help address the shortage of social workers who handle foster care cases in Kansas.

dures to help ensure that foster children's cases are monitored, discussed, and revised as needed so that the placement and service decisions are in the children's best interests, but staff in the county offices often did not follow those procedures. In some cases, poor supervision or other Department inaction may have contributed to children remaining in the system longer than necessary. Social workers also sometimes withheld important information about children's problems from foster care providers.

Inadequate training for social workers could be contributing to these kinds of problems. When we surveyed the 329 social workers in the 10 counties we visited, we asked whether their initial orientation and training was adequate to allow them to effectively carry out their jobs. Only 40 percent of the 117 social workers who responded rated their initial training as adequate or more than adequate. About 60 percent said their training was less than adequate, or they did not receive any training. The most frequently mentioned area where social workers said they needed training was in the Department's procedures.

For ongoing training, the numbers were somewhat more positive, but social workers still indicated they thought they needed better training. About 59 percent of the social workers responding said ongoing training was adequate or more than adequate. But slightly more than four out of 10 social workers said ongoing training was less than adequate or they received no ongoing training.

The following comments from social workers illustrate problems with both initial and ongoing training.

- Initially, ongoing training was more than adequate—things changed two years ago when our area got a new children and youth section chief. Training now is scarce, and he reported to our unit that 'training is a privilege. If you feel you have inadequacies perhaps you shouldn't be in this job.' In short, he doesn't give us training and asking for it could do more harm than good.
- We really need more money and more training for workers. Sometimes I see new workers really struggle through what experienced staff have learned through the school of hard knocks. Central office staff is not always very knowledgeable and helpful in interpreting policies and keeping policies up-to-date. It's very helpful to have experienced supervisors because without them we'd be sunk.
- Training in how to deal with sexually abused kids in care, family therapy principles, and working with the non-voluntary client is needed. I have traveled out of state three times in the past four years at my own expense and on my own time to get excellent training at a national conference. At the very least I should have been granted administrative leave—which I was not.

Respondents to the Kansas State University social worker survey we reviewed as part of this audit also indicated their training sometimes was inadequate. Of those responding to the Kansas State survey of current social workers:

- only 35 percent indicated they received adequate orientation training when they first started with the Department
- only 38 percent said they received adequate on-the-job training
- only 31 percent reported they were adequately trained to effectively complete paperwork

Recommendations

1. On an immediate basis, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services should review and consider reallocating staff in its area offices to address any immediate staff shortages it identifies that may be seriously affecting social workers' ability to effectively manage and monitor foster care cases.

2. To be able to effectively assess the need for additional staff resources to better manage the State's foster care program, the Department should do the following:
 - a. Develop a clear definition of a "case," and develop consistent guidelines as to how social workers should count and report the number of foster care cases (and other types of cases) they are assigned.

 - b. Develop guidelines for determining the number of cases a social worker can reasonably be expected to handle. These guidelines should address the different types of cases that social workers may be assigned, and any unique time factors—such as more or less travel time—that might apply to rural or urban areas.

 - c. Determine the most cost-effective mix of staff to provide social services to foster care clients. As part of this effort, the Department should review the types of tasks that social workers are now doing that could be done by lower-paid employees—for example, paraprofessional program technicians and other support staff—for duties such as transporting clients, supervising family visits, and typing, copying, and filing paperwork. The Department should also consider the mix of social workers and supervisors needed to ensure that foster care cases are adequately supervised.

3. Once it has a basis for deciding the number and mix of additional staff positions it needs to more effectively manage the State's foster care program, the Department should develop a comprehensive plan for addressing its staffing shortages, including which positions can be reallocated within the Department's existing budget, staff priority needs, cost estimates, and the like.

4. Because of the likelihood that significant numbers of new staff positions cannot be added to the Department within current budget constraints, the Legislature should consider directing the Department to establish a pilot

program in one or more area offices that would bring staffing levels in those offices up to the number needed to effectively provide foster care services. If such a program is established, the Department should conduct pre- and post-tests to measure changes in the attitudes of social workers, foster care providers, and foster care clients, and changes in the outcomes of the foster care cases handled in those area offices, as a way of measuring the success of the project.

How Has Funding Affected Placement and Service Decisions for Children in Foster Care?

Funding for foster care affects placement and service decisions in several ways. Obviously it has an impact on the number of staff available to handle the program, which in turn determines the amount of time and attention that social workers can devote to any given case. The staffing issue was discussed in the previous question. In this question, we looked for the effect funding appeared to have on the number and types of placements and services provided for children in the Department's custody and their families. In Part II of this series of reports, we found that children often were not placed in the recommended types of facilities or did not receive the types of services recommended for them.

We found that the moneys the Department has allocated to its area offices to pay for foster care placements generally have been insufficient to provide for the placements and services for children in those areas. However, the area offices generally spent far more than they were allocated, and those expenditures were covered through the supplemental appropriation process. In other words, the allocations apparently have not limited area offices expenditures for placements and services. Social workers did report that funding has been insufficient for other things that would allow them to do their jobs better, such as money for State cars, copy machines, and adequate office space.

Department staff at all levels contend that the needed types of foster care facilities simply are not available. Kansas' reimbursements to foster care providers do not cover the cost of raising a child, but those reimbursement levels generally have kept pace with inflation, and rates for family foster homes compare favorably with rates paid in surrounding states. Former foster parents we surveyed also said they quit because they were dissatisfied with the Department or its staff. The Department has encouraged the creation of several new facilities and services by offering grants.

The Amount of Money Allocated to Area Offices Apparently Did Not Limit the Money Those Area Offices Actually Spent On Foster Care Placements and Services

The Department has used several methods and formulas over the years for allocating funds to its area offices. These allocations are used to pay the direct costs of housing children in foster care facilities and of providing services that are not covered by medical cards. In a 1987 performance audit examining placements for abused and neglected children, we noted that the Department's foster care allocation formula gave three times as much weight to historical expenditures as it did to the number of children served by the area office.

For fiscal year 1990, each area office's allocation was simply increased by about 26.4 percent over the previous year's allocation, the same as the increase in the

program budget. Fiscal year 1991 allocations were based on changes in the total number of children in the program and the average program costs during fiscal year 1990. The overall allocation was limited to the amount budgeted for the program, which was approximately \$39.8 million. The maximum increase for any area office generally was limited to 25 percent of the previous year's expenditures.

In examining allocations and expenditures per child over the past three years, we noted that expenditures often bore very little relationship to the amount allocated. The accompanying table compares these allocation and expenditure data for fiscal years 1988, 1989, and 1990 for children in paid placements. Only children in paid placements are used for this analysis because the Department does not pay room and board expenses for children placed with parents or relatives or in State institutions. Also, because there were 17 area offices in fiscal year 1988, these 17 areas are shown for all three years. They have since been collapsed to 12 area offices.

As the table shows, some area offices underspent their allocations while others overspent them. For example, the Kansas City office overspent its allocation by about \$500 per paid placement in 1988, \$2,500 in 1989, and \$3,800 in 1990. Similar patterns exist in the Topeka and Wichita offices. These are the area offices that have had the most growth in the numbers of children in custody. At the same time, the Olathe and Chanute area offices have consistently underspent their allocations.

Allocations and Expenditures per Child in Paid Placements									
Area Office	1988			1989			1990		
	Allocation per Child	Expenditure per Child	Difference	Allocation per Child	Expenditure per Child	Difference	Allocation per Child	Expenditure per Child	Difference
Chanute	\$ 8,923	\$ 7,986	\$ 937	\$ 9,455	\$ 7,883	\$ 1,572	\$10,983	\$ 7,289	\$ 3,694
Emporia	8,784	7,794	990	7,844	8,263	(419)	7,920	7,872	48
Garden City	5,303	5,513	(210)	6,234	5,971	263	6,681	6,843	(162)
Hays	6,194	6,242	(48)	7,099	7,762	(663)	7,250	7,503	(253)
Hiawatha	6,348	6,069	279	5,832	5,407	425	5,550	6,841	(1,291)
Hutchinson	8,415	7,686	729	7,346	8,710	(1,364)	8,075	8,464	(389)
Kansas City	7,445	7,978	(533)	6,017	8,512	(2,495)	5,771	9,542	(3,771)
Manhattan	8,106	7,114	992	7,273	8,226	(953)	8,983	9,006	(23)
Olathe	11,676	9,988	1,688	11,244	9,719	1,525	13,720	11,416	2,304
Osawat.	11,586	9,488	2,098	10,089	11,567	(1,478)	11,228	11,987	(759)
Parsons	6,282	6,829	(547)	7,265	6,760	505	9,473	8,083	1,390
Pittsburg	6,986	7,645	(659)	6,351	6,735	(384)	8,148	8,528	(380)
Pratt	4,360	4,800	(440)	5,046	5,369	(323)	0	0	0
Salina	9,013	7,176	1,837	7,131	8,361	(1,230)	8,702	9,478	(776)
Topeka	8,806	9,798	(992)	7,900	10,054	(2,154)	9,507	12,309	(2,802)
Wichita	10,183	10,036	147	8,447	9,899	(1,452)	8,721	10,967	(2,246)
Winfield	7,171	8,182	(1,011)	5,858	7,557	(1,699)	0	0	0
Average Per Child	\$8,056	\$8,022	\$34	\$7,328	\$8,397	(\$1,069)	\$8,236	\$9,502	(\$1,266)
Statewide Total	\$22,555,472	\$22,469,165	\$86,307	\$22,446,540	\$25,720,743	(\$3,274,203)	\$28,390,886	\$32,738,945	(\$4,348,059)
Supplemental Appropriations for Provider Payments	\$0			\$3,656,680			\$4,348,059		

Statewide, placement expenses exceeded budgeted allocations by \$3.3 million in fiscal year 1989, and \$4.3 million in 1990. For these years, the Department asked for and received supplemental appropriations to cover all these expenditures. The Department initially projected that fiscal year 1991 expenditures might exceed allocations by \$5.2 million. However, Department officials told us these projections were not coming true and, as of March 1991, did not foresee the need for a supplemental appropriation for this fiscal year.

Evidently, Department officials in the county offices we visited did not see their allocation amounts as limiting their ability to make the necessary expenditures for foster care children. Our review of case files in these offices supported this contention. We saw no instances in which a placement or service was reported as not being provided because of a lack of funds. In addition, none of the officials in the counties we visited indicated that a lack of resources limited their ability to place children as recommended.

Social workers reported that funding has been inadequate for other things that would allow them to do their jobs better. In our survey of current Department social workers who handle foster care cases, two-thirds of the 54 social workers responding indicated the physical resources available to them were less than adequate. The items they cited as most commonly lacking were State cars, adequate office space, and adequate equipment such as copiers. A related problem mentioned by social workers was a shortage of clerical personnel to support their efforts. One social worker we surveyed wrote the following:

We need more State cars, our photocopy machines are frequently broken down, we have had no clerk for two months, transferred cases are disorganized, and we have no social histories or other needed documents.

A 1989 survey conducted by Kansas State University also found that social workers were frustrated by inadequate office space, equipment, and other resources. At least half of the social workers disagreed with the following statements:

- There is adequate availability of State cars to transport clients and children. (69 percent disagreed)
- There is adequate availability of State cars for field work travel. (73.5 percent disagreed)
- I have a place to work without interruption. (61.1 percent disagreed)
- I have acoustical privacy when working with my clients. (64.8 percent disagreed)
- My office has an adequate play area for clients' children. (74.4 percent disagreed)
- My office has an adequate area for family visits. (68.6 percent disagreed)

During our review of case files in 10 counties, we often observed that Department office space and equipment were less than adequate. In some offices, desks were placed so close that the chairs were back-to-back; this situation not only would be distracting, it would also make it difficult for workers to have a private conversation with a client. Areas used for family visits often were cramped, with little in the way of furniture or toys.

We also were told that the number of computers and copiers was far below the level needed. For example, officials in Wyandotte County said that sending administrative reviews to the district court was often delayed for months because of problems getting them typed and copied.

These kinds of problems may seem somewhat trivial but are not. They can add to the frustration many social workers feel in trying to handle a high number of cases. In addition, they apparently can contribute to delays in getting needed information to some of the people responsible for monitoring and managing foster care cases to ensure that children are appropriately placed and are receiving the types of services they need.

Appropriate Foster Care Placements and Services Are Limited Because They Simply Are Not Available

As pointed out in Part II of this audit series (Placement of Children and Delivery of Services), the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services does not know how many foster care bedspaces are available for foster care children in Kansas. Without that information, shortages cannot be identified nor recruiting efforts effectively targeted.

A Child Not Placed As Recommended

When appropriate placements are not available, children in foster care are often placed in one or more temporary placements. These placements generally do not offer the level of supervision, structure, or services the child needs.

For example, a 15-year-old girl in the Department's custody was given a psychological evaluation in 1988. The evaluator recommended that she be placed in a Level V group home. The Department placed her in an emergency shelter until space in a Level V facility could be located.

Slightly more than one month later, the girl ran from the shelter. She was caught the same day and placed in a second shelter because the first refused to take her back. She ran again five days later. The girl was located after 10 days and placed with her mother; the recommended placement was still a Level V group home.

Six days after being placed with her mother the girl was placed in a detention facility when her mother reported that she had run away.

Following several more placements, the court ordered that the child be placed with her mother because the Department could not find a facility with space to put the child, and facilities with vacancies would not take her.

For the 200 children whose case files we examined, about 19 percent of their placements while in the Department's custody were not in the recommended types of facilities. The most common reasons cited were that space in the recommended type of facility was not available, or that the facility refused to take the child. In addition, 40 percent of the social workers who responded to our survey indicated that one or more of their placement recommendations had been overruled or changed. Most gave the same reasons: there was a lack of space in the recommended type of facility or the facility refused to take the child.

When children were not placed as recommended for one of these reasons, they most often needed to be placed in a group home or private hospital, but were most often placed in an emergency shelter, with family members, or in a foster home. The following examples illustrate these findings.

In our sample, we found 17 instances in which the current recommendation for a child in custody was a Level IV group home. These children were not placed in a Level IV group home, but were placed as follows:

- 7 children were placed in emergency shelters
- 4 children were placed with family members or relatives
- 3 children were placed in family foster homes
- 2 children were placed in private hospitals
- 1 child was placed in a State hospital

Conversely, we found that 30 children were placed in emergency shelters when the placement recommendation for them was a different facility. The recommended placements for these children were as follows:

- 9 children were supposed to be placed in Level V group homes
- 7 children were supposed to be placed in Level IV group homes
- 7 children were supposed to be placed in private hospitals
- 5 children were supposed to be placed in family foster homes
- 2 children were supposed to be placed in State hospitals

Department officials in the county offices we visited all said a lack of facilities and long waiting lists for facilities were the major factors limiting foster care placements. Most gave the same answer for services. The absence of appropriate placements and services seems especially bad in the western areas of the State, although social workers and area office staff we surveyed indicated there were moderate to severe shortages in virtually all types of foster care placements Statewide.

Not placing children as recommended can have a financial impact on the foster care program. In the short run, placing children temporarily with family members or foster parents may help minimize the costs of the program (although emergency shelters are about as costly as Level V group homes). However, if those children need the structure, supervision, or treatment provided in more expensive facilities but those facilities are not available, there may be significant long-term costs to the program. Children may have more problems while they are in foster care and may stay in the system longer. In addition, they may have more problems when they leave the system to be reintegrated with their families, to be adopted, or to live independently.

Social Workers Express Concerns About the Lack of Availability of Appropriate Placements

We surveyed 329 social workers in the 10 counties we visited during the audit. We received responses from 117, or about 35.6 percent of those surveyed. Several social workers commented that the State does not always have facilities and services available for foster children when needed. Some typical comments we received from the social workers are shown below.

"I would not expect group homes to necessarily set up directly in my county; however, it would be helpful to have some closer than 60-100 miles away."

"Group home placements cannot be made in a single day on an emergency basis. Shelters are used to place children awaiting group home placements."

"Western Kansas is in great need of foster homes and group homes. To find a group home, it may be 100 to 300 miles away from the child's home."

"Children are rarely placed where it is best for them. They are placed with foster parents who will take them, or who have an open bed."

"We have an increasing number of youth who emergency shelters and group homes refuse to take, there is not room for them in therapeutic foster care programs, and they cannot be certified for hospitalization. I am tired of having to beg regular foster homes to take these youth on an emergency basis because we have no other placement resource."

"Because of the shortage of appropriate placements, children are warehoused in short-term placements and left there in a holding pattern until openings become available."

Several factors can be limiting the number of foster care facilities available, including the amount of money the State pays facilities for housing foster care children, and the availability of professional staff in some parts of the State to offer services or staff facilities. To help gauge the effect the amount of money the State pays to foster care facilities may have on the availability of those facilities, we surveyed foster parents and operators of group homes and residential facilities. We also compared Kansas' reimbursement rates to a number of other measures.

Most foster care providers we surveyed indicated that State reimbursements did not cover their costs of caring for children. In our surveys, we asked if the money the State paid foster families and group homes and residential facilities for caring for foster children was generally higher or lower than their actual costs. The following table shows the responses we received:

	<u>Group and residential facilities</u> (45 responses)	<u>Former foster parents</u> (40 responses)	<u>Current foster parents</u> (61 responses)
Reimbursements are:			
much higher than costs	0%	0%	0%
somewhat higher than costs	0%	3%	9%
about the same as costs	27%	34%	37%
somewhat less than costs	39%	34%	37%
much less than costs	34%	29%	17%

As the table shows, group homes and residential facilities were the most dissatisfied with State reimbursement levels. Almost three-fourths of the respondents from that group indicated that reimbursements were somewhat less or much less than their actual costs. Current foster parents were the least dissatisfied with their rates. Nevertheless, slightly more than half that group said reimbursements were less than their actual costs.

About 63 percent of former foster parents said reimbursement rates were too low. However, only seven of the 40 former foster parents who responded to the survey indicated that one of the reasons they quit being foster parents was because of low reimbursement rates. Most said they had quit because they were dissatisfied with the social workers or the Department.

Reimbursement rates paid to Kansas family foster homes in 1990 generally were higher than rates paid in nearby states. As discussed in Part I of this audit series (An Overview of the Program), the monthly reimbursement rates paid to Kansas foster homes in 1990 were higher than the average paid by four neighboring states. This information is shown in the table on the facing page.

As the table shows, Oklahoma had the highest monthly reimbursement rate in every age category. Kansas had the second highest rate of the five states shown. We were unable to obtain comparable data from these other states about their reimbursement rates for group homes because of differences in terms of services provided and clients accepted into the homes.

**Monthly Reimbursement Rates for Family Foster Homes
As of June 30, 1990**

<u>State</u>	<u>Age 2</u>	<u>Age 9</u>	<u>Age 16</u>
Iowa	\$198	\$243	\$300
Missouri	182	222	244
Nebraska	222	222	222
Oklahoma	282	342	402
Four-state average	\$221	\$257	\$292
Kansas	\$225	\$305	\$386

Family foster care reimbursement rates in Kansas were well below the U.S. Department of Agriculture's estimates of the cost of raising a child in 1990. To find out how the rates in Kansas compared with the actual costs of raising a child, we compared the reimbursement rates for foster parents in fiscal year 1990 to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's estimates of the cost of raising a child as of June 1989. To make the two amounts as comparable as possible, we removed elements of the Department of Agriculture's costs that represented expenditures that foster parents are not responsible for, such as education, clothing, and medical. The accompanying table shows how Kansas' reimbursement rates compare with costs for different ages of children.

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Estimate of Average Daily Cost</u>	<u>1990 Foster Care Daily Rate</u>	<u>Percent Difference</u>
0-4 years old	\$12.32	\$7.41	-40%
5-11 years old	\$13.09	\$10.02	-23%
12 years and older	\$14.96	\$12.70	-15%

As the table shows, Kansas' reimbursement rates for foster parents are substantially below the US Department of Agriculture's estimates of the cost of raising a child. This is especially true for very young children, for whom the rates were 40 percent below the cost estimate. For fiscal year 1991, this rate has been increased to \$10.02, the same as the rate for children 5-11 years old.

Kansas' reimbursement rates have increased slightly more than the rate of inflation over the last five years. The table at the top of the next page shows the reimbursement rates for family foster homes, group homes, and detention centers for fiscal years 1986 and 1990, and the percent increases during that period.

As the table shows, the consumer price index has increased by about 21 percent since fiscal year 1986. During the same period, Kansas' reimbursement rates for family foster homes increased about 23 percent, and its rates for group homes and detention facilities increased by about 22 percent. Therefore, it appears that the rate increases that have been granted over the years have kept just ahead of the inflation rate over the past five years.

	FY 1986 <u>Daily Rate</u>	FY 1990 <u>Daily Rate</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Family Foster Homes			
Age 0-4	\$6.04	\$7.41 (a)	22.7%
Age 5-11	\$8.17	\$10.02	22.6%
Age 12 and up	\$10.35	\$12.70	22.7%
Group Homes (b)			
Level III	\$25.85	\$31.41	21.5%
Level IV	\$43.55	\$52.92	21.5%
Level V	\$57.00	\$69.31	21.6%
Detention Facilities	\$40.90	\$49.70	21.5%
Consumer Price Index	107.6	129.9	20.7%

(a) For fiscal year 1991, the Department increased this rate to equal the rate for children ages 5-11.

(b) Rates for Level VI group homes are not included in the table because there are only two Level VI facilities that contract with the Department, and each one receives a different rate.

Providers' dissatisfaction with the amount of time social workers have to work with them may be contributing to provider shortages. As discussed in Part II of this audit series (Placement of Children and Delivery of Services), providers generally gave the Department's social workers low scores in helping when a child was first placed in their home or facility, arranging for services or treatment for the child during the placement, and working with the child and the foster provider when it was time for the child to leave the home or facility. Providers indicated that once a child was placed with them, they rarely saw a social worker. They also complained that social workers often did not return their telephone calls, and that they had to personally arrange for services for a child.

About one-fourth of the former foster parents we surveyed said they stopped being foster parents because they did not get good cooperation from the Department or were dissatisfied with the social workers. Their comments included the following: "The social workers were not experienced enough to know what was going on half the time. It seemed that we had a new one every month and it confused the children." "It would be a lot better if the case workers at least act like they care." We received many similar types of comments from operators of group homes and residential centers.

Although heavy social worker caseloads may not explain all social worker shortcomings, they certainly do create situations where social workers can only devote a limited amount of time to each case. This may translate to phone calls not being returned or services not being provided, and in general, children not receiving the attention they need. This lack of contact with the children and the foster care providers is obviously frustrating to those providers and may result in some of them leaving the foster care system, thereby aggravating existing shortages of facilities.

The Department has offered grants to encourage the creation of several new facilities and services. Basic economic theory would suggest that the Department could increase the availability of placements and services to some extent by increasing the reimbursement rates it pays for those placements. In addition, however, in each year since 1988 the Department has made grants to local governments or organizations to encourage the development and operation of new programs.

Projects funded through these grants must be cost-effective and must impact a target population that is currently being underserved by the system. Grants have been made for small projects like start-up costs for new level V and VI facilities in Wyandotte County, an aftercare program for juvenile offenders released from State institutions, and a training program for foster parents. Such grants have increased from about \$800,000 in fiscal year 1988 to \$1.9 million in 1990. These grants offer the potential for increasing the availability of foster care facilities and services, especially in areas of the State that are experiencing severe shortages.

Conclusion

This question explored the extent to which funding may have affected placement and service decisions within the foster care program. It appears that a lack of available facilities and services—and not budget limitations—kept some children in our sample from being placed as recommended, and kept some children and their families from receiving the services they needed. Appropriate placements and services—together with sufficient staffing resources devoted to the foster care program—offer the best hope for successfully addressing the problems and needs of children in the Department's custody and their families. When these critical resources are in short supply, the likelihood that the foster care system will fail those children and families is increased.

Foster care providers told us that the reimbursement rates they received from the State did not cover their costs, but this did not appear to be a major reason for them leaving the system. They were more likely to leave because they did not get good cooperation from the Department or its staff. Thus, in addressing the shortage of appropriate facilities, the Department must consider the impact its staffing shortages have in this area. Addressing these shortages of staff, facilities, and services is not going to be an easy task, especially in the areas of the State that are most underserved. The Department and the Legislature will need to look for new, innovative, and cost-effective ways to ensure that appropriate facilities and services are available for the children and families that need them.

Recommendations

1. To ensure that adequate numbers and types of placements are available to house children while they are in foster care, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services should explore all available options for increasing the number of placements. As part of that review, the Department should do the following:
 - a. Review the adequacy of reimbursement rates paid to family foster homes and group and residential facilities, and consider the need to adjust those rates to attract more foster care providers into the system.
 - b. Consider allocating more money for start-up grants or other incentives to make it more attractive for facilities to locate in those areas of the State that are most underserved.

2. To ensure that social workers have the support they need to allow them to do their jobs, the Department should assess the staff's reasonable needs for clerical support, office space and equipment, State vehicles, and the like. Once those needs have been assessed, the Department should prioritize those needs and determine how to fund them in the most cost-effective manner.

APPENDIX A

Reported Direct Costs for the 200 Children in our Sample Who Had Been in the Department's Custody

Included in this appendix are room and board, services, medical, clothing, and transportation costs for 167 of the 200 children whose foster care cases we reviewed. Costs for 33 children are not shown on the list. Those 33 children include 13 substitute cases we selected after these data were requested from the Department, and 20 children for whom the Department was unable to provide cost data because of such things as not including State hospital costs, being unable to find eligibility information, and using incorrect case number information.

The costs shown are for fiscal years 1988, 1989, and 1990 only. Cost information before 1988 was not readily available because the Department only keeps three fiscal years of information on-line. As a result, cost information for children who were in custody before fiscal year 1988 is not complete. In addition, some other costs may be understated because Department officials found children with multiple case numbers with some cost information under each number; some cost information for a few children was included in other types of social services cases rather than in foster care cases; and some medical costs at State hospitals were not included.

Fiscal Years 1988 through 1990

	County	Room & Board (a)	Services	Medical	Clothing	Transportation	Total	Months in Custody (b)
1	Barton	\$1,708				\$23	\$1,731	7.6
2	Barton	\$1,197			\$200	\$23	\$1,420	7.8
3	Barton	\$4,882		\$826	\$200	\$120	\$6,028	16.1
4	Barton	\$4,766		\$514	\$200	\$129	\$5,609	16.1
5	Barton	\$1,577		\$19,244		\$393	\$21,214	15.1
6	Barton	\$15		\$150			\$165	25.5
7	Barton	\$17		\$128			\$145	25.5
8	Barton	\$1,780				\$38	\$1,818	10.7
9	Barton	\$1,260		\$113	\$138	\$19	\$1,530	6.8
10	Barton	\$410		\$441		\$13	\$863	13.3
11	Barton	\$5,765	\$981	\$380		\$34	\$7,160	6.6
12	Barton	\$16,383	\$2,959	\$144			\$19,486	18.4
13	Barton	\$212		\$30		\$14	\$255	7.3
14	Cherokee	\$27,198	\$20,907	\$129		\$75	\$48,309	25.4
15	Cherokee	\$12,855	\$3,552	\$319	\$242		\$16,995	17.9
16	Cherokee	\$410		\$63	\$150		\$623	5.0
17	Cherokee	\$429		\$7	\$184		\$620	5.0
18	Cherokee	\$1,354			\$400	\$9	\$1,763	11.9
19	Cherokee	\$713			\$346	\$7	\$1,067	11.9
20	Cherokee	\$16,686	\$4,082	\$587	\$188		\$21,544	25.8
21	Cherokee	\$47		\$1,141	\$13		\$1,201	1.5
22	Cherokee	\$1,976	\$326	\$36	\$105		\$2,444	11.9
23	Cherokee	\$14,558	\$4,017	\$459	\$200	\$63	\$19,297	20.2
24	Finney	\$260				\$103	\$363	2.5
25	Finney	\$4,804		\$955	\$363	\$44	\$6,166	7.3
26	Finney	\$10,720		\$26	\$75		\$10,821	28.8
27	Finney	\$10,614			\$75	\$157	\$10,845	28.8
28	Finney	\$6,950		\$40,721	\$578		\$48,249	29.6
29	Finney	\$4,193		\$176	\$102	\$150	\$4,622	10.8
30	Finney	\$1,197					\$1,197	12.0
31	Finney	\$289		\$56,845		\$7	\$57,141	3.6
32	Finney	\$3,665			\$200		\$3,865	12.6
33	Finney	\$465					\$465	1.1
34	Finney	\$227				\$113	\$340	9.2
35	Finney	\$3,512			\$200		\$3,712	3.8
36	Finney	\$51					\$51	9.2
37	Geary	\$1,496			\$246	\$5	\$1,746	4.9
38	Geary	\$360			\$250		\$610	1.1
39	Geary	\$937				\$72	\$1,009	2.0
40	Geary	\$11,719	\$1,819	\$1,315	\$553	\$373	\$15,778	24.3
41	Geary	\$2,743	\$736	\$106		\$105	\$3,689	32.0
42	Geary	\$1,306					\$1,306	30.8
43	Geary	\$256					\$256	0.8
44	Geary	\$94					\$94	0.5
45	Geary	\$556					\$556	1.6
46	Geary	\$2,753		\$62	\$47	\$268	\$3,130	26.2
47	Geary	\$69					\$69	0.5
48	Johnson	\$14,140		\$44	\$152	\$26	\$14,362	26.0
49	Johnson	\$27,588	\$9,727	\$596	\$117		\$38,028	34.9
50	Johnson	\$8,530	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,530	24.2
51	Johnson	\$2,553	\$195	\$26,916			\$29,664	12.5
52	Johnson	\$2,978					\$2,978	7.7
53	Johnson	\$9,635		\$130	\$211	\$580	\$10,556	30.1
54	Johnson	\$5,950		\$3,335		\$22	\$9,307	32.2
55	Johnson	\$20,125	\$6,216	\$77	\$70	\$5	\$26,492	27.6
56	Johnson			\$124			\$124	13.8
57	Johnson	\$5,256	\$4,776	\$18,101			\$28,133	26.0
58	Johnson	\$10,087	\$1,648	\$1,266	\$100	\$31	\$13,131	33.4

Fiscal Years 1988 through 1990

	County	Room & Board (a)	Services	Medical	Clothing	Transportation	Total	Months in Custody (b)
59	Johnson	\$26		\$3			\$29	6.4
60	Johnson	\$4,501	\$154				\$4,655	11.7
61	Johnson	\$25					\$25	24.2
62	Johnson	\$2,070					\$2,070	12.5
63	Johnson	\$5,494			\$150	\$167	\$5,810	23.7
64	Johnson	\$4,764		\$17			\$4,781	35.4
65	Johnson	\$2,963		\$58,751			\$61,714	9.5
66	Johnson	\$3,796		\$183			\$3,979	35.4
67	Johnson	\$29,007	\$15,374				\$44,380	23.2
68	Johnson			\$452			\$452	19.8
69	Johnson	\$2,185		\$13		\$192	\$2,390	25.7
70	Marshall	\$3,033		\$248		\$379	\$3,660	36.0
71	Marshall			\$70			\$70	16.3
72	Marshall	\$8,758		\$2,264		\$232	\$11,254	25.8
73	Marshall	\$903			\$61		\$964	2.3
74	Sedgwick	\$582					\$582	16.2
75	Sedgwick	\$2,795		\$42			\$2,837	27.6
76	Sedgwick	\$4,257	\$45	\$55	\$200		\$4,557	30.8
77	Sedgwick	\$7,418	\$1,289	\$27,683		\$15	\$36,405	28.6
78	Sedgwick			\$301			\$301	14.3
79	Sedgwick	\$23,464	\$4,596	\$2,141		\$90	\$30,291	28.9
80	Sedgwick	\$11,650	\$2,298	\$6		\$316	\$14,270	24.0
81	Sedgwick			\$580			\$580	25.7
82	Sedgwick	\$5,586	\$1,382	\$3,552	\$97		\$10,618	19.8
83	Sedgwick	\$6,524	\$6,138		\$57		\$12,719	13.0
84	Sedgwick	\$3,173		\$141	\$309	\$100	\$3,723	17.5
85	Sedgwick	\$3,523	\$992				\$4,515	26.7
86	Sedgwick	\$8,749	\$3,527	\$2,076	\$73		\$14,424	19.1
87	Sedgwick			\$1,430			\$1,430	22.5
88	Sedgwick	\$7,663	\$1,619	\$35			\$9,317	32.0
89	Sedgwick	\$793	\$283				\$1,076	4.8
90	Sedgwick	\$5,253		\$105	\$150	\$60	\$5,568	32.5
91	Sedgwick			\$70			\$70	6.0
92	Sedgwick	\$1,485	\$928		\$283	\$50	\$2,746	11.6
93	Sedgwick	\$11,454		\$29			\$11,483	35.1
94	Sedgwick	\$3,650	\$1,541		\$101		\$5,292	10.1
95	Sedgwick	\$3,465			\$108	\$345	\$3,917	25.6
96	Sedgwick	\$23,050	\$5,364	\$936	\$151	\$509	\$30,009	32.5
97	Sedgwick	\$14,916					\$14,916	23.3
98	Sedgwick	\$14,050	\$3,181	\$248	\$103	\$190	\$17,771	20.6
99	Sedgwick	\$1,995			\$91		\$2,085	8.8
100	Sedgwick	\$932	\$918	\$30			\$1,880	9.4
101	Sedgwick	\$870	\$788	\$203			\$1,861	9.4
102	Sedgwick	\$4,744	\$1,470	\$1,673	\$100		\$7,987	35.0
103	Shawnee	\$457		\$219			\$676	12.9
104	Shawnee			\$137			\$137	21.5
105	Shawnee			\$260			\$260	21.5
106	Shawnee	\$9,164	\$2,164	\$11,840	\$299		\$23,466	31.0
107	Shawnee	\$2,887			\$100	\$35	\$3,022	17.6
108	Shawnee	\$3,178			\$100	\$39	\$3,317	17.6
109	Shawnee	\$2,887			\$100	\$35	\$3,022	17.6
110	Shawnee	\$33,088	\$9,109	\$1,888			\$44,084	32.1
111	Shawnee	\$2,054			\$249	\$8	\$2,311	6.0
112	Shawnee	\$281	\$79	\$618			\$978	14.1
113	Shawnee	\$29					\$29	0.8
114	Shawnee	\$2,868					\$2,868	11.6
115	Shawnee	\$5,787	\$2,918	\$9,451	\$199		\$18,355	25.8
116	Shawnee	\$21,519	\$20,665	\$503	\$345	\$221	\$43,253	27.7
117	Shawnee	\$4,312	\$1,147	\$2,789	\$200		\$8,448	9.4

Fiscal Years 1988 through 1990

	County	Room & Board (a)	Services	Medical	Clothing	Transportation	Total	Months in Custody (b)
118	Shawnee	\$11,835		\$206			\$12,041	35.0
119	Shawnee	\$11,379	\$7,977	\$6,861	\$100	\$100	\$26,417	21.3
120	Shawnee	\$152	\$12	\$1,472			\$1,636	18.7
121	Shawnee			\$2,173	\$122		\$2,295	27.6
122	Shawnee	\$23,602	\$14,451	\$1,854			\$39,907	26.5
123	Shawnee	\$22,264	\$6,705	\$1,927	\$125		\$31,021	24.4
124	Shawnee	\$6,965	\$1,391	\$49	\$85		\$8,490	32.7
125	Shawnee	\$54					\$54	2.0
126	Shawnee			\$8,703			\$8,703	7.8
127	Shawnee	\$2,336		\$820			\$3,156	30.0
128	Shawnee	\$319					\$319	5.3
129	Thomas	\$1,609		\$399	\$50		\$2,058	4.7
130	Thomas	\$4,804	\$959	\$3,801	\$201	\$282	\$10,047	13.1
131	Thomas	\$883			\$99		\$982	19.4
132	Thomas	\$314		\$169	\$76		\$560	14.5
133	Thomas	\$27					\$27	5.8
134	Thomas	\$27					\$27	5.8
135	Thomas	\$14					\$14	5.8
136	Thomas	\$35					\$35	5.8
137	Thomas	\$5,460		\$293			\$5,753	21.7
138	Thomas	\$5,235		\$2,803			\$8,038	21.7
139	Thomas	\$571		\$68			\$639	4.2
140	Thomas	\$611		\$78			\$689	4.2
141	Thomas	\$451		\$396	\$97		\$944	14.7
142	Thomas	\$1,050		\$126			\$1,175	4.2
143	Wyandotte	\$2,040		\$90			\$2,129	12.8
144	Wyandotte	\$477	\$76	\$155			\$707	11.7
145	Wyandotte			\$45,112			\$45,112	1.7
146	Wyandotte			\$7,258			\$7,258	11.7
147	Wyandotte	\$17,417	\$9,660	\$5,300	\$317		\$32,695	29.5
148	Wyandotte	\$728			\$250		\$978	5.7
149	Wyandotte	\$3,271					\$3,271	33.9
150	Wyandotte	\$3,924					\$3,924	15.6
151	Wyandotte	\$13,744	\$448	\$353	\$124		\$14,669	33.2
152	Wyandotte			\$67			\$67	25.3
153	Wyandotte	\$7,179	\$74	\$2,869	\$125		\$10,247	30.6
154	Wyandotte	\$839	\$199	\$9	\$500		\$1,546	2.6
155	Wyandotte	\$1,919		\$158			\$2,077	8.2
156	Wyandotte			\$505			\$505	24.3
157	Wyandotte	\$228	\$152			\$21	\$402	13.9
158	Wyandotte	\$2,619		\$29			\$2,648	15.9
159	Wyandotte	\$4,764	\$2,080	\$11,617	\$124		\$18,585	21.2
160	Wyandotte	\$9,951		\$280	\$325		\$10,556	32.5
161	Wyandotte	\$7,999	\$1,479	\$7	\$124	\$58	\$9,668	21.0
162	Wyandotte			\$358			\$358	20.3
163	Wyandotte	\$155		\$499			\$654	14.3
164	Wyandotte	\$3,431		\$77			\$3,507	29.0
165	Wyandotte	\$14,698		\$2,672			\$17,370	25.8
166	Wyandotte	\$1,421		\$125	\$125		\$1,670	18.1
167	Wyandotte	\$50	\$35				\$85	7.0

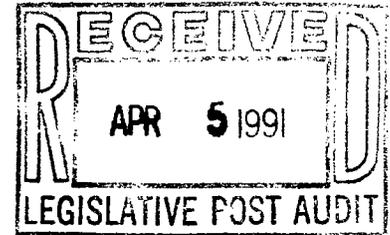
(a) In addition to the per diem paid to foster parents and to group homes, this category includes expenditures for emergency foster care, day care, prevention of out of home placement, adoption support, independent living, and reunification services.

(b) The number of months that the child was in the Department's custody during fiscal years 1988 through 1990.

APPENDIX B

Agency Response

On April 3, 1991, we provided a copy of the draft audit report to the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Its response is included in this Appendix.



STATE OF KANSAS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

915 S.W. Harrison, Docking State Office Building, Topeka, Kansas 66612-1570

JOAN FINNEY, *Governor*

April 5, 1991

Meredith Williams
Legislative Post Audits
109 West 9th, Suite 301
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1285

SRS Foster Care Program

Dear Mr. Williams:

We want to compliment you on the fine report which you and your staff completed on staffing and funding levels in the SRS foster care program. Your conclusions are consistent with my own impressions since returning to the agency.

We were pleased to note that several of the planning strategies we have initiated are consistent with the recommendations presented in the report. We will incorporate the additional recommendations into our planning as we move forward in developing a comprehensive plan.

We very much appreciate the work of your staff and their patience with us as we developed the data they needed. Again, we appreciate the help Legislative Post Audit staff is providing in improving the foster care system in Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert C. Harder".

Robert C. Harder
Acting Secretary

RCH:jh