Ms. Freed, Mr. Fertig,

Thank you for the below color-coded responses, indicating responses in our continuing Q&A. I did note that my email address was incorrect, so Brittany Glas forwarded the email on to me. For future reference my email address is: rachel.sommerfeld@ksn.com.

I do have some additional follow-up questions regarding my initial and ongoing request.

On March 23, 2015 I requested the following:
"I am requesting documentation of the response times of each of these 4 steps [referring to report, preliminary inquiry, initial assessment and further assessment or investigation] for child cases in DCF for the past 5 years... I would like a breakdown by each year, or if possible, month-to-month."

As of this date, I have not received this specific information. I was initially told “DCF does not track the time from the beginning of the report to the completion of each step. Therefore data on the average response time for each of the four steps is not available."

I have since been offered the following data, with ongoing requests and questions for clarification:
1) On-time percentage for SFY 2015 further assessment for abuse/neglect timely contact with victim/family.
2) On-time percentages for Initial Assessment decisions for 2014 and 2015 YTD (for both adults and children, combined).

I appreciate your further clarification of policies listed below. However I am still requesting the specific data for the past 5 years and documentation of the data and how it was compiled. I have asked, in multiple ways, for better clarification of how DCF monitors and tracks response times and on-time percentages throughout the stages of an investigation and the data that you track. Although you have provided on-time percentages for initial assessment decisions (children and adults) and timely contact with victim/family, I have not been offered 5 years of data, and have further not received documentation of that data. As my initial request also requested information regarding child cases, I am also requesting that the on-time responses for Initial Assessments be split up into on-time child responses and on-time adult responses. I am also requesting on-time data and documentation for the other stages of a child case/report (preliminary inquiry, further assessment: same-day response, 72-hour response, 20-day response.)

You mention several different systems that track cases saying there is no one central location to pull reports on the data from these systems:
KIPS
KIDS
FACTS
Due to the standard Federal CFSR review, you say that this information cannot be made available until after June, when that review is completed. Do you have a projected date for this data being made available? What is the timeframe (start date and anticipated completion dates) expected for this CFSR review?

Further, are there other methods available to receive this information in a more timely fashion? We understand if this data is not available in a simple 2 or 3-page report but continue to request this data so that we can compile the information requested in our KORA. Many other government agencies also offer us the ability to inspect certain records and documents in person, in lieu of providing printed documents. Please let me know if this is an option as well, that could provide us a more direct method to finding this data. We further understand that if this data is only available through your data team, you will provide us an estimate for any fees incurred for staff time or copies of documents.
I have done some searching on the DCF website and the online policy manual and am hoping to get a better understanding of the systems you mentioned above. Can you direct me towards further explanation of these systems to supplement the information I have found online?

FACTS: Family And Children Tracking System is the agency’s child welfare information system. Information in FACTS is used to support the department budget, internal management, and reports to the legislature, federal government and the general public. FACTS includes information about the outcomes of abuse and neglect investigations, the child abuse and neglect central registry and foster care and adoption information.

KIPS: Kansas Intake/Investigation Protection System (online link to form for mandatory reporters)

KIDS: I have not been able to find more documentation about what KIDS stands for and how it is implemented.

Thank you for your help with this continued request.

Sincerely,

Rachel Schrag Sommerfeld
Executive Producer
KSN | ksn.com
833 North Main St. Wichita, KS 67203
Newsroom: 316-292-1111
Direct: 316-292-1141   Cell: 316-

From: Theresa Freed [mailto:Theresa.Freed@dcf.ks.gov]
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2015 2:45 PM
To: Sommerfeld@ksn.com; Brittany Glas; Denise Killian
Subject: responses

I'm back at my desk now. here are the color-coded Q&A.

From: Rachel Sommerfeld
Sent: Sunday, April 19, 2015 10:25 PM
To: Denise Killian
Subject: Additional DCF follow-up questions

Denise,
Please see my additional questions and clarifications regarding the most recent response to my ongoing KORA request, received Friday. I have not yet sent this to Mr. Fertig, PIO, or Ms. Freed, Director of Communications. If you feel it is more appropriate to send this to Mr. Knapp, given your ongoing discussion with him, please forward this to him, or let me know if I should send this directly to Mr. Fertig & Ms. Freed.
Thank you.
Rachel

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Mr. Fertig, Ms. Freed,
Please see the additional questions regarding ongoing KORA request below. In order to make my questions more clear, as the below text includes many original questions, responses from DCF and follow up questions, I have typed my most recent questions in **BOLD.** I have taken my original follow-up questions and placed them in **ITALICS.** The responses I have received from DCF are in **QUOTATION MARKS.** I have also attached a PDF with all the prior communication regarding this KORA request.

Given the continuing confusion (thus the need to try to differentiate questions, answers and follow-up questions) I feel an on-camera interview would be the best way to help give us clear answers to our questions.

In response to my original KORA, I requested response times for the past 5 years. After for several clarification emails back and forth, I received an email with data for FY2014 and FY2015 for initial assessment and timely contact with victim/family. (See continued questions about those definitions below and whether those details are a direct response to the data I requested in the KORA.) I have not yet seen any documentation for years prior to 2014. Please provide me with the data for the past 5 years.

In response to question 2a below:
I am still unclear about what “timely contact with the victim/family” means. Is it the same thing as “Reasonable efforts to determine safety” and “Safety determination at initial contact?” I was pointed to those policies (2310 and 2312) for my answer. Do I assume that “timely contact with the victim/family” is the same thing? I spoke with Brittany Glas, who did a pre-interview Friday in Topeka, and she indicated that she was also unclear about the definition. She said she was told several times that things are determined on a “case-by-case basis.” Is there a standard?

- **Timely has to do with timeframe:** did the worker respond within the timeframe assigned? The KPRC assigns each abuse/neglect event as either a "same day" or "72 hour". When a worker makes contact and determines initial safety within the assigned timeframe, it is considered timely.
- **Safety determination at initial contact has to do with assessing safety at initial point of contact:** when the worker made initial contact, did worker determine safety? The initial safety decision must be made within the assigned timeframe of same day or 72 hours.
- **Reasonable efforts to determine safety, has to do with risk/safety assessment and protective action:** Once a worker has determined immediate safety of a child, the worker must also complete a comprehensive risk/safety assessment; did the worker obtain sufficient information to make an assessment? What did the worker do with that information? (such as conduct safety planning, request services, request out of home removal, etc.) This should be ongoing throughout the life of the case.

I also asked for an explanation of what constitutes “timely contact” – is it in hours? The same day assignment is literally, "same day". So if a social worker gets a "same day" at 4:59 pm on a Friday afternoon, the social worker has to respond on Friday afternoon on the same day. It is not 24 hour.

How many hours? Is it different for a 24-hour response time case and a 72-hour response time case? Is the “timely contact” in fact 24 and 72 hours? **72 hours, is 72 working hours, excluding weekends and holidays. There is no 24 hour response...it is a "same day" response.**
What are the specific requirements to be considered “timely”?  *Worker must respond within the same day or 72 working hours as assigned.*

In PPM2310 it discusses how a social worker determines the initial safety of the child who is the subject of the report, contacting a parent, caregivers, siblings, alleged perpetrators, etc. may be needed to determine the safety of the child. It all says this should be done “within the response time.” Is this within 24 or 72 hours? Is that the specific time that is allowed? This policy also does not specify a time frame for what is “timely contact” with the family and these other individuals. *"Response time" always refers back to the case assignment response time, of either "same day", "72 hour" or 20 (working) days.*

To be clear: Can I assume, after my multiple questions on this issue, that this is the meaning: After a call comes in to the office, a social worker or other DCF worker has 24 hours SAME DAY, not 24 hours (or 72 hours depending on the case) to speak with parents, siblings, caregivers, alleged perpetrators, etc. to determine if that child is in immediate danger. YES. Is that in fact the the requirement for a 24-hour (SAME DAY, not 24 hours) (or 72) response time? YES.

*If that is the case, then is it correct to say (given the details I was given in one of the responses from DCF) that of the reports that are assigned for further assessment of abuse neglect concerns in 2015 thru Jan., in 97% of cases, social workers contacted these individuals within 24 (SAME DAY) or 72 hours (as permitted) to determine whether the child was in a safe place. Is that an accurate assumption? YES, our data show 97% compliance*

The answer I was given to my question was:

Please see PPM 2310 for Safety Determination at Initial Contact and 2312 Reasonable Efforts to Determine Safety.

http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/PPSpolicies.aspx

My question listed in 2b below goes to the same question. What are the requirements that need to be met on cases with a “same day or 72 hour” response time. Are the requirements the entirety of the PPS PPM2310 – discussing “Safety determination at initial contact.” Is that safety determination the requirement to have an on-time response time? Are there other factors that go into the requirements of meeting that response time? Do they have to discuss more with the reporting party? Any law enforcement? Are there documents that must be obtained in that time? Workers must make face to face contact with the victim as well as collect any information needed to determine safety. That might mean interviews with siblings, caregivers, reporters, relatives, law enforcement, etc...depending upon the situation at hand.

In response to 2c (listed below) – I am still wondering what this means. Do you track the timeliness of 20-day response time cases? Because that report is not readily available does that mean it can be made available? Is there a time frame for receiving such information? I would like to formally request additional information on the response times for 20-working day response times. *(This will require assistance from our data unit. DCF and the State of Kansas is currently under the Child and Family Services Review - CFSR, which is a standard federal review. Due to the intense time consuming nature of this review and the requirements we have for federal availability, our data team may possibly not be able to prepare additional data reports until after June).*
In reference to question 2) above, would cases that do not meet the criteria for same day or 72 hour response time, be applicable for a 20-day response time? YES. Child in Need of Care Non-Abuse (CINC/NAN) events that do not qualify for the 72 hour response time will receive a 20 day response. What is the on-time percentage and documentation for those CINC/NAN with a 20-day response time? The data unit would have to pull this data and create a report. This is time consuming work, which cannot be done at this moment, due to the current Federal CFSR. This information can be made available after June.

"A 20 working day response time is only on non-abuse/neglect reports. A report for timeliness on non-abuse/neglect reports is not readily available."

In response to question 3, I asked for the documentation of the response times. I was told the following to my question:

I would also like to see documentation of the response times listed, for preliminary inquiry, initial assessment and reports assigned for abuse/neglect. I would like to formally request the documentation process for how DCF tracks these policies.

"Our system tracks the time reports are received and the time the initial assessment decision is completed. Our system does not track the time a report is determined to need a preliminary inquiry."

Please note that these are two different processes:
- The KPRC is a central office function, which receives and processes protection reports. The data for this is stored in our KIPS and our FACTS systems.
- The Assessment and Prevention Program, is a regional program, which investigates and assesses reports of abuse/neglect and assesses CINC/NAN reports. This is information is stored in our KIDS and FACTS systems.

Because of the two different processes and three different data systems, there is no one location to pull reports.

What does this response mean? I understand you have a policy (PPM 1320) that states that “Preliminary Inquiry information shall be obtained as soon as practical and shall not exceed three working days from the date the report is received by the agency.” Then what does the statement “our system does not track the time a report is determined to need a preliminary inquiry” mean? Does that mean the system does not if a Preliminary Inquiry is done within the required 3-day response time? I also requested the documentation for how these reports are tracked. Preliminary Inquiries are done by social workers at KPRC. When a hotline call is made and the event is not assigned as a same day, the worker sometimes needs additional information. The KPRC social worker can place the hotline event on “preliminary inquiry” status, in order to contact the reporter, law enforcement, a regional social worker, or etc. in order to gather additional information to determine if or how the case should be assigned. These preliminary inquiries are tracked through our KIPS system.

I have additional questions about the below question from me, and the response from DCF: The original response to my KORA said “DCF does not track the time from the beginning of the report to the completion of each step.” It is unclear to me how DCF does not track this time, but has percentages on how many are done on time. Can you better explain to me the process of how DCF tracks its policies on timely responses? What documentation exists that shows the progression of
timely responses? KPRC tracks the timely processing of calls and KPRC social work assessments (to determine assignment to the field). This is collected in our KIPS database. However, we do not have a longitudinal report that seamlessly measures the entire process.

"Each step in the process has a time frame set in policy. The system tracks each step separately per intake. We do not track the time from the report received to safety determination in one time frame."

I am still very unclear about how DCF keeps track of whether or not cases are being handled according to policy, and according to the specific deadlines required in the PPM. Original response to my KORA said "DCF does not track the time from the beginning of the report to the completion of each step." The above response says "the system tracks each step separately per intake."

*I would like to formally request the timeliness that the system tracks for each separate step. If the system does not track the average response times, please provide me with the function by which the system keeps track of the response times, as I would like to request that information.

**KPRC - tracks intake worker responses and KPRC social worker responses in KIPS and this data is available.**

**Regional field - tracks social worker responses and timeliness through FACTS and this data is also available.**

However, due to the current FEDERAL CFSR, we may not be able to produce these reports until after June.

I have another question regarding the below Q and A:

You state in a previous email that “The maximum time allowed to make an Initial Assessment decision or request a Preliminary Inquiry is the end of the next half work day from the time the report is received.” You have also previously stated that “The Preliminary Inquiry information shall be obtained as soon as practical and should not exceed three (3) working days from the date the report is received by the agency.” What is the on-time percentage and documentation regarding when Preliminary Inquiries are completed? I would like to also formally request the documentation for determining the response time for Preliminary Inquiries.

"Our system does not capture the completion of a preliminary inquiry. For more details regarding the practice and policy for preliminary inquiries see PPM 1320 and 1330. [http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/PPS/Pages/PPSpolicies.aspx]"

To be completely clear: I understand that DCF has a requirement for completing a preliminary inquiry within three days, but your saying that DCF does not track that? Or are you saying that the system does not track it? If the system does not track this, how does DCF ensure that preliminary inquiries are completed within the required 3 days? How do supervisors know if their employees are completing this step on time, if there is no tracking? **We do track this information.**

I have spent a considerable amount of time since my initial contact with Ms. Freed in February going through the Policy Procedure Manual (PPM). I simply cannot be expected to understand the inner workings of the entire manual, when Ms. Freed, of her own admission, says that it is possible for her own staff to misspeak and that my questions require research. ("It is far more likely even the most knowledgeable staff member could misspeak during an on-camera interview under the pressure of
being put on the spot.” “You have asked a long list of questions and follow up questions that require research.” So I do not find it unreasonable that we are asking for further clarification of confusing documents. I have had ample time to read hundreds of the policies listed online. I spent approximately one month reading and researching those policies. I put in a KORA request after that extensive research to get specific data and clarification to my questions. And nearly a month after that initial KORA request I am still awaiting many answers. Many of my questions have been answered with "see xxxx policy" -- yet I continue to ask these questions because the PPM did not make it clear to me how such things were tracked and also does not provide the answers to the specific questions I have asked regarding data. I believe an on-camera interview would allow the kind of follow-up questions that would allow for more clear understanding of DCF policies.

Thank you.

Rachel

Theresa Freed
Director of Communications
Kansas Department for Children and Families
Desk: 785-296-0537
Cell: 785- [redacted]