

CHILD WELFARE DECATEGORIZATION

Purpose

Decat was established by Iowa Code section 232.188 to:

- ❑ Establish a system of delivering human services based on client needs rather than categorical programs and funding sources
 - ❑ Redirect child welfare funding to services that are more preventive, family-centered, and community-based in order to reduce the use of restrictive approaches that rely upon institutional, out-of-home, and out-of-community services.
 - ❑ Improve the service outcomes for children and families.
 - ❑ Strengthen community involvement in planning for and addressing the needs of children and families in the community.
-

Source of Funding for Decat Services

- ❑ The majority of funding for decat services comes from state and state-federal dollars appropriated to DHS and allocated through DHS to DHS Regions and to Juvenile Court Services (JCS) for child welfare and juvenile justice services. Principally, this is from the state appropriation for Child and Family Services for the core services of family foster care, group care, family centered services, family preservation, and delinquency services.
 - ❑ Beginning in FY 2000, DHS' Child and Family Services appropriation also included a small allocation (\$2,069,631) specifically for decat services.
 - ❑ To the extent that DHS and JCS are able to "save" dollars by serving children in less restrictive, less expensive levels of care, they are able to re-invest those dollars into prevention and early intervention.
 - ❑ To the extent that demand and utilization of more traditional, more expensive services increase, there are fewer dollars available for decat projects to re-invest in prevention and early intervention. In addition, dollars that would otherwise have been spent for decat services may need to be used to meet the demand for more traditional child welfare and juvenile justice services.
-

Decat Opportunities

- ❑ Flexibility in developing individualized services to respond to individual and family needs.
 - ❑ Ability to invest in prevention and early intervention approaches with dollars that are redirected from core child welfare and juvenile justice services.
 - ❑ Ability to carry over state funds that remain unobligated or unexpended at the end of the fiscal year, and to use those funds to finance other child welfare services enhancements during the succeeding fiscal year.
-

Decat Requirements

- ❑ Develop specific, quantifiable short-term & long-term plans for enhancing the county's or group of county's family-centered & community-based services, & reducing reliance upon out-of-community care.
 - ❑ Develop annual child welfare and juvenile justice services plan.
 - ❑ Involve community representatives and county organizations in the development of the child welfare and juvenile justice plan.
 - ❑ Submit an annual progress report to DHS and to the Iowa Empowerment Board, which summarizes the progress made toward attaining the objectives in the Decat Board's plan.
 - ❑ Coordinate the decat board's planning and budgeting activities with the community empowerment board for the community empowerment area within which the decat county is located.
-

Services Funded by Decat

In FY 2001, \$17.4 M was expended on decat services. Following is a breakdown of the types of services/activities funded.

- 38.8% Prevention and early intervention
 - 39.4% Individualized services for children in CW/JJ system
 - 9.4% Social work case aides
 - 12.4% Decat coordinators, case facilitators, training/consultation, & operating expenses
-

Decat Limits

- ❑ The enabling statute states that, "The decategorization of funding shall not limit the legal rights of children and families in the decat area to services, but shall provide more flexibility to the partnership county or counties in responding to individual and family needs."
- ❑ In other words, if demand for core child welfare/juvenile justice services (e.g., group care, family centered, family foster care, etc.) increases, dollars that would otherwise have been spent on decat services may need to be used to fund core services for children coming to the child welfare/juvenile justice system.