

The Department of Health and Human Services has released an evaluation of Family Helpline, Family Navigator and Right Turn, services designed to increase support to families in meeting the needs of their children who may be experiencing behavioral or emotional problems. The report covers 30 months, beginning in January 2010 after the passage of LB 603.

The final evaluation by Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc., found the three programs to be effective, valuable services for Nebraska youth and families.

“DHHS has been working diligently to produce effective services for Nebraska youth and families,” said Scot L. Adams, director of the DHHS Division of Behavioral Health. “We hope to continue collaborative partnerships with providers and other stakeholders toward the common goal of providing ‘the right service, in the right amount, at the right time.’”

According to the report, the three services help families clarify their concerns, identify their strengths and needs, and develop plans to address their needs.

The Helpline and Navigator services interact with families who may not have previously experienced involvement with the child welfare or behavioral health systems, but who may be at risk of such involvement.

The evaluation includes findings that:

- Over 15,000 Helpline calls were received by or made to Nebraska families.
- Helpline operators have offered families over 11,600 referrals to services.
- Family Navigator peer services provided support to over 1,000 families and recorded over 3,100 referrals to services.
- Right Turn has served 746 children in 391 families and documented over 3,600 service referrals.
- Only two youth served by Right Turn experienced adoption dissolution.

The support provided by Nebraska Family Helpline is immediate and short term. About half of the recommendations given to callers were for mental health services, with parent education and supports, assistance with basic needs and non-therapeutic services the next most frequently recommended services.

The Family Helpline refers families needing more concentrated assistance for a longer time to Family Navigator services.

The Navigator, or peer mentor, has been through a similar experience and helps the youth and family in crisis understand their options, makes referrals to supports and services, and promotes a partnership between the family and their choice of providers.

The Right Turn program works exclusively with families who have adopted or have legal guardianship of children who had been state wards prior to adoption or guardianship. The program provides supports as families face special issues, offering case management and peer support services. An additional goal is to prevent the dissolution of adoptions and guardianships.

The three services are funded by DHHS. Through contracts, the Family Helpline is operated by Boys Town, Family Navigator services are operated by the Nebraska Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health, and Right Turn is operated by Lutheran Family Services in conjunction with Nebraska Children’s Home Society.