



FINAL

DHS Children, Adults and Families Division
Child Welfare Advisory Committee
January 13, 2010

Members

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Dana Ainam | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Butler | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helen Hoang | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jerry Moore | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Christine Stetzer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Arenz | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leslie Currin | <input type="checkbox"/> Jean Lasater | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pam Patton | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Christine Stolebarger |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Balter | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Darland | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leola McKenzie | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Angela Sherbo | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruth Taylor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Iris Bell | <input type="checkbox"/> Rep. Sara Gelser | <input type="checkbox"/> Christina McMahon | <input type="checkbox"/> Becky Smith | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nan Waller |

DHS Staff

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erinn Kelley-Siel | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mickey Serice | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lois Day | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Bouska |
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Minutes recorded by Pam Pearson

AGENDA REVIEW

- Balter: The agenda is organized around 1) data reports and briefings that will receive limited discussion, 2) cross over reports from members who serve on other related committees and 3) the CWAC work plan. All data reports, briefings and cross over reports will be linked to the work plan. All reports and materials will be posted on the CWAC web page.

MINUTES

ACTION: The 11/12/09 CWAC minutes were approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Calendar

- Balter: At each CWAC meeting the calendar will be reviewed to see what is coming up in the next quarter. Today he highlighted Election Day on January 26. The results of the votes on measures 66 and 67 may affect the February legislative session and DHS' response. Also highlighted events surrounding development of legislative concepts.

Data Report – OR-Kids

- Balter: CWAC received a report about a year ago on OR-Kids and was asked at that time for recommendations on data to track. CAF has been working on how

best to collect and report the data. The report in today's agenda packets is the next update.

- Day: OR-Kids is our SACWIS system – a federal requirement. FACIS is not SACWIS compliant. We are making every effort to assure OR-Kids is compliant. It rolls multiple systems into one. It will go live on July 19, 2010. User testing in three pilots is underway. It is a comprehensive child welfare information system with checks and balances that will help drive us to best practice.
- Kelley-Siel: To relate this to CWAC's four priorities¹ this information system will facilitate placement with relatives and help address disproportionality issues. It will create a major change in how people do their work. Data may not be reliable for the first three months. We will ask partners for a grace period. We are using lessons learned from the MMIS implementation. After it is implemented and has taken hold, it will make a difference in the work we do.
- Day: To not overwhelm staff additionally, she has asked her program managers to not roll out any major policy changes at the same time OR-Kids is implemented.
- McKenzie: What is the schedule of rolling it out to the counties?
- Day: We have the three counties in the pilot, and then it will go live statewide on July 19. She will let Leola know the names of the pilot counties.
- Balter: As this is a data report and not an action item, if you have questions specific to your personal interest, please contact Lois Day separately.
- Day: We share this not only for information, but as a request for support. OR-Kids is seeking support from community partners as we move forward.

Briefing – Legislative Activity

- Balter: FIWG has asked Mickey Serice to provide a briefing on legislative activity at each CWAC meeting. As the budget process begins, this briefing will be a dual report on budget and legislative activity.
- Serice: After he prepared his written brief, CAF decided to prepare a fourth legislative concept as a placeholder in case one is needed as a result of the recommendations of the Child Welfare Racial Equity Task Force. We are still gathering input from staff on legislative concept ideas.

¹

- Identifying strategies to reduce over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system.
- Preventing foster care placement;
- Assuring that children placed in foster care are safe and are thriving;
- Providing permanency for children placed in foster care in a timely manner

- Balter: If you have a passion or interest in legislative or budget development, contact Mickey. If you have a concept that may need CWAC input, please let Pam Pearson know so it can be reviewed by FIWG for a future CWAC agenda item.
- Waller: This afternoon, a work group of the three branches of government is meeting in an effort to begin to develop an aligned legislative agenda. CWAC should be kept informed of this work. Individual agencies may be promoting other things in addition.
- Kelley-Siel: The focus of this work group is on the dependency system. Mickey, Lois and Erinn are attending the work group meetings.
- Waller: As legislative priorities are developed by this work group, they need to be shared with CWAC as part of the effort that all partners will help move them forward.

Briefing – Federal Policy

- Kelley-Siel: Does not have a lot of information to share but wants to tee it up for future discussion. CAF has started to look at what we want to champion at the federal level. TANF reauthorization and child welfare financing reform are two that affect CWAC's four priorities. Oregon is not in total agreement with the position papers in the agenda packets from NAPCWA and NASTA. The position paper on child welfare financing says the reform should remain cost neutral; however, many state leaders are saying that the feds need to provide more support than what is currently provided. For TANF reauthorization, Oregon stands out in how we recognize that there is an opportunity to support TANF families to help prevent child abuse. We need to stop talking as if TANF and child welfare are separate.

We are planning to lay out a federal policy strategy for our congressional delegation and anyone willing to attempt to influence the federal discussion. Some CWAC members have connections that could be used for this purpose. How can we partner together to get more resources? Do we need a CWAC subcommittee or another method? She will share these CAF position papers with CWAC soon and would like to know if members agree with them or not.

ACTION: “Federal Policy Strategy” will be added to CWAC’s list of ongoing issues for future discussion, after CAF’s position papers are completed.

Cross Over Report – Child Welfare Racial Equity Task Force – Kory Murphy

- Murphy: His report today is to show where we are coming from in 2009 and going in 2010 to move toward our goals. The CWAC work plan has an action item under its goal regarding over-representation² to receive training regarding the institutional impacts of racism. In an effort to provide such training, he shared “*The Cycle of Socialization*” by Bobbie Harro. It illustrates how outside influences shape how we become who we are. Before we can move on to the cycle of liberation, we first must wake up to the need to change.

Distributed an outline of the work done thus far. Contact him with questions. There are places where we are actively involved and others where we hope to be more active. It is based on six areas of change. The agenda packets included the executive summary of “*What We Know about Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Oregon’s Child Welfare System: Decision Point Analysis Quantitative Report*” prepared by PSU Child Welfare Partnership. [Note: the complete report is available on the CWAC webpage.] PSU is a strong partner and their work in this area has been nationally recognized. The decision point analysis taught us that we knew the reality but did not have the data to prove that African American and Native American children are removed at a higher rate than white children.

Area of change #2 – Youth, Parent, and Community Partnership and Development: We are struggling to get this moving.

Area of change #3 – Public Will and Communication – Kory encouraged members to read the *Urban League Report: State of Black Oregon* [available at <http://www.ulpdx.org/StateofBlackOregon.html>].

Area of change #4 – Human Service Workforce Development – The Model Court is scheduled for April 2 and will be added to CWAC’s calendar. Kory encouraged CWAC members to attend.

Area of change #6 – Legislation, Policy Change and Finance Reform – the timeline for the work of the task force will be added to CWAC’s calendar. We hope to have draft recommendations from the task force’s work groups before their March meeting. Hopes the next analysis will be to see how much it would cost to keep kids out of foster care as compared to how much it costs to be in foster care.

² From CWAC Work Plan:

Goal 1: To advise the Department of Human Services (DHS) on development and administration of child welfare policies, programs and practices related to reducing over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system.

- 1A: Receive training regarding the institutional impacts of racism.

- Waller: She will send a notice to CWAC about Model Court when the location is finalized. [1/25/10 - Note - Model Court Conference: Implicit Bias and Family Engagement - Friday April 2, 2010 - Jantzen Beach Red Lion in Portland, Oregon.] The task force's work is related to CAF's initiative and CWAC's priority to safely reduce foster care. The task force is off to a good start and more people are becoming aware of the issues and nature of the problem. There is need to reform both systems and people.
- Murphy: There is one more document in the agenda packets on this topic, "*Policy Actions to Reduce Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in Child Welfare: A Scan of Eleven States.*"
- Kelley-Siel: Would like CWAC to consider taking on that which would not duplicate or conflict with the task force's work. For example, members may consider hosting listening sessions with youth, parents and grandparents and doing what they can in their own spheres of influence, using the talking points that were prepared for CWAC by Gene Evans as a foundation. The community partnership is a priority and a challenge.
- Balter: Reducing disproportionality is one of the goals in our work plan and we will receive more reports on this topic. We would need help in facilitating any forums or engaging the communities we have access to. We could ask the question of our communities, "Why do you think this is taking place?" There will be a more active role for CWAC in the workforce development, policy development and legislative agenda.
- Waller: It is not just about fixing DHS Child Welfare, but about every school and agency doing the same. That is where CWAC has some strength – by insisting each member's organization address the issue.
- Moore: Many times by the time law enforcement gets involved, it is too late to keep the kids out of foster care. What can happen before then?
- Waller: The Casey Foundation foster care reduction initiative is an effort between DHS, the Commission on Children and Families and others to have supports in place for families. At the decision points along the life of a case, there are things that need to be done so that unbiased decisions can be made. We all have personal biases. Training and prompts at those decision points can help prevent those personal biases from influencing the decisions.
- Balter: The Casey initiative is something that we have not had a recent update on and may need to have one at the next meeting.
- Bell: A continuum of services to keep children out of foster care includes Healthy Start and relief nurseries. Front end efforts are very important. CWAC

wrote a formal recommendation that Healthy Start not be cut. The data proves it works.

- Murphy: There is a direct link between the Casey initiative and the equity task force. What you see in the task force's update is the work of the Casey initiative.
- Waller: The Governor signed the executive order creating the equity task force at the launch of the Casey initiative.
- Taylor: Regarding the youth and parent partnership, there is a challenge to getting parents on a committee such as CWAC. They need to be taught how to sit on a committee such as this, have a job description for their responsibilities and be reimbursed for their time.
- Balter: Suggested Ruth and Kory meet to develop recommendations on how to engage parents.

ACTION: An update on the Casey Initiative will be on a future CWAC agenda.

Briefing – BRS Update

- Keddy: This is an update 18 months into BRS redesign. In 2008 all BRS contracts were due to expire and we took that as an opportunity to assess and reconfigure the contracts. In 2007 a needs assessment was completed and a list of 22 proposed changes was prepared. In 2007, 61 new BRS contracts were put out to bid. We have achieved or are on the path to achieve 21 of the 22 proposed changes. A funding and resource issue has prevented us from mandating crisis respite to reduce moves.

The data sheet she distributed compared before and after BRS redesign. A major shift in resources went towards therapeutic foster care to increase that resource across the state. Fewer children have had to leave their region to access that service.

- Sherbo: Of the 22 proposed changes, asked about #13 and if the 90 day placement cap would truly be eliminated or only reduced.
- Keddy: We did eliminate the cap. There are 30-day emergency placements that can be renewed twice for a total of 90 days, and those do continue. By investing more in therapeutic foster care, we are seeing the number of emergency placements going down.
- Stolebarger: As a child's behavior improves, BRS foster parents may be hesitant to accept the reduced rate as regular DHS foster parents which would allow the child to continue to live with them.

- Keddy: For many of these foster parents, their value system is such that they are willing to accept the lower rate for the sake of the kids.
- Patton: Question about utilization.
- Balter: Asked Pam to contact Donna individually due to the specific nature of her question. Reminded the committee that the process is that specific questions are to go to the presenter outside of the meeting. If questions and concerns rise to a level needing CWAC work, they should then be brought to FIWG's attention.

FUTURE ISSUES WORK GROUP

- Balter: FIWG is down to three members and invites other CWAC members to consider joining them for a deeper contribution to CWAC. He is first looking for volunteers, but if there are none, will be recruiting.

ACTION: Interested members are to contact Mike Balter and Pam Pearson.

FOSTER CARE SAFETY TEAM

On 12/17/09, CWAC was invited to comment on the Foster Care Safety Team's draft recommendations. Today's meeting was a final opportunity to comment. Jerry Moore, Don Darland, Pamela Butler and Leola McKenzie are on the FCST and were given the opportunity to share their experiences before the discussion was opened to others.

- Moore: Taking care of children and managing foster care is a daunting task. The resource issues and the fact that humans are involved make it even more challenging. DHS has to be perfect, and if not, someone is going to come after the agency. For him, a key recommendation is that support and training be provided to foster parents. Mentioned that where there is smoke, there is usually fire. Internal communications between the screener and other key staff could be improved. Concerns about one person making a decision without the input from others. Concerns that complaints about foster parents are not tracked by the foster parent's name, but by the child's name.
- Darland: The FCST found that in many of the founded dispositions they reviewed, DHS did a proper closure and acted appropriately. However, there are differences among the local offices in how they may deal with the allegations (aka smoke). DHS maybe should look at standardizing what the local offices do "when the smoke starts" to catch it earlier. Noted that the

recommendations are not final, however, DHS is already working on some of them.

- Patton: The recommendations are concrete and appear reachable. However, they will not be implemented if they do not fit with other current initiatives or without more time or money.
- Day: Some of the recommendations do fit in well with our goal of safety of children in foster care and others do not. The recommendations to increase staff and to pull staff for specific duties on recruitment may be less achievable. The FCST did identify many things we believe to be true. Many of their recommendations were no surprise and we will do what we can to implement them.
- Kelley-Siel: A next step will be to see which recommendations are in process and the timelines for implementing them. We can use that as we build the next budget and as we allocate existing training resources. Most FCST members are non-DHS staff and one benefit is that through this experience they may become champions to help advocate when there are competing issues for the same funding sources. We depend on others to help make these things happen, including parents, former and current foster youth.
- Patton: Training tends to be one of the first things to go when budgets are cut. Suggests that the budget for paying foster parents include the costs of training, supporting and providing respite for foster parents. Foster parent training should not be a separate budget item. Perhaps that should have been included in the rate redesign.
- Moore: The FCST talked about that and how to change the training for foster parents, such as including child care and food to help get the foster parents to the training events.
- Butler: The FCST also talked about combining it with support groups for another avenue to provide the training.
- Bell: Asked for clarification on recommendation #6.
- Day: The 307 is written under the name of the child's parent. OR-Kids will allow us to track allegations by the foster parent's name.
- Moore: Currently there can be multiple complaints against a foster parent of abuse to multiple children, but there is no electronic way to track by the foster parent's name.
- Kelley-Siel: Also, there is no way to track if the foster parent's certification was revoked or they were encouraged to not reapply.
- Day: If a foster parent knows their certification is going to be revoked, they can withdraw and then we cannot revoke.

- Bouska: In the case review, did the FCST look at commonalities of the children such as age, race, etc?
- Kelley-Siel: They looked at the foster provider files, not the child files.
- Bouska: It may interesting to look at the characteristics of the children abused by foster parents to see if some systemic interventions could be targeted toward the children to prevent the abuse.
- Waller: That may also help us to provide support to foster parents to prevent the circumstances that could lead to foster parents harming the children.
- Butler: Did not recall that the actions of the foster parents were reactions to the behaviors of the children or toward a specific age group.
- Moore: It seemed more so that it was a result of something in the foster parent's life circumstances or an overreaction to something a foster child did.
- Kelley-Siel: The closed-at-screening assessments may be the place to look at the behavior issues.
- Sherbo: Certification violations and founded abuse are not the same. Foster parents are held to a different standard (for example, no spanking). The recommendations on OR-Kids and OIT investigations are critical. There must be zero tolerance for crimes against children in the foster homes in which DHS has placed them. There are two sets of recommendations: one for crimes against children and one for the foster parents who needs support and training.
- Moore: The FCST was looking at criminal behavior, but there may be things that could be done to prevent criminal behavior.
- Balter: His concern about the report is that DHS ends up tolerating certain behaviors because of the shortage of resources. For example, certifiers have a caseload of 55 – that should not be tolerated. And private providers would lose their DHS license if they placed children in an untrained home – placing a child in an untrained DHS foster home should not be tolerated. Scarcity and demand are things CWAC should address because they are things the system continues to tolerate. The findings are right on, but he is not sure the recommendations solve the structural issues behind them. DHS is trying to operate a system by shifting resources to the hot topic of the moment, which leaves a gap elsewhere.
- Waller: All of the recommendations are good and should be done, but the resource issue does need to be addressed, as does the human issue. We, as community partners and CWAC members, can help explain that part of the story for DHS: that there is a risk to being human and for children the risk is higher due to their vulnerability. There will be bad outcomes at some times because humans are involved, not just because DHS failed. We can be messengers of that message.

- Moore: The reality is that people try to be perfect, but perfect does not always happen.
- Balter: So what is a tolerable percentage of injury or death? Or an understandable percentage?
- Sherbo: It must be less than when the child is not in foster care. Find out what the risk is in the general population. The risk in foster care must be less.
- Kelley-Siel: There is always room to do better, but it must be planful. DHS cannot always be reacting to the hot issue of the day. Our message needs to be that, yes, we do have to be accountable, but CWAC could help by giving us permission to not keep adding one more thing, but rather to stay committed to our strategic plan to safely reduce foster care.
- Balter: That is a role CWAC can take. We can say that we support the division's work on these most important things and we know that means some other things are not going to get done.
- Stolebarger: Asked if a call about abuse by a foster parent is screened differently. She has heard they are because these are difficult children.
- Day: The same screening standard is used. One of the recommendations is that there be a regular review of closed-at screenings to make sure we are applying the same standards.
- Kelley-Siel: There is a higher expectation that the screener share the report with the certifier and caseworkers of other children in the home. If screening is different, it is that and not that we are letting things go because the kids are more difficult.
- Balter: If there are any more comments, please send them to Lois as soon as possible. The final FCST report will be shared with CWAC as it will include recommendations pertaining to CWAC.

ACTION: Mickey Serice will forward CWAC's comments to the Foster Care Safety Team. [Completed 1/15/10]

CWAC MEMBERSHIP

- Balter: Several CWAC members have terms ending soon or are past. Before reappointments are made, we need to ask what are the characteristics important to have for membership. He wants to have a conversation at the next FIWG meeting and invites any CWAC members to join in for that portion of the meeting. Then FIWG could act as a nominating committee to find candidates that fit those characteristics.

ACTION: The FIWG 2/17/10 meeting will include this discussion and all CWAC members will be invited to participate.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Erinn Kelley-Siel

Accomplishments

- Kelley-Siel: We want to celebrate some of the progress we have made in 2009 and an email highlighting these accomplishments will be sent to all staff soon. [Note: On 1/21/10, DHS Director's Message titled "2009: a momentous year for DHS" forwarded to CWAC.]

Budget

- Kelley-Siel: DHS rebalance will be in Ways and Means on 1/14/10. The Legislature is deferring any decision making until after the vote on Measures 66 and 67. The 10% cut list is not the list we are advocating for, but was an assignment we were asked to complete. We do not know how the Legislature plans to use it. For 2011-13, we are in the early stages of discussion and the community will be invited to participate in the process. CWAC members are invited to submit ideas to her. We know we will be in a limited resource environment. We continue to have a hiring freeze and are making budget cuts. We don't know if we will be able to continue what federal stimulus moneys provided. We will probably start the budget building process with the policy option packages we proposed for 2009-11 as the foundation, with consideration for where we are now and what is most important now.

Program and Field Update

- Kelley-Siel: Every district will have its own strategic plan, using the dashboard as their instruments. Invites members to encourage their local counties to continue to do this work.

Media

- Kelley-Siel: There has been a lot of media attention on child welfare recently. A Critical Incident Response Team has been called for the recent fatality in Lane County. We will let you know when the initial report is posted. We are managing accountability but also caring for the staff and community that are traumatized when these things happen. It will be a difficult CIRT report and support for staff will be important.

- Butler: Children First for Oregon and Oregon Foster Youth Connections will be publishing positive stories for Foster Care Prevention Month (May 2010). If you have stories, please send them to her.
- Kelley-Siel: A reporter from Oregon Public Broadcasting observed the Child Abuse Hotline and will be running a story. Part of our internal strategy is to bring some of the critics of the system in to become better informed.
- Waller: When negative media stories come out, a void is created when the agency cannot respond. Is there something CWAC members can do to fill the void?
- Kelley-Siel: Our goal is to release a statement to humanize the tragedy without being case specific. It would be helpful for the community to say the agency does need to be accountable, but that there is no truth to statements that staff do not care for children.
- Balter: Suggested Gene Evans meet with FIWG to prepare us to react to such stories with ways to share the systems issues. To get it organized in a way that is easily accessible to CWAC members.
- Kelley-Siel: Gene and she would welcome that. Outside of a reaction mode, DHS does have stories to tell. We can give you the themes and you can speak to them as you tell your story. This Lane County case will offer you an opportunity to speak to the need for citizens to be aware of children in their communities. Our system is designed to respond after a child has been hurt. When we talk with legislators, we need to have a better resource base for people in crisis. CWAC members could champion that community responsibility.

ACTION: Invite Gene Evans to meet with FIWG to help CWAC members respond to negative media stories about DHS Child Welfare.

Meeting adjourned.