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Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



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January 6, 2022

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1460 – An Act To Revise the Department of Health and Human Services Rehabilitation and Reunification Process

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

On June 15, 2021, you sent a letter to the Office of Child and Family Services requesting an update on the development of policies related to family reunification. This letter serves as OCFS' response to your request.

OCFS has a standard practice for the development and implementation of all new and revised policies. Under OCFS' Cooperative Agreement with the Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine policies are developed and updated with the assistance of Cutler staff who work to develop the initial draft, including conducting research and bringing their national experience in child welfare policy to the process. The draft policy is sent to child welfare staff to allow them to provide input and draft policy updates are shared with the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel (MCWAP), which includes the Child Welfare Ombudsman. We have had rich discussions with MCWAP regarding these policies and staff have provided invaluable input.

Policies updated in 2021 include:

- Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)
- Safe Haven Policy
- Staff Safety Policy
- Immunization Policy
- Family Team Meeting (FTM) Policy

In addition, there are several more policies currently in the finalization process, including:

- Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Policy
- Youth Transition Services Policy
- Placement with DHHS Employees Policy

OCFS is aware that the Family Team Meeting Policy was of particular interest for this Committee and discussed in the context of LD 1460. The new [FTM Policy](#) was issued in November of 2021 and provides clear and consistent practice expectations to staff regarding when and how FTMs should be convened. As noted above, this policy was revised in collaboration with staff from the Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine and MCWAP provided input on the content before it was finalized. Additionally, OCFS invited the participation and input of those who expressed concern and interest in this policy during the committee process on LD 1460. Updated guidance to staff on FTMs was a recommendation of the Collaborative Safety report received in October and OCFS utilized information from the fatality reviews conducted with Collaborative Safety to inform improvements to the policy.

Work to update additional policies will continue in 2022 in collaboration with the Cutler Institute. We will provide updates on the work undertaken in 2022 in our annual report at the end of the year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Todd A. Landry
Director, Office of Child and Family Services

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STATE OF MAINE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

June 15, 2021

Todd A. Landry, Director
Office of Child and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services
11 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0011

Dear Director Landry,

The Health and Human Services Committee recently considered [LD 1460](#), An Act To Revise the Department of Health and Human Services Rehabilitation and Reunification Process. The committee voted “ought not to pass” based on the work the Department of Health and Human Services is currently undertaking with the Muskie School of Public Service, in particular the work relating to updating and revising policies regarding reunification for families involved with child protective services, including family team meetings. The Committee requests that the Department provide an update on the development of the policies related to family reunification, including a copy of the policies and a list of people involved in the development of these policies, no later than January 15, 2022. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sen. Ned Claxton
Senate Chair

Rep. Michele Meyer
House Chair

cc: Health and Human Services Committee members
Representative McCrea, Sponsor of LD 1460
Jeanne M. Lambrew, Commissioner, Department of Health and Human Services
Molly Bogart, Government Relations Director, Department of Health and Human Services