

Testimony of
Page Walley, PhD
Managing Director, Casey Family Programs

**CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing
Fiscal Year 2010 – 2011**

Committee on Human Services
Councilmember Jim Graham, Chair

March 17, 2011

Ensuring the Safety, Permanency and Well-Being of DC's Children Through Strategic Partnerships and Investments: Casey Family Programs and the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)

Good morning, Chairman Graham and members of the District Council Committee on Human Services. I'm Dr. Page Walley, Managing Director of Strategic Consulting at Casey Family Programs and it is with deep appreciation that we testify before you today regarding our national partnership with the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and investment in ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of the District's most vulnerable constituents.

Who is Casey Family Programs?

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation whose mission is to provide, improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care. Established in 1966 by UPS founder Jim Casey, the Seattle-based foundation focuses entirely on foster care and improving the child welfare system.

Since our founding in 1966, Casey has invested more than \$1.6 billion in programs and services to benefit children and families in the child welfare system. Over the next decade we will invest at least \$1 billion more to fulfill the promise of our 2020 vision – to reduce the U.S. foster care population by half by 2020. And we are on track to deliver this promise as the U.S. foster care population experienced a 17% reduction of 510, 699 to 423,733 children between FFY 2005 – FFY 2010.

We are committed to helping States, counties and tribes implement effective child welfare practice by providing members of Congress, state legislators and child welfare administrators non-partisan research, strategic consulting and technical expertise so they may craft laws and policies to better the lives of children in foster care as well as children and families at risk of entering the child welfare system.

At Casey Family Programs, we support and assist child welfare systems in their efforts to protect children and create strong families. We believe children do best in stable families and familiar environments. This gives them the best chance to grow into successful adults. And that is best for all of us.

Why is Casey Family Programs Investing in the District of Columbia's Children and Families?

The District of Columbia's child welfare system holds the unique distinction of serving the nation's capital most vulnerable children and families. Situated in a highly visible yet complex political, urban environment, the safety and well being of the country's most fragile families generates national attention and interest.

Despite national recognition as one of the few child welfare jurisdictions to achieve all seven (7) of the Federal Child and Family Services (CFSR) systemic outcomes, DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) continues to grapple with intense public scrutiny and skepticism regardless of documented achievement in key performance outcomes related to children's safety, permanency and well being . Unfortunately, CFSA's notable system improvements are routinely overshadowed by remnants of the scathing media attention and discourse surrounding the agency's long standing consent decree and history of court oversight.

At the end of FFY 2010, there were **2069 children in DC's foster care system**. A significant achievement given the 2519 children in out of home care in 2005. This performance outcome alone demonstrates CFSA's ability to safely serve children in their own families and communities, strengthen families through community based prevention and early intervention programs and ensure permanency for youth ages 13 and up who are not only the most challenging population to serve but also comprise 56% of the District's foster care population. In fact, the District experienced an **18% reduction in the number of children in foster care from FFY 2005 – FFY 2010**. Other notable and consistent performance outcomes rivaling other child welfare jurisdictions include:

- The absence of repeat maltreatment for 96% of DC's children which is above the national standard of 94% and a key indicator of children's safety;
- A reduction of entries into care of their infant population from 26% in 2006 to 14% in 2010 despite a national upward trend and disproportionate number of children ages 0-3 entering foster care (36% of total entries in 2009); and

- 67% of youth in pre-adoptive homes exiting to permanency from FFY 2009 – FFY 2010.

Although the District of Columbia is experiencing a significant reduction of children in care and increases of youth exiting to permanency through adoption, legal guardianship, reunification or lifelong permanent connections, there are additional resources Casey Family Programs can offer to help the District improve and sustain their performance in ensuring children's safety, permanency and well-being.

What is the Nature of the District of Columbia's CFSA Partnership with Casey Family Programs?

In 2008, DC CFSA and Casey Family Program formalized a national partnership through a jurisdiction agreement to fund system reform efforts focused on safe reduction and increasing permanency for older youth in care. One of our first projects involved technical assistance and consultation on the development of a continuous quality improvement framework and Comprehensive Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan. As a national leader in improving educational outcomes for foster youth, CFSA was also a participant in our Breakthrough Series Collaborative focused on educational stability and achievement of children in the child welfare system.

CFSA's child welfare Director, Dr. Roque Gerald is passionately committed to Casey's 2020 safe reduction efforts and through his nimble leadership, the agency has systematically implemented a number of aggressive, innovative permanency strategies to safely reduce the number of and increase permanency for older youth in out of home care.

With a CY 2011 total investment of \$150,000, Casey Family Programs is currently funding and providing consultation on the following CFSA initiatives:

1. Data Analysis of the Permanency Opportunities Project (POP) Methodology
2. Development of a Comprehensive Strategic Communications Initiative
3. Development of a Family Centered Practice Model
4. Implementation of Differential Response

Casey Family Programs is also supporting CFSA's senior leadership team in building executive level leadership and organizational capacity through our national partnership with the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA)'s "Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance" (PPCWG) Institute.

How Can Casey Family Programs Continue to Partner and Invest in the District of Columbia's Children and Families?

The District of Columbia's child welfare system is constructed on a solid foundation of family centered principles and accountability for achieving outcomes for families through evidenced based practice, sound policy, rigorous CQI systems, and strategic collaboration at the local and national levels.

Through innovation and seasoned child welfare leadership, CFSA has a demonstrated record of achievement and performance in child safety, permanency and well-being. There remains, however, more work to sustain and improve these outcomes across the District. And given the current fiscal environment, the work ahead proves to be even more challenging.

As Mayor Gray's administration assume their leadership positions throughout the District, Casey Family Programs stands ready to support the Mayor's and CFSA's priorities in serving the District's' most vulnerable constituents. We are well resourced and positioned to deliver an arsenal of national expertise, "real time" data and technical assistance to assist the District in achieving its vision to improve outcomes for children and strengthen families through a comprehensive, integrated "safety net" of supportive services.

Our desire moving forward is to deepen our partnership with the District through strategic alignment of Casey's considerable resources and our shared priorities for children and families. In closing, I sincerely thank District Council and the Committee on Human Services for your attention to my remarks today and will answer any questions you may have at this time.