

Attending: Mike Balter by phone, Benjamin Hazelton, Judy Stiegler, Pam Pearson

## MINUTES

The minutes of the February 14, 2007, meeting were approved.

## PLANNING FOR MAY 9 CWAC MEETING AND BEYOND

- Balter: Suggested that rather than using the list of possible issues to build the May 9 agenda, the CWAC take a 30,000 foot look at how the committee is going as far as products go and if we are getting the things accomplished that the committee seeks to accomplish. This conversation began about a year and a half ago<sup>1</sup>. When we became more structured, we asked members to come to meetings better prepared, we developed operating procedures and we started using FIWG to frame issues. Sees this as a type of annual review. The committee's work is still driven by events to a certain degree. We are in the midst of a legislative session. Are we any better prepared and what could we do to improve our preparedness for the next legislative session?
- Stiegler: As a part of that process, she suggested looking at the list of issues to point out which ones have been done, what was addressed by CWAC that was not on the list of issues and ask ourselves if we accomplished what we wanted to. She would answer yes, but others may not agree.
- Balter: He has several questions that he would like answered by CAF.
  - Should CWAC be advocating more during the legislative session? If so, we are not prepared to do so. Budget hearings have passed and we may not have an opportunity for policy discussions on bills.
  - Should CWAC be advising CAF management as it pursues different things?
  - Are we having an impact as an advisory board?
  - Are we influencing policy work outside DHS? The recommendations we are preparing to send to Bruce Goldberg may influence Bruce's thinking, but what about the Legislature's thinking?

The committee always seems to be at the back side of things, such as the safety model.

---

<sup>1</sup> The first FIWG meeting was held on September 14, 2005.

- Stiegler: When she was appointed as CWAC chair, there was frustration in the committee about unproductiveness. Since that time we have worked to improve the process and structure. The question we now have is whether or not the changes in process and structure have led us anywhere. The answer may be not yet; some members may answer yes.
- Balter: We should not ask it as a yes/no question. We have made progress in the structure, but now we need to ask if it improved policy or management. Our advice should create improvement, but currently it is difficult for us to know the consequences of our involvement. We may want to ask Bruce and Ramona if they are getting what they want from CWAC. A review of the discussion while we were writing our “Principles” document may reveal hoped-for impacts and whether or not there was agreement on those impacts.
- Stiegler: We are looking for a discussion on next steps from the perspectives of both CWAC and the agency. Our first goal was better order and process, but now we are at the next step.
- Balter: A quality improvement process: where we are, where we hope to be and what is the next area in which to improve. Reviewing the early documents of the restructure may reveal a simple purpose statement. We also need to recognize that the dynamics change when committee membership changes.
- Stiegler: Agrees that this may be a good time to review our principles and the subsequent letters we produced to see if we are serving the role we should and if we should have a bigger advocacy role.
- Balter: We have created a better structure and have prepared documents that reflect the consensus of the group. We now need to ask if this work has influenced the agency and made an impact on legislators.
- Stiegler: This may be a better discussion for the May CWAC meeting than select another issue from the list.
- Balter: It is also important to have this discussion before we provide guidance to the new teens subcommittee. We need to know what impact we want them to have and in what sphere: CAF management, public policy or both.
- Hazelton: The CRB also has an advisory committee of representatives across the state. They do not set policy, but provide their experiences and perspectives on how policy is applied. His interest in serving on CWAC is to have the opportunity to persuade CAF administration. Gave the example of the Oregon Safety Model and how it took partners off guard because they were not brought in at the beginning. Now there is the work around the staffing structure and use of CETs and SSAs. He would like CWAC to be given the opportunity to take a critical look at the proposal and be able to express concerns and benefits, both

as a committee and individually, so that they can be considered. As a follow up, CWAC should request clarification on why decisions are made. There is a benefit to having many eyes with many different positions looking at proposals.

- Stiegler: She is on the steering committee looking at the staffing structure. It is an inclusive group, but an additional set of eyes looking at a proposal early on rather than after the fact can be beneficial.
- Balter: Suggested Judy meet with Ramona before the May CWAC meeting. In fairness to Ramona, he understands her hesitation to share information on preliminary concepts when past experience resulted in premature opposition. However, CWAC should be given information early enough that our input can make a difference. He would like to know if the reasons CWAC has not received information at early stages is internal politics, timing or a process that is not working well. DHS has a policy option package that has a major influence on adoption structure and he did not find out about it until it was too late to provide input.
- Stiegler: As a workable topic: we are at a point in time to have a dialogue about where in the process we interact with the agency on particular topics and what those topics are.
- Balter: Is CWAC's role to give early advice, late reaction or some place in between? It may be that Ramona has some constraints of which we are not aware. Suggested Judy meet privately with Ramona before the May 9 CWAC meeting. One question to ask is if advocacy is a role the agency has in mind for CWAC.
- Stiegler: The current list of issues is mostly pet issues raised by individual members. They tend to get pushed to the back burner by other issues of broader focus. It would be helpful to have this discussion before framing the work of the Subcommittee on Teen Issues in Child Welfare. One of our tasks today was to narrow their issues and plan a joint meeting. However, clarification of the expectations of the full committee and subcommittees should occur first. She will meet with Ramona before the May 9 CWAC agenda is finalized.
- Balter: That clarification is needed so that we can know what we are evaluating against.
- Stiegler: We will give this discussion an hour on the May 9 agenda. We will want to send something to CWAC in advance to help them prepare for the discussion. She asked Mike to prepare draft talking points that FIWG will review. They will be sent with the May 9 agenda.
- Balter: Suggested titling it Continuous Improvement Process. We are midway in the legislative session, which is an appropriate point in time for this

discussion. Perhaps the recommendations to Bruce that we will be finalizing today should be sent to the Ways and Means co-chairs as CWAC testimony.

- Stiegler: We will talk about what we want to happen with that document later today.
- Hazelton: Asked what the ORS that mandates CWAC says about the function of CWAC.
- Stiegler: The ORS language is broad and can be interpreted in many ways. We can use that in framing this dialogue; the legislature mandated the committee, are we close to how the agency wants to use the committee and if not, what is needed to get to that point?
- Balter: He will draft a discussion paper. Gave the example of the NRCOI report that was on the list of issues. CWAC was asked to read that report, but did not receive instructions on the purpose of reading it, whether or not it was to give a personal opinion about the report.
- Stiegler: She will use Mike's draft with her when she meets with Ramona.
- Balter: For most big processes, such as the safety model and policy option packages, we were brought in late in the process and had limited ability to influence decision making. We need to know if this is how Ramona wants to use CWAC and, if not, how to change the process. That is the private conversation that needs to occur between Ramona and Judy. If Ramona does not want influence and advice early on, then we should not bring that option to CWAC.
- Stiegler: Our improved discipline and structure has resulted in products. The next step is to have a process assuring that the issues we study are the ones on which the agency wants advice. We need consensus between DHS and CWAC in order to operate as an effective advisory committee.
- Hazelton: One concern about creating the Subcommittee on Teen Issues in Child Welfare is that members may not have the time and ability to take on projects. It may be that keeping teen issues at the forefront of attention is the better task than taking on specific issues.
- Stiegler: There is a difference between issues on which we can come to consensus and those that we cannot. Some topics are of great urgency to a particular member, but not the committee as a whole. FIWG is to be the filter. However, we also need to be able to give feedback and know that the feedback is not all for naught.
- Balter: We want to know how best to use our structure to meet the shared expectations of both the agency and committee. Then we need to define what those shared expectations are. One of his expectations is early involvement in

major projects. If that is not shared by DHS, we need to know that. That is what Judy needs to discuss privately with Ramona, not in front of the full committee. Our previous structure did not allow the committee to have an impact on public policy, because we could not reach consensus.

- Stiegler: We did not have our Principles document before. Filtering through the principles is a legitimate step. We are now at a point in time when we can have more constructive conversations. We need to come to this understanding before we establish the Subcommittee on Teen Issues in Child Welfare and select issues for them to study.
- Balter: Everyone agrees teens are underserved. Perhaps an issue would be determining where the Homeless and Runaway Coalition should be housed, under the Commission or under DHS.
- Stiegler: We have time to delay the start of the subcommittee.
- Balter: As we build a list of issues for the subcommittee, we can filter them through the shared expectations to prioritize them.
- Stiegler: FIWG meets again in June. We will defer the discussion of the teen issues after we have the discussion on shared expectations. She will discuss the following with Ramona:
  - How early in the process issues should come to CWAC to enter into their advisory role;
  - As an extension of that, does the agency see CWAC playing an advocacy role; and
  - Once CWAC makes a recommendation, whether it goes to CAF management alone or to a broader audience.

**ACTION:**

- ✓ **Mike Balter will prepare a draft discussion paper on Continuous Improvement Process that FIWG will review.**
- ✓ **Judy Stiegler will meet with Ramona Foley before the May 9 CWAC agenda is finalized to discuss:**
  - **How early in the process issues should come to CWAC to enter into their advisory role;**
  - **As an extension of that, does the agency see CWAC playing an advocacy role; and**
  - **Once CWAC makes a recommendation, whether it goes to CAF management alone or to a broader audience.**
- ✓ **The final discussion paper will be sent to CWAC with the May 9 agenda.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO BRUCE GOLDBERG

- Stiegler: Shared a final draft of the two CWAC recommendations. A decision is needed on the data on face-to-face visits. The original data from the CRB study was from March 2006, but shows visits only for out-of-home placements. DHS has provided data on all open cases for March 2006 and also for the most recent month available, January 2007. DHS cannot separate the visits by mothers and fathers. The DHS data shows an increase in the percentage between March 2006 and January 2007. However, Judy was cautioned by DHS in that the increased percentage does not necessarily reflect more visits because caseloads decreased during that time.
- Hazelton: An argument could be made that caseworkers' ability to have face-to-face visits is a caseload resource issue. What we see is that the number of visits remained relatively constant, which may imply workers are at capacity with the current staffing resource level.
- Stiegler: The data is not able to explain the "why," and that is not the goal and point in these recommendations.
- Balter: Our recommendation is to increase the percentage of cases receiving visits. One strategy may be to reduce caseload size; the percentage will increase because there are fewer to visit. Our recommendation is to move toward a certain percentage (a 12% increase) as the outcome, not how to get there. Whatever the current number is, we want to keep moving toward 100%. Suggested using the January 2007 data because it is the most current, footnoting the data source as DHS.
- Stiegler: The second paragraph of this recommendation clarifies that it pertains to all open cases, not only foster care. She also changed the last paragraph so that it does not recommend "automatic" referral. All DHS employees are mandatory reporters and Ramona had said earlier that she did not want to create a structure outside that required for mandatory reporters. These recommendations will be reformatted into a letter to Bruce Goldberg and put on CWAC letterhead.
- Balter: The next step is to ask Bruce and Ramona how they will respond to these recommendations.
- Stiegler: Our operating procedures include that final step. We can use the language from our operating procedures to close the letter saying we await a reply. It would be helpful to have the bylaws, operating procedures and principles at each meeting.
- Balter: Offered to have them printed poster-sized.

**ACTION:**

- ✓ **Pam Pearson will format the recommendations into letter format. Following FIWG review of the draft letter, Judy Stiegler will send the final letter to Bruce Goldberg.**
- ✓ **Mike Balter will follow up on his offer to make posters of the bylaws, operating procedures and principles.**

Meeting adjourned.