

## **Director's Message**

4/22/19

Dear Team,

On October 1, 2019, DCFS faces the potential loss of over \$200 million due to the expiration of the Title IV-E Waiver. This could have a significant adverse impact on the services we provide.

### **What is the “waiver,” you might ask?**

- Most of our federal funding can only be spent on foster care payments—so the federal government guarantees funds for certain children who enter the system, but provides very limited funds to keep them from entering care in the first place.
- With the Title IV-E Waiver, the federal government essentially “waived” these restrictive requirements, granting us great flexibility to invest federal dollars intended for foster care payments for other purposes, like prevention and after care services or for the Core Practice Model.
- DCFS has operated under the waiver since 2007, and during that time we have seen a major shift in the way we practice social work and engage families—resulting in a 19% decline in foster care caseloads, and 53% decrease in average length of stay in out-of-home care.
- Unfortunately, without an act of Congress, waivers for all states are set to expire on September 30, 2019.

### **What's at stake if the waiver isn't extended?**

- Thanks to the Board of Supervisors, we have hired more than 3,100 social workers since 2013, resulting in lower caseloads. It has been a steady march forward and we have yet to cross the finish line, but certainly, a \$200 million loss threatens to undermine our progress.
- The waiver has been instrumental in allowing social workers to practice social work and truly engage with families. Longtime social workers may recall the days of checklists when detaining a child, instead of wrapping around the family with the support of the Core Practice Model and Child and Family Team meetings. This investment has yielded clear results for our clients.
- Not only are our caseloads vulnerable, but so are the services we rely on to support our children and families. When a family expresses their voice and choice and requests services we can't provide, how will we support them?

Since I first joined the Department, I have been working with Chief Deputy Director Brandon Nichols and the Board of Supervisors in advocating for legislation to extend the waiver. It is no small feat to get a bill passed in Congress, but we have come further than I had imagined. Senator Feinstein (D-CA) and Senator Rubio (R-FL) introduced the “State Flexibility for Family First Transitions Act” (S. 107) in January to extend existing waivers for up to two years to assist with our transition to the recently enacted “Family First Prevention Services Act.” Next month, I'll be returning to Washington, DC with the Board of Supervisors to educate lawmakers on the impact of allowing our waiver to expire.

### **SEIU Lunchtime Meetings**

In the coming weeks, from April 29 to May 17, SEIU 721 will be conducting a series of lunchtime educational meetings at DCFS offices. The goal of the meetings is to educate its members about their efforts to support the waiver extension and opportunities to be involved.

Thank you for all you do for our children and families. Have a great week.