

# **Maintenance Needs in Performance-Based Contracting Success: The Missouri Project on Privatization of Out-of-Home Care for Children**

## **Project Overview**

Missouri's study examined the processes necessary for maintaining public and private partnerships in performance-based contracting of case management services in child welfare beyond the initial contract implementation process. Using a mixed method design, the project expected to determine a best-practice model for ongoing use of performance-based contracting in the delivery of out-of-home care case management services.

## **Description of Sites**

The performance based foster and adoption case management contracts were initially awarded to seven consortiums effective 06/01/05. Case assignment did not begin until 09/01/05. The contracts were awarded in three regions: St. Louis; Kansas City; and Springfield. Initially cases were only assigned from Greene County, in the Springfield Region, to one provider. When the region was expanded to include the 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Circuits, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, case assignment began to a second contractor. Three provider consortiums serve St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles, and Jefferson Counties in the St. Louis Region. Two provider consortiums serve Jackson, Andrew, Buchanan and Clay Counties in the Kansas City Region. Two provider consortiums serve Greene, Christian, Taney, Lawrence, Barry and Stone Counties in the Springfield Region. Three additional contracts were awarded on 09/01/08 to serve 12 counties in the central, south central and southwestern portions of the state. Each region is served by one consortium.

Several non-negotiable items were established prior to the potential contractors submitting competitive bids. Those items included a minimum number of supervisory units, a supervisor to worker ratio, a continuum of services, and a maximum fee for a child's care and case management services (set by an actuary study). These non-negotiable items were the contributing factors for providers combining smaller agencies into a larger consortium.

Missouri's Children's Division established "mirror" units within the public realm to parallel private contractors in two regions, Springfield and Kansas City. The "mirror" units are Children's Division personnel who performed child welfare case management duties in a replicated environment similar to the private sector. Matched criteria included pre-established base caseload size, rotation assignments, caseload caps, supervisor to worker ratio and staff development expectations. The establishment of the "mirror" sites allowed for comparative outcome analysis in the areas of permanency, stability, and safety.

## **Project Activities**

Activities to satisfy the needs of the cross-site evaluation and the unique needs of the state of Missouri included surveys and interviews with frontline workers and supervisors from public and private agencies, judges presiding over foster care cases, CEOs of private consortiums, Children's Division Regional Directors, public and private Quality Assurance staff, and Oversight Specialists who provide technical assistance to the private agencies. Child welfare outcome data in the areas of permanency, stability, and maltreatment was also utilized.

In addition to the activities described above, several meetings were held with a goal of improving child welfare services in Missouri and the public/private partnership. They include: two practice summits which partnered case managers, supervisors, program managers, CEO's and Regional Directors from public and private sectors; two joint Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) summits for sharing of best practice; and a two day training of QA/QI specialists which provided an opportunity for these staff to collaborate, share ideas and share tools.

The quarterly meetings held with the contracted CEOs, Program Managers from the public and private agencies, and Oversight Specialists were also observed with meeting minutes provided for the local and cross-site evaluation.

### **Long-Term Benefit**

Missouri's project provided an opportunity to examine the long-term maintenance of performance-based contracts to effectively and efficiently promote improved outcomes for children in out-of-home care. Missouri's model was built on private/public collaboration. As such, it also provided an opportunity to examine how to achieve, sustain, and improve such collaboration.

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