



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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Review of DOC Contractual Foster Care program underway

Pierre- A review of the Department of Corrections (DOC) Contractual Foster Care Program is being conducted as a result of a criminal investigation, which has resulted in criminal complaints filed against Ted Klautt of Walker, SD. Klautt's wife had been a contractual foster care provider for the state since November of 2001. On February 2, 2007, the DOC removed the foster care children placed in the Klautt home upon the advice of the Division of Criminal Investigation, pending their investigation. The foster care contract has been terminated for cause.

"I am horrified at the allegations made regarding the abuse of children placed in the DOC Foster Care program," said Corrections Secretary Tim Reisch. "The allegations are certainly not indicative of the dedication and quality of care provided by our licensed Foster Care providers."

At Reisch's request, Juvenile Corrections Monitor John Ellis is conducting a review of the DOC Foster Care program. The review includes personal interviews of all juveniles currently assigned to the program as well as juveniles that were formerly assigned to the program. No other significant allegations have come from the review to this point.

"The use of the Juvenile Corrections Monitor for an investigation of this nature is fairly rare but not unprecedented," said Reisch. "State law makes the Juvenile Monitor responsible for investigations involving allegations of abuse or neglect in our state-run facilities, but Governor Rounds has used him to conduct similar investigations in private facilities on a number of occasions as well." This is the first time that the Juvenile Monitor has conducted an investigation involving the DOC Foster Care Program.

The DOC Foster Care program was created in 1998 to serve children committed to the DOC by the courts, which are unable to return to live with their family after successfully completing their treatment programs. "Unfortunately, not all of our kids have an appropriate home to return to, and foster care is a good fit for a number of them," stated Doug Herrmann, Director of Juvenile Services.

DOC foster care providers must meet licensing standards established by the SD Department of Social Services.

DOC Contractual Foster Care Program Information Q & A Briefing

- **When and why did the DOC Contractual Foster Care program begin?**

The DOC Contractual Foster Care program was started in 1998. The program was created to provide appropriate homes for youth committed to the Department of Corrections who had completed their placement in a correctional facility or alternative care placement but were not able to return to live with their family. Generally speaking, youth are considered for DOC Foster Care when a pre-release assessment determines their home/parents are not the best aftercare option due to relationship, substance abuse, mental health or stability challenges the family and/or the youth face.

- **How is it funded?**

The program was funded initially by utilizing Youth at Risk Funding through the Department of Education. Since July 2002, funding for the program has come from state general funds.

- **How many DOC Youth has the program served since its inception?**

Since the inception of the program, 267 youth have been placed in the DOC Foster Care program.

- **How many youth are currently in the program?**

There are currently 32 youth in the DOC Foster Care Program.

- **How many DOC Foster Care Families are there and where are they located?**

There are currently 18 active DOC Contractual Foster Care homes located in 16 communities: Ramona, Mt. Vernon, Arlington, Edgemont, Waverly, Woonsocket, Spearfish, Custer (2), Keystone, Watertown, Aberdeen (2), Colome, Standburg, Bath, Yankton and Hot Springs.

- **What is the profile of the youth in DOC Foster Care and length of stay?**

Of the 32 youth currently in the DOC Foster Care Program, there are 23 boys and 9 girls. The average age for these boys is 16.7 years and the average age for the girls is 16.9 years. Of the current 32 youth, 28 were committed to DOC as delinquents and 4 were committed as CHINS.

The average length of stay with the family is currently 516 days. Of the current youth, the range of stay spans from a recent placement with the past month to a youth that has been with his foster family for more than four years.

Some youth remain in DOC Foster Care until they transition to independent living as adults, other youth transition from Foster Care to another program (like Job Corps) and some are able to return to live with their family once the issues that warranted the foster care placement are adequately addressed.

- **How does one become a DOC contractual foster care provider?**

Prospective DOC Contractual Foster Care providers complete an application through DOC. They are required to meet all standards for DSS licensure as foster parents, including criminal background checks, abuse and neglect registry checks, training and home inspections. All DOC contractual foster homes are licensed through the Department of Social Services, who is also responsible for annual licensing renewal.

- **How much is a DOC contractual foster care provider paid?**

DOC Contractual Foster Care providers are paid \$33.50 per day, per child. This daily rate is to be used to meet the food, clothing and miscellaneous expenses of a youth in placement. The foster parent is not be responsible for payment of medical expenses incurred by the youth in placement, however the foster care parent is required to take the youth to Medicaid providers for medical/dental care.

- **What systems are in place to monitor the care of youth placed in the DOC Foster Care Program?**

There are a number of safeguards in place. Every year the Department of Social Services makes a visit to each of the homes they license to provide foster care. This is done as a part of the license renewal process. The Department of Corrections also employs two Foster Care Specialists, one assigned East River and one West River. These Foster Care Specialists work with the youth in foster care and the foster family through in-person and phone contact. Additionally, every child assigned to the DOC Foster Care Program has a Juvenile Corrections Agent assigned, who is required to maintain regular contact with the youth.