We believe children ‘grow’ best in their own homes, but we also know that sometimes law enforcement must remove children from their home to keep them safe from abuse or neglect. These children are placed in the custody of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS).

Families Matter, the initiative that’s changing Nebraska’s child welfare and juvenile services system, is serving an increasing number of children through the use of kinship care. Nearly half of all Nebraska children in out-of-home placements were in kinship care with aunts, uncles, grandparents and family friends in September 2011.

“Kinship care” minimizes trauma and creates stability by placing children with people they know and have a relationship with.

Their safe transition back home when appropriate can be smoother, and the connection to the relative or friend who cared for them is likely to continue.

I’d like to thank kinship caregivers who are raising their grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or children of close family friends, when the parents cannot. Their commitment to their extended family can make a life-long positive difference to the child.

For example, “Emily’s” been in foster care for six years. Despite best efforts, no foster homes would provide a permanent home for her.

Because her caseworker searched again for people who knew Emily, she’s now living with her half-brother and his father, who’s considering guardianship for her. Stories like Emily’s are now happening for more Nebraska children.

Department staff statewide and our partners in the eastern and southeast part of the state, KVC Nebraska and Nebraska Families Collaborative, continue to focus on kinship care for children who aren’t able to live at home.

In Nebraska, Families Matter!

Kerry Winterer, CEO

Nebraska Department

of Health and Human Services