

2.0 THE PUBLIC POLICY CONTEXT

A variety of changes in the political and social environment impinged directly on the implementation of FAMILY TO FAMILY. Some of these changes were confined to a particular state or community, but many were local manifestations of forces that had a national impact. Among the factors affecting the initiative were:

- new resources for family support and preventive services became available through the Family Preservation and Support Services Program;
- these were Federal efforts to establish reporting standards through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS);
- Federal funding incentives to enhance state automated child welfare information systems (SACWIS) created an atmosphere that was supportive of the capacity-building objectives of FAMILY TO FAMILY;
- tension between "family preservation" and "child safety" became an issue of public and professional debate; and
- 1994 elections changed the make-up of Congress and many state legislatures and brought into office some governors whose policy agendas were not compatible with FAMILY TO FAMILY.

As this list indicates, the political environment shifted from being quite favorable in the early stages, particularly in certain states, to threatening (even hostile) in the later stages in some states. The following section summarizes the effects of some of these forces. It is followed by a description of changes in each of the states.

2.1 The National Context

The national public policy context within which FAMILY TO FAMILY was planned and implemented was outlined above. Our discussion begins with a new federal program that was established during the first year of the initiative.

The Family Preservation and Support Services Program. During the first year of implementation, efforts under FAMILY TO FAMILY were reinforced by the creation of two new sources of federal fiscal resources. The Family Preservation and Support Services Program, a component of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, brought nearly \$1 billion in new resources to expand the range of services available to disadvantaged families and children. This legislation also was significant for reasons other than the infusion of new fiscal resources. It represented the first formal recognition of family preservation services in federal policy and emphasized the need to deliver services that were family-centered. The manner in which funds were distributed also was important. Using specially designated federal funds, each state had to assemble a wide array of community-based organizations and service providers to: 1) assess current uses of resources to support and serve families and children; 2) assess gaps in services; and 3) formulate a plan for integrating the delivery of supports and services from diverse sources.³

The overall tone of this new program was entirely consistent with the thrust of FAMILY TO FAMILY and states involved in the initiative generally seemed better prepared to undertake the required planning process. This was due in part to the planning effort they had made for FAMILY TO FAMILY, but also because most of the states were already involved in statewide initiatives focusing on families and children.⁴ It was possible, therefore, for them to meet the planning requirement within the context of those efforts.

Regardless of the broader context, the actual amount of resources available to a community under the Family Preservation and Support Services Program was quite small on an annual basis compared to the child welfare budget. As a result, it provided only a modest incentive to mount a special planning effort. Nevertheless, it did seem to provide resources at the margin and to reinforce efforts to include community-based organizations and public agencies other than child welfare that served families and children.

³ See *Making Strategic Use of the Family Preservation and Support Services Program: A Guide for Planning*, Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Children's Defense Fund, 1994.

⁴ This included governors' initiatives, such as *Families and Children First* in Ohio, as well as programs associated with consent decrees, such as the R.C. consent decree in Alabama. New Mexico and Hamilton County, Ohio, began FAMILY TO FAMILY within the context of both a consent decree *and* a governor's initiative.

AFCARS. After remaining in regulatory limbo for several years, final federal rules concerning the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) were finally released on December 22, 1993. The significance of this for the field of child welfare is that uniform data will eventually be available from all states. The direct impact on FAMILY TO FAMILY was that each state had to make modifications of varying degrees to its information system in order to meet federal requirements and not to face financial penalties (only one grantee state—Pennsylvania—does not have a statewide child welfare information system). As a result of the planning for FAMILY TO FAMILY, grantee states became aware of some of the limitations of their systems, and therefore, attempted to make some refinements in them, beyond simply meeting the minimum requirements of AFCARS.

Some states used this opportunity, coupled with technical assistance provided under the auspices of the Foundation, to some advantage.⁵ The impact of AFCARS on the quality of data available in the FAMILY TO FAMILY states, therefore, was generally positive, but ultimately of marginal significance.

SACWIS. A similar conclusion might be reached concerning the impact of incentive funding for new statewide child welfare information systems (SACWIS). Again, the availability of funds providing 75% federal reimbursement for the costs of new or enhanced systems initially seemed very promising. FAMILY TO FAMILY states also were able to take advantage of technical assistance made available by the Foundation in formulating their plans and to collaborate through meetings sponsored by the Foundation in the development of a model information system that would be driven by frontline interests. In this case, however, political changes in Alabama and New Mexico halted or delayed those plans and the inability to reach a consensus across localities prevented Ohio (and Pennsylvania) from developing new systems. New Mexico did eventually implement a comprehensive new system.

It should be noted that these three states had relatively powerful, if not worker-friendly systems already in place when SACWIS funding became available. Thus, most states involved in the initiative (like their counterparts elsewhere in the country) did not take full advantage of the opportunity to expand and enhance their information systems. However, this is attributable in equal measure to an unfavorable climate created by electoral changes and to the challenge

⁵ See the discussion of Ohio's development of a data model in *Using Data to Guide Policy and Practice: Self-Evaluation in FAMILY TO FAMILY*, pp. 59-61.

states faced in resolving state and local interests that made it difficult to meet federal requirements for adopting a statewide design.

Family preservation and child safety. By 1994, family preservation had emerged as an issue of public debate. Discussion in newspaper articles and other reports in the popular press counterpoised the safety of children with family preservation. Adding to the debate were evaluations and other professional assessments that challenged the effectiveness of family preservation services (e.g., Schuerman, Rzepnicki & Littell, 1994). While the reaction within the field of child welfare generally and within the FAMILY TO FAMILY states more specifically did not amount to a backlash, it did temper enthusiasm about intensive family preservation services and produce some changes in rhetoric.

Political changes. Elections in 1994 precipitated major changes in welfare policy that may ultimately produce, directly or indirectly, significant changes in the child welfare system. For example, attempts have been made to eliminate Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and it is questionable whether it will retain its entitlement status. Also of concern is whether recent changes in public welfare policy will have the effect of channeling children into the child welfare system as their families reach welfare time limits and lose assistance.

Accompanying the national political shift were changes in county boards of commissioners, state legislatures, and governorships. As indicated by the following descriptions of changes in the public policy contexts, this resulted in substantial changes in the prevailing policy perspectives in two states, changes that had significant repercussions for FAMILY TO FAMILY.

2.2 Alabama

Planning for FAMILY TO FAMILY began in 1992. In applying for a grant under FAMILY TO FAMILY, Department of Human Resources (DHR) leaders proposed to implement it in conjunction with the system reform efforts required by the R.C. consent decree. This was because the initiative's goals are virtually synonymous with those of the consent decree. For example, while the consent decree mandated that children in out-of-home care remain in their own counties, FAMILY TO FAMILY endeavored to place children in their own neighborhood; the consent decree called for developing services for children and families, FAMILY TO FAMILY sought to expand community-based services; the consent decree called for inclusion of

specific individuals in child welfare decision-making processes, FAMILY TO FAMILY sought to develop partnerships. Jefferson County, which includes Birmingham, the largest metropolitan area in Alabama, became the FAMILY TO FAMILY Phase 1 site.

In 1994, the state elected a new governor. Although philosophical changes immediately accompanied the inauguration of the new governor, changes in the leadership of the DHR did not occur until about eighteen months later. In a span of about three months in spring of 1996, the governor appointed a new Commissioner to lead DHR, and both the Director of Family and Children's Services at the State, and the Jefferson County DHR Director subsequently resigned. This extreme change in leadership and direction left the Alabama child welfare agency in turmoil.

Early in her tenure, the new Commissioner expressed opposition to the R.C. settlement. Of specific concern was the state's commitment to provide resources to improve services for children in out-of-home care with emphasis on avoiding unnecessary placements and providing the least restrictive placement when a child must be removed from home. The Commissioner's vocal opposition to the consent decree and its goals suggested that she did not agree with the work of FAMILY TO FAMILY, although this was never stated.

During 1996 and 1997 there were hiring freezes, several reorganizations, and continuing budgetary crises that significantly impaired the work of DCFS. To achieve system reform of the magnitude being attempted by the State of Alabama's child welfare agency, consistency in leadership and direction and commitment of resources were essential. Unfortunately, these were missing in the State in the past two years, and thus, the work of FAMILY TO FAMILY was seriously impeded.

Jefferson County, which in 1994 began to convert to the system of care prescribed by the consent decree, was especially affected by the inconstancy of the state. In 1996, it was unable to fill vacant staff positions that were needed to meet the demands of the consent decree. Additionally, resources were unavailable to develop needed services for families and children in Birmingham. Finally, staff turnover, fluid leadership, and several reorganizations in Jefferson County produced a situation in which changes in policy and practice were difficult to implement.

2.3 New Mexico

The FAMILY TO FAMILY initiative in New Mexico is housed within the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD). At the inception of the FAMILY TO FAMILY planning grant, the Department had recently been re-organized as a comprehensive agency, with strong support from a governor who had made children and family issues a focus of his campaign and administration. In this context, FAMILY TO FAMILY was viewed by at least some key staff as an entry point for systems reform, consistent with the Foundation's vision.

Changes in CYFD leadership began shortly before the 1994 elections, with the sudden departure of the Director of the Division of Social Services. After the election, the newly-appointed CYFD Secretary began a reorganization process that separated adult and children's services, with children's services housed in the Protective Services Division (PSD). The impact of these changes was magnified by the fact that neither the Secretary nor the new PSD Director had worked in child welfare at the county or state levels. During the first few months of the administration, further reorganization efforts eliminated many mid-level managerial positions, including the four District Operations Managers (DOMs) who had served as intermediaries between central office and county staff. At the same time, a planned transition occurred between the staff member who had coordinated the grant application and the one who had agreed to serve as FAMILY TO FAMILY coordinator in the implementation period.

The effect of these personnel and organizational changes on FAMILY TO FAMILY was profound. During the planning period and first implementation year, leadership of FAMILY TO FAMILY had rested with the Social Services Director, who collaborated intensively with the four DOMs. To accommodate their very different management styles and philosophies, as well as the substantial variations in demographics and resources among more than 30 local offices, the decision had been made to focus planning for FAMILY TO FAMILY at the district level rather than attempt a statewide plan. Each DOM chose initial implementation sites within their district; these nine counties included Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and several smaller cities. The DOMs were thus essential to both the planning process and the implementation plan, which gave them responsibility for developing and sharing programmatic strategies in response to FAMILY TO FAMILY goals. County office staff were involved only in the specific strategies being fielded within their offices, and as a result, felt varying levels of ownership for changes associated with the initiative. The departure of the Division Director and the DOMs within a

period of six months, therefore, effectively eliminated the leadership needed to continue the process of local program development and implementation, and keep local efforts integrated into a statewide context.

Philosophically, the new administration was generally supportive of the goals of FAMILY TO FAMILY, and particularly of the initiative's clear specification of targeted outcomes, which were seen as consistent with their emphasis on quality and accountability. At the same time, the new leadership was wary of programmatic strategies that were seen as potentially controversial, such as the use of flex funds to respond to family needs while children were in care. The reorganization of the department and startup issues posed a distraction as well. The net result was an extended period during which local programs were implemented to the extent that local directors were willing and able to do so, but without support or encouragement from central office. Some local efforts were carried forward during this time, while others floundered for lack of resources or guidance, or simply because attention was focused on local crises. In addition, there was no ready forum for local leaders working on similar programs to communicate directly with each other, particularly if they worked in different parts of the state.

As state leadership became more involved in the initiative, they brought a focus on goals and measurable outcomes, suggesting both a systems approach for analyzing issues and an emphasis on data to define needs and assess interventions. This sometimes resulted in the strategies developed during the FAMILY TO FAMILY planning process being modified or eliminated and replaced with Process Action Teams charged with compiling information about, and proposing responses to, issues such as foster parent recruitment and social worker retention.

The current administration's philosophy is reflected in the new Children's Code, which was enacted into law during the spring 1997 legislative session. The new code is rooted in insights from longitudinal analyses that demonstrated the impact of system events on children's movement through the system. It also responds to ongoing pressure from lawsuits on behalf of children in care, by shortening timelines at each step of the custody process and allowing the state to begin considering termination of parental rights as early as nine months after removal.

The administration's focus on quality improvement and measurable outcomes was exemplified by the development of Strategic Plan goals and "metrics," and the September 1997

Excellence Plan. The excellence plan, ratified by a gubernatorial executive order, defines performance objectives and strategies to achieve them for direct services, administration and community/interagency relationships. The Department's strategic planning metrics provided a compact set of performance indicators, updated quarterly and circulated among program managers and leaders. These indicators focused on increasing the number of foster homes as well as several measures based on longitudinal data, such as re-entry rates, patterns of initial placements, average number of placements, and the length of time in care.

State support for PSD has remained strong during a time of general budget cutbacks, with 19 positions created through the FAMILY TO FAMILY grant now funded as permanent state positions. Agency leaders credit their success in gaining new positions to their access to data supporting the need for positions.

2.4 Ohio

In contrast to the more centralized control over policy and administration in Alabama and New Mexico, Ohio's child welfare system vests much fiscal responsibility and administrative discretion with counties. Throughout the FAMILY TO FAMILY years, the policy environment at the state-level changed under the leadership of the Governor's office and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). The philosophy and goals of FAMILY TO FAMILY enhanced several initiatives instituted at the state-level and implemented in selected Ohio counties. For example, there were modifications to regulations guiding the home study process for families interested in foster care and adoption. Additionally, funds were made available in multiple counties for flexible, wrap-around services to meet the needs of children and their kinship caregivers.

FAMILY TO FAMILY in Ohio is set within the overarching *Family and Children First* (OFCF) initiative which seeks to create local collaboratives of public and private child-serving agencies to improve the lives of Ohio's families and children. FAMILY TO FAMILY complements the agenda of *Family and Children First* by seeking to implement child welfare reform, and more specifically, foster care reform in two Ohio counties, Cuyahoga and Hamilton.

Throughout the course of the initiative, there have been several leadership changes within the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS). While a succession of leaders have

articulated support for the values and principles of FAMILY TO FAMILY, their level of involvement seems to reflect their perception that it is but one of a number of primarily local “projects” that compete for their attention— *Family and Children First*, the Kellogg Foundation’s Families for Kids initiative in the northeastern part of the state, and most recently, the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration in selected counties. However, a fair appraisal of the situation in Ohio demands consideration of the relatively weak role state law and policy prescribe for the state agency. State administrators lack real financial leverage because counties bear such a substantial proportion of the fiscal burden of children’s services. This severely limits the influence of ODHS officials in their dealings with county agencies. As a result, their attempts at leadership involve facilitating the participation of counties in projects largely of their own choosing, without insisting on statewide implementation of any broadly focused initiative, including FAMILY TO FAMILY.

Given this characteristic of the Ohio system, the expansion of FAMILY TO FAMILY beyond the original two counties is being done in partnership with PCSAO, the professional association of county directors of child welfare agencies. Although ODHS has made a commitment to supply data for self-evaluation in FAMILY TO FAMILY counties, PCSAO is organizing the orientation and training sessions associated with the startup of the expansion phase.

Hamilton County. The settlement of a class action lawsuit against the Hamilton County Department of Human Services (HCDHS) in 1986 established strict standards for the provision of child welfare services in Hamilton County. The *Roe v. Staples* consent decree instituted criteria for the removal and subsequent return of children and mandated implementation of pre-placement preventive services, training of casework staff, internal review procedures and planning responsibilities. The FAMILY TO FAMILY goals supplemented the reforms begun under the consent decree. Leadership in Hamilton County for child welfare reform and, more specifically, FAMILY TO FAMILY has been stable since the resignation of the children’s services director in 1994. However, budgetary constraints have greatly influenced the direction and speed of FAMILY TO FAMILY implementation. A fiscal crisis in 1994 and 1995, partially precipitated by a dramatic increase in the number of children placed in residential settings, resulted in movement toward a managed care philosophy by the agency’s leadership. Supported by recommendations from the multi-agency Children Services Financial Workgroup,

the agency signed a managed care contract with private providers that was expected to take effect during the final quarter of 1997. The contract includes provisions for services to children in group care or therapeutic foster care, and those needing mental health services. This move is consistent with Ohio's move toward managed care for State Medicaid funding under OhioCare.

In 1994, a United Way Community Chest report focused on Hamilton County's approach to serving multi-needs children. This report provided the impetus for the child-caring agencies within the county to come together to share support of these children. Together the child-caring agencies supported the formation of FCF Management to provide services to "deep-end" children who have multiple needs. The formation of FCFM influenced not only the funding of services for multi-needs children, but also affected the way child welfare was able to provide services to these children. While FCF Management's mission is to provide appropriate services in the least restrictive environment for children with severe problems, there is concern about the growing numbers of children served in residential settings and the constantly escalating cost of this care.

Finally, welfare reform efforts in Hamilton County are seen as having a major effect on the department's structure and philosophy. HCDHS elected to link its welfare reform strategy to FAMILY TO FAMILY's neighborhood foster care efforts by establishing Integrated Strategic Business Units (ISBUs) to provide services to specific geographic areas within the county. These changes not only institutionalized the community-based partnerships of FAMILY TO FAMILY within Children's Services, but also expanded this collaborative philosophy to the agency as a whole.

Cuyahoga County. The Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services' (CCDCFS) leadership changed in June 1992, immediately prior to the beginning of FAMILY TO FAMILY's planning phase, when a new executive director was appointed. In the early years of her administration, other new leaders joined the agency as deputy directors. Since then, unlike many other FAMILY TO FAMILY sites, the agency administration has remained constant and provided unchanging leadership in moving the agency toward the FAMILY TO FAMILY goals. The advent of FAMILY TO FAMILY, in conjunction with the leadership change in the agency, provided a focus for defining the agency's mission: 1) to develop culturally sensitive, neighborhood-based foster care programs; 2) avoid unnecessary placements and preserve the family if possible; and 3) reduce the number of children inappropriately served in institutions.

Furthermore, FAMILY TO FAMILY added a new dimension to the work of the agency by incorporating into the agency's work a philosophy of partnerships that has greatly influenced CCDCFS's work with private child caring agencies, community-based service organizations, other public child-serving agencies, neighborhood groups, foster parents, and the children and families the agency serves.

The CCDCFS philosophical transformation has occurred within a changing social, political, and financial context. There was a significant increase in substance abuse (indicated by the number of newborns referred to the agency because of positive tests for toxic substances), changes in county leadership, a financial crisis that resulted from increased expenditures for congregate care, and an unchanging board rate for agency licensed foster homes. The department's financial shortfall necessitated an austere budget that included a reduction in staff resources, and a reduction in the amount of funds allocated to residential treatment for purchased foster care. It also incorporated strategies for providing appropriate care to children in custody using less restrictive environments, such as relative homes and agency foster homes.

The news media's criticism of the agency has been harsh at times and county commissioners contracted for a performance audit of the agency during 1997. What is most noteworthy in this regard, however, is that important actors in Cuyahoga County believe that the agency is making slow, but steady progress in improving services for families and children. The partnerships that the agency has nurtured with its community and agency partners have inspired public support for the agency's goals and helped the community gain a better understanding of the challenges of its work. Although there appears to be slightly more tolerance when the agency stumbles on its chosen path, there are still many conflicts within the community that greatly influence whether CCDCFS will endure in its goals.

2.5 Maryland

Maryland's FAMILY TO FAMILY grant is housed in the Department of Human Resources' (DHR) Social Services Administration (SSA). Although Baltimore City (by far the largest jurisdiction with approximately two-thirds of the state's foster care caseload) was identified as the initial implementation site, Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties were named as additional sites in the state's implementation plan.

The current state policy environment is strongly influenced by a DHR budget deficit, resulting in part from increasing costs for out-of-home care. In particular, lengthy stays within the relative foster home caseload, most notably in Baltimore City, are perceived as contributing to the deficit. The L.J. vs. Massinga consent decree, which requires that kinship parents be informed of their right to apply for foster parent status and benefits, has exacerbated the financial impact of these cases by encouraging more families to become licensed care providers. The state has received a IV-E waiver, effective in February of 1998, that will allow subsidized guardianship in the three jurisdictions and which may provide some reduction in these costs in coming years.

Senate Bill 711, enacted in late 1996, required more frequent court reviews for children in out of home care, similar to those provided by the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. While the law is intended to improve the timeliness of permanency planning, it increased the pressure on an already overburdened court system. The state has funded ten masters who are able to hear cases in juvenile courts, and take a more active role in permanency planning.

The change in State administration following the 1994 election did not result in substantial shifts in policy direction. However, the resulting personnel changes slowed progress considerably as key positions were left unfilled for extended periods, while individuals moved among leadership roles at the state and Baltimore City. Current DHR leadership has become more publicly supportive of FAMILY TO FAMILY in recent years, including testimony to the state legislature. The state's current Foster Care Program Director served as coordinator of FAMILY TO FAMILY in Baltimore City, and is a strong advocate for community-focused foster care.

Baltimore City has been directly affected by changes at the state level, as its Department of Social Services (DSS) Director moved to assume leadership of DHR, and managers from DHR were appointed to top positions in the city. None of these changes have resulted in strong support for FAMILY TO FAMILY or its underlying philosophy. By contrast, leadership changes in Prince George's County at both the director and deputy director level produced enthusiasm for FAMILY TO FAMILY specifically, and more generally for family-centered practice and community partnerships. Stable leadership in Anne Arundel County showed consistent commitment to the initiative across all years.

2.6 Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is unusual among FAMILY TO FAMILY states in two respects, both of which have influenced the implementation of FAMILY TO FAMILY. First, the state has traditionally relied heavily upon private providers for family foster care, particularly in Philadelphia, the pilot implementation site, where approximately 80 percent of the foster care caseload is in private agency homes. Second, in a strongly county-administered system, the state Department of Public Welfare (DPW) has relied upon targeted initiative grants to encourage counties to adopt innovative programs and practices, such as family preservation and special-needs adoption. The Family Service System Reform (FSSR) Initiative, launched in this manner, has developed into the organizational context for FAMILY TO FAMILY.

FSSR encourages communities to develop a collaborative framework in which community members can identify local needs, priorities and services strategies to improve outcomes for children and families. Beginning in 1995, Pennsylvania has combined Title IV-B (part 2) and state funds to provide counties with three-year grants ranging from \$66,000 to \$550,000, along with technical assistance to support planning and redesign of services. Currently, 37 of the state's 67 counties have active FSSR processes. FSSR supports and extends the efforts of an earlier effort, the Family Centers Initiative, which offers integrated, coordinated and/or co-located early childhood development and family support services. There are currently 48 Family Centers located in 30 of Pennsylvania's counties. Counties that have Family Centers submit a single application for FSSR and Family Center funding, and are required to demonstrate within the application how the two initiatives will be integrated.

The state is also promoting practice change by sponsoring workgroups on placement review and kinship care, representing state and local child welfare agencies and private providers. Each committee is charged with developing "best practice" recommendations and assessing the fit between existing regulations and this ideal. The Placement Review Committee has used foster care visitation as the focal point for a broad range of practice issues, including five day meetings, foster parent mentoring, supervision of visits and continued contact with foster parents following reunification. The intent of the group is to influence practice through practice standards that are incorporated into state-sponsored training programs, practice standards adopted by private provider consortia, and private provider licensure and contracts,

rather than through regulatory approaches. The Kinship Care Committee is similarly structured, and is developing a subsidized legal guardianship program for the state.

Another way in which Pennsylvania stands out among FAMILY TO FAMILY states is in the continuity of leadership at both the state and local level that it has experienced during the FAMILY TO FAMILY planning and implementation period. Although the DPW experienced a change in administration following the 1994 election, its programmatic direction has remained fairly constant. The service reform efforts initiated during the previous administration have dovetailed with the current leadership's focus on locally-generated solutions to human service issues and encouraging change by creating incentives rather than regulation. In Philadelphia, the state's initial implementation site, leadership of the Department of Human Services and the FAMILY TO FAMILY Initiative has been stable since the initiative's planning period. This stability at the state and local level allowed Philadelphia to play an active role in supporting FAMILY TO FAMILY expansion and other statewide reform efforts.

2.7 Conclusions

FAMILY TO FAMILY was undertaken in New Mexico as an integral part of a governor's broad agenda for improving outcomes for families and children and in Maryland as a component of a broader services reform initiative. After these governors left office, the Initiative was viewed somewhat indifferently by the next administrations. Within the limited ability of the state agency to actually effect statewide reform, FAMILY TO FAMILY in Ohio began as a component of a broad initiative by its governor to support families and children, and because that governor remains in office, it continues to be supported. Similarly, it was viewed as a useful complement to the R.C. consent decree that state officials in Alabama had negotiated as a means of reforming their child welfare system. When a new governor was elected, however, an effort was made to dismantle the system being created under the consent decree. In Pennsylvania, the new administration strongly supported FAMILY TO FAMILY, although for somewhat different reasons than its predecessor.

Strong leaders, typically state and local child welfare officials, championed the adoption of FAMILY TO FAMILY in their respective states and promoted its implementation in the early stages. Their leadership and management strategies are discussed in the next chapter. However, these key individuals had to contend with the political pressures described above in

trying to advance the initiative's agenda. As they ceased to be involved in many states and communities, often because of electoral changes, momentum was lost or halted completely. What is so apparent now is how difficult it is to anticipate political changes and to incorporate changes in policy and practice into legislation and regulation. Given the pressures inherent in the child welfare system, a successful reform effort requires creative and energetic leaders and their vision, as well as changes in policy and practice.

The case of Alabama shows how difficult it is to sustain changes in policy and practice. Even in the face of an established consent decree, officials in a new administration sought to reverse policies and practices that have the imprimatur of the courts, but with which they vehemently disagreed. In spite of the legal barriers, the result of their efforts was to create disarray throughout the system. Still, following the resignation of a DHR commissioner who was not supportive, the same consent decree may remain standing as the foundation for renewed efforts to implement the reforms begun earlier.

The experiences of FAMILY TO FAMILY suggest that consumer demand alone will not drive changes. For enduring change there must be a confluence of consumer demand and agency leadership efforts. In FAMILY TO FAMILY the lessons from the experiences of local sites alone did not guide policy. Instead, policy changes continued to occur through regular agency channels.