



Hearing Title: "The New Era in the Fight Against Methamphetamine in Iowa"

Presiding: Chairman, U.S. Senator Charles Grassley

Full Judiciary Committee

Date: Tuesday, October 13, 2015

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 600 East Locust Street

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Cowles-Kruidenier Auditorium of the State Historical Building

Written Testimony

Submitted by:

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Senator Grassley is a champion of foster care nationally and has been a supporter of Four Oaks as the lead agency for Iowa's statewide foster care and adoption work, in combination with five non-profit child welfare agencies and the Department of Human Services.

Senator Grassley also visited Four Oaks recently to look specifically at our work in the Wellington Heights neighborhood, to revitalize homes and help families in a more comprehensive way. We call that approach TotalChild. During that visit, Senator Grassley offered to consider supporting finance reform to help us better use existing funding in a more efficient and flexible way to sustain affordable housing and supportive services.

We also want to make the Senator aware that Four Oaks was awarded a federal demonstration grant, locally called PUSH-CR (Partners United for Supportive Housing – Cedar Rapids). It is one of five in the country that is showing how supportive housing for children and their parents in Iowa's foster care system have multiple challenges such as addiction, including meth, and are benefiting from a supportive housing approach. It's another example of a comprehensive/integrated approach in foster care, substance abuse treatment, mental health care, and affordable housing to get better results, faster.



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In the PUSH-CR project, many of the 60+ clients, enrolled in the first three years, have been meth addicts. So this testimony is intended to suggest that an important strategy to help meth addicts recover when they relapse – a quicker recovery and sustained behavior – will help them maintain housing, safely keep their children at home and advance in education and work towards self-sufficiency.

- PUSH-CR currently has 18 or 30% of our currently enrolled families that struggle with Meth use. Many of our families have informal supports with grandparents and siblings stepping forward to try to support the addiction. Most of these parents have excellent parenting skills and have fairly high skill sets being able to work, attend classes and appointments while battling their addiction. Several PUSH-CR participants have been successful in their battle against Meth addiction. Once client described meth use as a three day high that you can't get focused and she chooses not to use it again.

Here are two stories showing how meth is an ongoing issue with the clients we help to recover and stabilize through supportive services and affordable housing:

- A PUSH couple had a fire in the home due to allowing a peer to cook meth. The children were removed. They both completed treatment and the children have been returned and DHS case closed. The father is in federal prison for a minimum of five years, and the mother and children continue to stay involved with PUSH supports and activities.
- PUSH has a single mom who struggled in the first couple of months with getting clean from meth and other substances. She did impatient treatment and her children have returned and she has custody. She is close to getting the DHS case closed and has graduated from family treatment court. It took a lot of support and engagement for her to follow through with treatment and get clean. Once she was clean and mental health addressed she has been successful. She has been clean for over a year.

So, the struggle continues. PUSH-CR represents a complex merger of two systems—child welfare and housing—to serve some of the community's highest need families. This program represents a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the child welfare and housing systems to ensure that these families with the highest need receive the services necessary for stability and safety. With our continued support many of these families will experience success.

To that end, there are two pieces of legislation that we would like Senator Grassley to support. Senator Ron Wyden's legislation, The Family Stability and Kinship Care Act of 2015, as well as legislation from Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Mike Crapo (R-ID), All Kids Matter Act <http://keepingkidsinfamilies.org/> are bills focused on adopting new ideas for improving child welfare policy and investments.

We hope that Senator Grassley will again be a champion for children with a look at how comprehensive, cross-cutting approaches, flexibly funded, produce better and more pro-active results.