

Foster care presentation 11-17-15

Special Committee on Foster Care Advocacy

Attention: Senator Knox

Mr. Knox,

On November 17, 2015, I am scheduled to be a witness/presenter to you Foster Care Committee. I would like to provide the following information for your review.

I have been in Law Enforcement since 1981. I am currently employed as a first watch shift lieutenant with Wichita Police Department. This assignment is a day watch position. This assignment has allowed for me to supervise and be personally involved in the issues of foster care occurring within Wichita, Kansas. As the watch commander, I am frequently called by officers and sergeants to calls that need some additional resources. I noticed a sharp increase in the amount of disturbance, vandalisms and other calls occurring at one of the many foster care homes that are within our response zone. The majority of the calls became prevalent after the switch from Youthville to St. Francis.

The geographical area that I am responsible for has between ten (10) and fifteen (15) group and foster care homes. The homes each has multiple residents placed there by the DCF.

The officers that I supervise are frequently called to the homes on incidents that do not require police intervention. I have noticed on several occasions when the officers arrive, usually two (2) are dispatched at a time. The officers encounter staff (house parents) who had difficulty addressing code of conduct rules. On more than occasions the house parent has escalated the situation.

The officers are being requested to transport (JIAC, ComCare or hospital) and monitor the disruptive child as the house parent cannot provide a timely response from the assigned case manager. This can be several hours until a responsible person can be located to relieve the officer.

The officers are then removed from service to address the problems at the homes. This removal from service drains already limited resources to respond to 911 calls.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to your committee and answer any of their questions.

Thank you in advance.

Don Phelps