

## Michelle Zaun Discussion Points related to Foster Care

\*Amend the State's 4E Plan to allow Affidavit Homes outside of the reservation.

\*It is no more liability to the state to have an affidavit home than it is to have tribal children in county homes. Likely the opposite considering the responsible agency would be tribal.

\*This would allow for more flexible placement options and allow easier placements for sibling groups. Native families generally speaking are larger thus currently sibling groups are being split which is contrary to the emotional and mental health of children in foster care.

\*Amend the State's Century Code 50-11, Administrative Code 75-03-14 limiting the number of placements to 4.

\*Licenses should be issued on a per household basis. They should be based on experience, capabilities of the foster parents and available space. Many states are 8. While not all homes should have 8, some could be which make for more flexibility for agencies for placements.

\*Sibling placement should become a much higher priority in this state. Allowing higher placement numbers would allow agencies more ability to accommodate this.

\*Different types of licenses should be looked at, experienced homes with extra room could easily have permanent beds and emergency/respite beds so that children are not sitting in offices or having to go home with social workers or be placed in institutions.

\*The system needs better checks and balances to keep agencies behaving in professional manners and keep relationships between foster parents and agencies positive. In many instances the people making the choices for children in care are not the correct people.

\*Permanency for children needs to be addressed. The 15 month policy currently in place is not being followed consistently between agencies or judges.

\*Other agencies than AASK should be looked at for adoption services, AASK is several years behind in some areas of the state in even starting home studies which does not promote permanency for children.

\*Better funding practices for children in care for things like braces and scar repair.

North Dakota's foster homes are full, children are being sent out of the state. Drugs and alcohol are becoming bigger and bigger problems all over the state not just on reservations, thus more kids are entering care. By not changing some of our policies we are forcing agencies to choose which children are more at risk than others. There is no real way to determine that thus leaving many children in bad situations. By not allowing siblings to stay together because of "numbers" and "liability issues" we as a state, the people supposed to care for our kids are hurting them even further. Foster parents need to be treated with professionalism, honesty and appreciation. The good foster parents are the ones that fight and argue, they are the parents with their heart and soul into these children, the parents that spend their time and effort healing and teaching these kids real love instead of just feeding them and sending them to school, yet they are labeled not compliant and too opinionated. The systems trains the foster parents to care, tells them they matter and that their opinions matter, tells them we are supposed to all do what is best for the child/children when very often that is not how things are handled. North Dakota policies are old, new problems with drugs, alcohol, mental illness and crime are affecting us more and more, we need to change our policies to better and more effectively serve our children.