



FINAL

DHS Children, Adults and Families Division
Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Future Issues Work Group
August 8, 2007

Attending: Janet Arenz, Mike Balter, Iris Bell (by phone), Pam Patton,
Mickey Serice, Angela Sherbo, Judy Stiegler

Minutes Recorded by Pam Pearson

CONTINUOUS SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

- Stiegler: We may want to review the ongoing list of issues to see which are still pertinent. Some may have been acted on but are not yet complete.
- Patton: If we are going to consider possible issues, she mentioned that she and Shirley Heck (Child Welfare Providers Girls Subcommittee) recently sent a letter to Director Bruce Goldberg regarding their concern that there may be a conflict of interest between the DHS policy to provide gender-specific services and the MHO's implementation of the DHS Children's System Change in the initiative's policy to provide individualized, least restrictive, shorter psychiatric residential stays and wrap around services. That may be an issue to add to the list because it crosses over to child welfare in that many children are in both systems. She thought this was on the list at one time.
- Pearson: It may have been one of the issues that Patton said could be removed from the list some time ago because it was being addressed in a different venue.
- Patton: Mike Balter may also be interested in this issue. The Boys and Girls Aid Society has a member on the Child Welfare Providers Girls Subcommittee. The Coalition for Equal Access for Girls and that subcommittee wrote this joint letter to Bruce Goldberg, Ramona Foley and Bob Nikkel out of concern for the problems they are hearing about the managed healthcare organization. They are determining that some young women are staying in mental health facilities for too short a time and returned to Child Welfare to meet the "least restrictive setting" requirements. The young women then fail in those placements. DHS policy says it will provide gender specific services, but that was not transferred to the MHO rules. This approach is not effective with this population of young women. She understands that this concern will not

be revealed in the way data is currently collected. Asked if there is a way to look at how young women get services.

- Sherbo: Surely DHS can separate length of stay by gender.
- Balter: A diagnosis category would be needed.
- Sherbo: One cannot assume that length of stay determines if the placement is ineffective. She read the Patton/Heck letter and found nothing in it substantiating the concerns.
- Stiegler: If Patton wants this issue back on the CWAC list of issues, she will need to craft the topic.
- Patton: The topic is the Children's Change Initiative and its impact on children in child welfare and their access to the kinds of services they need. Agreed to remove it from the list earlier because she understood data was being collected and thoroughly evaluated. If the data said length of stay for women was decreased by a certain amount of time, how would you know that for some it is not long enough to be effective?
- Sherbo: Length of stay figures that show an average length are relatively meaningless and won't let us get to the issue that Pam is raising. However, collecting that information could show if there has been a significant change as a result of the initiative. One question is how the initiative impacts children in child welfare. Another question is whether or not child welfare provides gender specific services. Those are two broader questions than in the Patton/Heck letter, which asks if the MHO change disproportionately or wrongly impacts women. That is too narrow for CWAC.
- Patton: CWAC would be more interested in the impact of the initiative on children across the board, broken down by boys/girls and young/old as extensions of the questions. Returning to the List of Issues, the last one could be broadened to include all 18-year-olds, not only girls as long we include that we want the information by age, gender and race.
- Stiegler: We need to go back to the start of today's agenda instead of winnowing the list because the discussion on Continuous System Improvement will impact how we go about being a better advisory group.
- Balter: First, we need to understand that we are in large patterns of cycles. We act surprised when the legislative session comes up. Part of what he wants is to ask what we learned last session, especially if we wrote to anyone in a legislative way. If we have a communication with DHS, should there be a response and conversation that follow? That is one thing we are missing: the dialogue. We would like a continuing

dialogue on the big issues rather than addressing small snippets of issues. We need to look at themes and threads, big topics over long periods of time. Second, there is the challenge of sorting issues between policy and operations. Advising on the implementation of policy already decided is different than advising on the policy as it is being decided. Some CWAC members may not know if it is a policy or operations conversation and become confused and uninterested.

- Sherbo: Agrees with Balter. Suggested removing all issues on the list except for the first two. All the others are important, but are tiny pieces of larger issues. Suggested massaging the first two issues into two themes: 1) quality assurance/system improvement and 2) collaborations, with CWAC's advice focusing on internal improvement and the role of external partners in that improvement.
- Stiegler: This would refine the definition of the committee's job.
- Balter: We must continually ask ourselves what is our role and our capacity to execute that role.
- Arenz: We have defined ourselves but we have not changed the culture in how we behave at meetings. We need to try to remain action-oriented with a leadership role rather than being only receptacles. We need to avoid talking about issues repeatedly and getting nowhere.
- Stiegler: We also need to make sure we choose the big picture issues rather than the little issues.
- Arenz: Our inability to arrest the raising of little issues impacts our effectiveness.
- Bell: How does our role impact our list of issues? Does our role say we are supposed to develop a list and decide what to tackle next?
- Stiegler: About two years ago, CWAC created the FIWG to avoid spending time in full CWAC meeting to refine issues. FIWG then developed operating procedures and other products.
- Balter: We have new capacities that we did not have 18 months ago. We need to use them to continue to move forward and not drift back.
- Patton: Some of the issues on the list were there before we had the operating procedures.
- Stiegler: We need to decide what to take off the list and what to move forward.
- Arenz: The overarching philosophy of our role will make us more action oriented.

- Patton: The reason for the list was because issues would come up during meetings and we did not have time to discuss them. FIWG was to prioritize the issues.
- Stiegler: And decide if they were legitimate issues for CWAC.
- Patton: Some are too narrow, such as the meth babies issue and the one about services to 18 years and older young women. Before eliminating them from CWAC, we need to say how they will be discussed if not by CWAC and where they cross over into bigger issues.
- Arenz: That is where the collaboration piece between agencies and between divisions comes in. We cannot recommend a policy if Child Welfare is the only one that will be trying to deal with it by itself.
- Sherbo: Referred to the Continuous System Improvement document drafted by Balter and the list of questions on page 2¹. We cannot answer #1 and #2 because the committee is too diverse. We should focus on #3 and #4. #5 is not a question. #3 should be rephrased to ask: Does CWAC believe the committee should offer early advice? The answer would be yes. The purpose of having a committee like CWAC is to get improvement. We ought to focus on big areas and system improvement and how to be informed about agency directions early on. Those quality assurance/system improvement and collaboration themes can be used for any topic. Using meth babies as an example topic, we would ask how the Oregon Safety Model impacts mothers seeking D&A treatment.
- Arenz: Using those themes will make for easier decisions and keep us thinking about the bigger goal.
- Bell: If talking about meth, narrow it to a component such as the number of children taken into custody or some aspect in child welfare that comes out of the meth crisis.

¹ **List of questions reprinted here:**

1. Should the CWAC issue advocacy positions or policy recommendations to legislative committees independent of the Department. (I.e. should the recent recommendations to Dr. Goldberg be sent to a legislative committee?)
2. Should CWAC take positions and send recommendations to Ways and Means regarding Policy Option Packages proposed by CAF?
3. Does DHS/CAF want earlier input or advice on major policy activities like the safety model or is post-development reaction preferred?
4. Does DHS/CAF want early advice or consultation from CWAC on responses to major challenges and reports like the Holder report or the NRCOI report or major management decisions like the staffing changes in the recent policy option package?
5. With the new capacity identified above, the CWAC may be better able to respond to these types of opportunities.

- Arenz: We couldn't answer that until we get to the collaboration theme: getting the right people in the room. If we want to talk about meth babies, we need representatives of the other pieces of the problem in the conversation.
- Stiegler: We have no lack for issues. The key is how and where we identify them. It is more a matter of in what venue the discussion occurs as to what the discussion is about.
- Balter: We have moved to talking about meth and not context. We need to be talking about who sets our agenda, CWAC or CAF? Are we a free wheeling committee or does CAF bring us the issues that are most troubling to the division? If a CWAC member brings an issue, the member needs to provide evidence that it is a serious issue. If CAF agrees it is of concern, then CWAC can have further discussion. FIWG is the switchboard to lay out the division's priorities, add CWAC's issues, then prioritize and lay the course. Look at the framework of operations and policy as the overlay. We should pick an issue, such as the safety model, and learn from that. Can CWAC help the agency roll it out? Ask CAF what are the top three things it wants advice on. There may be some issues that CWAC cannot advise on such as relationships with unions.
- Patton: Heard Ramona say at the June CWAC meeting that she did want the earlier input. And we need to remember our guiding principles document that said the earlier we are involved, the better our advice.
- Sherbo: Earlier vs. later advice is one piece. The key is that we give advice on major policy activities. There is no other body to bring stakeholders into dialogue (other than the legislature). CWAC should only talk about major policy activities. "Meth babies" and "Teens 18 and older" are too narrow topics for CWAC.
- Serice: If the big issue is how to prevent children from coming into foster care, the safety model would fall under that as an operation to move in that direction.
- Sherbo: Sees the safety model as the major policy activity as it impacts decisions DHS is making from the moment the call is made through TDMs, who is invited to the meetings and the activities that take place to prevent the child from coming into care. There is plenty of work on the safety model still going on, as well as the quality assurance and CFSR looking at it. It is the system change initiative for the division. And it is ongoing.

- Patton: Bruce Goldberg asked us how to keep kids out of foster care. How does that fit?
- Sherbo: Once we take a position as a committee, we should not drop it but know regularly where it is at.
- Balter: In an operations discussion, there is the same principle; reporting is needed on the data and evidence. That is if the decision is that the agency wants that type of advice.
- Bell: That requires some work by the agency.
- Balter: That is work already being done. Managers are already looking at the data which we can request.
- Stiegler: What we request is the feedback loop. This letter to Bruce is a good example.
- Balter: Keeping kids out of foster care is a policy decision, not a model. We made recommendations, the agency agreed. Now we can ask how it is going and how we can help accomplish the recommendations. Advocacy and involvement by CWAC in policy are different than CWAC involvement in agency operations.
- Bell: Are we asking that question of ourselves?
- Stiegler: That was the point of the Continued System Improvement discussion.
- Bell: That is the question we need to answer.
- Stiegler: Do we do both policy and operation and how? We tried to get to this point in the discussion during the June CWAC meeting, but the safety model discussion took up our time.
- Balter: The challenge of this group is that there is some overlap of operations and policy. The CWAC agenda needs to be set in a way so we don't get into a conversation about one when we wanted the other. We need to be clear in the framework and disciplined in the meetings on what the discussion will be on the topic: policy or operations. As for children in foster care, we were invited, we responded and now we can ask how did it go and what did the agency do with our advice. On the safety model, have we been invited to the conversation or are we jumping into it?
- Stiegler: We created the diversion of talking about the safety model ourselves during that meeting. It was Mickey Serice's recommendation that a subcommittee be formed on the safety model's quality assurance.
- Bell: We need to bring closure to the foster care recommendations or at least know where they are headed.

- Arenz: We can use the next CWAC meeting as an opportunity to exercise our feedback loop.
- Stiegler: Requests for data are already on the September agenda.
- Balter: Where does the budget process it in? We should ask how that went. If the agency did not get the FTE, workers cannot do more face to face visits. If the agency received additional funding, then we should ask how it will be used to address our recommendations. This would be ongoing from biennium to biennium.
- Sherbo: Maybe our overall question is how to reduce foster care because it encompasses many things and we have already been invited to that conversation.
- Balter: That seemed to be the burning policy question. The role out of the safety model is the operations question. Examples: How does the OSM address meth babies? How do you keep meth babies out of foster care?
- Sherbo: Basically we want to know how the agency can put itself out of business.
- Arenz: Do we want to link the CFSR into this somehow? That may require policy option packages and budget changes. Actions outside the department may be needed to make that happen. We may want to make a case for tying the CFSR outcomes to what we are talking about.
- Serice: It is important that when issues are discussed in CWAC, they are revisited until it is agreed that the issue is resolved or we have moved on. We don't do that well at this time. Cautioned about scope creep because the committee is so diverse and large. Some members think broadly and others more narrowly. That may contribute to why we struggle to bring closure to topics.
- Stiegler: Closure may not be necessary as much as knowing where our input has gone. Progress may stall because of budgets; if so, we need to know so we can decide where we go next with our recommendations. We manage scope creep in how we initially phrase the issue. The letter to Bruce was specific in giving finite responses, which disallowed that creep.
- Patton: We should follow up on those recommendations on a regular basis. If we see changes in the data, then we can ask for reasons why.
- Serice: The recommendation about increasing face to face visits is a good example. Even if we make it to the recommended 80%, we won't stop. As we get the data to CWAC for discussion, if we see we are not

getting to the 80%, we can ask for ideas on how to get there. We would start with asking for ideas within current resources.

- Patton: The question is where Child Welfare is now and how can CWAC help.
- Serice: Sees it being where a CWAC member hears a set of issues impacting the ability for a community to improve its percentage of face to face visits and the committee discussing what might help that community increase their percentage.
- Arenz: We need to make sure the issues stays on the agenda for follow up. That leads to an expectation that the recommendations will be taken seriously and action will be taken on them. A culture change to have that expectation is a good thing.
- Stiegler: That is already built into the operating procedures.
- Balter: Are we advocates for a point of view? No. We are collaborators, we are not here to get our individual positions to win. It is reasonable to ask what happened. We heard there were policy option packages to move our recommendations forward. We need to know what happened, how it is working in individual communities. In the belief that the agency wants our advice early, we need to get information in a timely way and feedback when we ask for it. If the agency does not want us to take an advocacy position, we should not.
- Sherbo: We need to play that out with something specific. We gave advice when we were asked about how to reduce foster care. We received a response from Bruce saying our recommendations were reasonable and would be worked on. Now it seems reasonable to ask where the agency is with meeting the recommendations. New recommendations may come from that answer and the dialogue may keep going.
- Balter: Disagrees. We need to establish the expectation that we will write back. It is natural at the beginning of the engagement to continually ask for more. We have not negotiated that yet. We need to establish this new rhythm. It is reasonable for CWAC to ask the agency how things are going with recommendations we make and not just once. That is our policy discussion with the division. Because we have a non-DHS chair, she can have a frank discussion with Ramona about whether CWAC is a watchdog entity or is to be collaborative.
- Sherbo: It would be FIWG's role to determine what pieces of data to request for these updates, such as:

- Face-to-Face Visits data by district and how far each is from target.
- Dashboard Reports
 - Change over time in face to face contacts with children to show any change since CWAC recommendations were made.
 - For in home cases
 - For foster care cases
- Management actions taken to improve efforts on this outcome measure.
- Final information on staffing allocations for each district as a result of the staffing POP and how it is expected to impact face to face contact.
- Number of visits between parents and their children in each district over the same time period reported for face to face contacts. (To make sure that there is not an unintended consequence of reduced visitation in order to increase the face to face visits.)

FIWG should make the requests and give DHS adequate time to collect it in advance of the next full CWAC meeting.

- Balter: We need to sort out what information to request and do so in writing. Another expectation to help advance this topic and build trust is to make CWAC requests in writing and track them to make sure responses are completed.
- Patton: Asking Ramona about CWAC being a watchdog or collaborative would be an offensive question. Instead the CWAC chair should say that we want to be collaborative. To change from the sense of being the watchdog requires CWAC receiving information in a timely way and using the structure we have described to change the committee's behavior and attitude.
- Stiegler: Some of this is built into the bylaws and operating procedures. However we have not operationalized it yet. Regarding the advocacy piece, there is a difference between advocating for a policy or position to DHS and being advocates to the rest of the world. We are advocates for a variety of things as individuals, but as CWAC we are advocates for positions to DHS, not to others.
- Balter: We are not at a stage of development to advocate to outside entities. Perhaps some day we can.

- Sherbo: We got close to that in our recommendation to prioritize D&A treatment for parents. On those issues where we can reach consensus, we need to be out there advocating.
- Serice: Keep in mind that we don't have 100% representation on CWAC of every area touched by CAF, so the ripple may not be positive.
- Stiegler: When a recommendation is made, the feedback loop would include potential roadblocks and how to deal with them. The roadblocks may need to be brought to the table before progressing forward with a recommendation.
- Sherbo: For keeping kids out of foster care, one of our recommendations was for parents to receive priority in funding of D&A and mental health treatment. A discussion about meth babies belongs to someone other than CWAC. It is too specific for a state-level advisory group and the likelihood of consensus too slim. We need to focus on the highest level issues where consensus can be reached.
- Stiegler: When issues come from the agency or CWAC members, FIWG is the switchyard to determine if it is appropriate for CWAC or needs to be referred elsewhere.
- Sherbo: Asked if Mike would write a draft on how FIWG will triage issues. FIWG developed principles on what CWAC ought to do and that included delegating the triage to FIWG. That needs to be followed by a process for preparing CWAC for substantive discussions on high level topics, including having the necessary information in advance.
- Balter: We also need to sort topics as either policy or operation focused. The Chair can announce that it will be a policy conversation and set aside operations issues as they come up or vice versa. We have been building a core set of documents so that we do not need to keep having the conversation about building new behaviors.
- Stiegler: The CWAC response to Bruce was a great example. It was a policy discussion and we were disciplined in keeping it as such.
- Arenz: It is important to have expectations on an action item, not just having the agency agree with our recommendations, but a reply on how they will be achieved and what CWAC can do to move them forward if barriers exist. That may include outside advocacy.
- Balter: What are the behaviors of collaborators?
- Arenz: Sometimes it is advantageous for DHS to have CWAC advocate for something DHS cannot advocate for itself. That can help prioritize the action among other competing interests.

- Balter: CWAC is not ready for outside advocacy, but we should not take it off the table. If we get good at earlier input and advice, we may be able to advocate to outside entities. We are weak in advocacy because we find out too late.
- Arenz: The division and department will do what it needs to do, but we can control who is in the group and the actions and behaviors to create an environment of collaboration. The behavior changes we need to focus on are our own: follow up, expectations, and how the committee leadership guides the conversation of the group.
- Bell: Don't we have the capacity to reach consensus?
- Balter: Yes, on some issues. Another big issue today is the safety model. It can be a place where we practice the operations discussions. Members have a lot of interest and energy. Asked about the proposed safety model subcommittee.
- Stiegler: No action has been taken on the subcommittee because she wanted more discussion here first. The FIWG is the standing subcommittee. The Teens Issues in Child Welfare Subcommittee is ad hoc. A safety model subcommittee would need clear expectations of what it should do.
- Sherbo: Asked that no more subcommittees be formed. We should adopt the two questions of how to keep kids out of foster care and how to improve the system as our overarching questions. A subset is what we will want to look at in the safety model.
- Serice: If deciding what data to pull for the safety model discussion, we can do that within FIWG. We can then take those requests to Angela Long or have her and research staff come to a meeting to help FIWG know what data we already have and what would be a special pull or what we do not have the ability to pull.
- Arenz: When CAF is working on newer initiatives, does it occur to CAF if the initiatives would be good topics for CWAC?
- Serice: Yes, when time permits. This is especially challenging during the legislative session when timelines are very short. However, we should bring the requests and how we responded to the next scheduled CWAC meeting.
- Arenz: For new initiatives that are the result of legislative actions, does CAF consider CWAC having a role in advising?
- Serice: Again, yes, if the timing allows it. CWAC is an advisory body for one program within one division of DHS. Bigger decisions may get

kicked to a department level. For example, when developing the POP, we had some restrictions on what divisions could share outside as internal work was being done.

- Patton: Asked if staff are looking at data to see what impact the safety model is having.
- Serice: Yes.
- Stiegler: Asked that Mike draft the framework to continue the discussion of the Continuous System Improvement.
- Balter: We should suggest to CWAC that the committee needs to learn new behaviors and we have selected the recommendations to Bruce as the policy topic and want to use the safety model as the opportunity to have a conversation about a big operations project. We should use FIWG in between CWAC meetings to review if the process is working in six months. FIWG is a tool of CWAC.
- Stiegler: In that process, we need to capsule the behavior norm we are trying to get to and why we are continuing the foster care issue and starting the OSM one.
- Sherbo: FIWG needs to receive draft minutes of the previous CWAC meeting before it meets so that the FIWG can plan the agenda for the subsequent full CWAC meeting.

ACTION: Mike Balter will draft the next version of the “Continuous System Improvement” document.

AGENDA REVIEW

ACTION: Decision: Delete “Subcommittee Reports.” Move the Continuous System Improvement discussion to 9:30.

- Balter: Coming prepared to meetings will continue to be a dilemma until we have created the expectation to read reports in advance. Asked that Angela draft the data questions about the safety model. Since we have had a legislative session and DHS has a new budget, we should ask how DHS did on those as related to keeping kids out of foster care to keep that as the focus. As for future agendas, they should be primarily three items: Recommendations from FIWG, a policy report and an Assistant Director’s report. The two main agenda items on each CWAC agenda should be the policy and operations issues.

- Stiegler: The decision today is to not create a OSM subcommittee, but instead to keep it within FIWG. We have an open door policy for FIWG so if other CWAC members want to be part of the framing of the conversation, they are welcome to come to FIWG meetings. She will reorder the agenda as outlined above. The data and information will be sent out in advance and there will be no discussion unless there are questions. The last agenda item will be changed from “Miscellaneous” to “Highlights and Hot Topics”.

DECISION: An OSM subcommittee will not be formed.

ACTION: Angela Sherbo will draft the data questions about the safety model. (Completed on 8/9/2007).

TEENS ISSUES IN CHILD WELFARE SUBCOMMITTEE

- Stiegler: We did not have time today for this and so it will be a focus of the next FIWG meeting, including input from CWAC on what the subcommittee should do. We will devote the first hour of the next FIWG meeting to this subcommittee.
- Balter: Sort the subcommittee’s work under policy (keeping kids out of foster care) and operations (Safety Model). Any topic should be funneled through those. An example in the context of teens: issue of vulnerability for teen.

Meeting Adjourned.