

State of New Mexico

CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

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CABINET SECRETARY

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May 26, 2020

Angie K. Schneider, Chair
Shelly Bucher, Program Director

Dear Ms. Schneider and Ms. Bucher,

Thank you for the Substitute Care Advisory Council (SCAC) 2019 Annual Report. The Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) truly appreciates the Advisory Committee and the Substitute Care Review Board members' extraordinary dedication to the children and families of New Mexico.

According to the FY19 Report, the SCAC reviewed 97 children's cases, with a focus this year on older children and youth in foster care. This subpopulation is of special interest to CYFD as well, and we appreciate the closer look that the SCAC was able to take with regard to the unique challenges involved in serving this age group.

In the FY19 Report, it was noted that there was little evidence that youth aged 14 and older were provided Independent Living Assessments; updated case plans with clear Life Skills Plans; and involvement in their Life Skills case planning—all of which are outlined in CYFD policy regarding services to older children and youth in foster care.

CYFD is currently in the late planning stages of restructuring how we work with older youth in foster care. You may be aware that we are extending foster care services for youth up to age 21, using a phased-in approach that begins in FY21. To serve these youth and young adults, we will be implementing a new practice model that is relational rather than transactional, with clearly operationalized goals and principles designed to improve outcomes. As this new model will require careful consideration of caseloads and specialized training, our hope is that youth aged 16-21 will have one worker assigned to them, as opposed to the current structure, in which the Youth Transition Services worker merely augments the primary case management that is provided by the youth's Permanency Planning Worker.

Thank you for allowing CYFD the opportunity to respond to the 2019 SCAC Annual Report's formal recommendation(s). If you have any questions regarding this response or our other activities, please call me at (505) 827-7602. Thank you again for all you do for the children, youth, and families of New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. Blalock".

Brian Blalock
Cabinet Secretary

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