

# Child Welfare Advisory Committee

Judy Stiegler, CWAC Chair  
CASA of Central Oregon.

Dana Ainam  
Confederated Tribes of the  
Grand Ronde of Oregon

Janet Arenz  
Oregon Alliance of  
Children's Programs

Mike Balter  
The Boys and Girls Aid  
Society of Oregon

Iris Bell  
Oregon Commission on  
Children and Families

Leslie Currin  
Oregon Department  
of Education

Don Darland  
Oregon Foster Parent Assoc.

Sara Gelser  
State Representative

Benjamin Hazelton  
Citizen Review Board

Cathy Kaufmann  
Children First for Oregon

Jean Lasater  
Oregon Homeless and  
Runaway Youth Coalition

Phil Lemman  
Oregon Youth Authority

Jerry Moore, Chief  
Salem Police Department

Pam Patton  
Coalition of Advocates for  
Equal Access for Girls

Doug Poppen  
Clackamas County  
Juvenile Department

Angela Sherbo  
Juvenile Rights Project

Becky Smith  
State CASA Program

Christine Stetzer  
Principal  
Grant Watts School

Ruth Taylor  
Parents Anonymous®  
of Oregon

Nan Waller  
Multnomah County  
Circuit Court Judge

April 22, 2007

Bruce Goldberg, M.D., Director  
Department of Human Services  
500 Summer Street NE, E-15  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Keeping Children Safe and Decreasing Need for Foster Care

Dear Dr. Goldberg:

During the November 8, 2006, CWAC meeting, you asked for input on what two things could and should DHS do over the next year to assure more children are safe in this state and how to change the increasing need for foster care. Your stated goal is to decrease the need for foster care, while at the same time assuring children are safer.

We are pleased to share the following recommendations reached by consensus of the Committee.

### How to change the increasing need for foster care:

Two primary ways to decrease the need for foster care are to:

- ✓ Keep children from coming into foster care
- ✓ Get the children that are in foster care out

Barriers exist to both. One such barrier is a lack of A&D and mental health treatment. As a result, children go into and remain in foster care while their parents wait for treatment. No child should have to pay such a price.

As a component of a strategy to reduce either the need to place children in foster care or the length of stay of children placed in foster care, information must be developed to determine the number of cases where A&D and/or mental health issues are the primary presenting problem of the parents or caretakers. These cases should always receive priority in the funding and spending of A&D and/or mental health dollars available to DHS, including shifting resources to meet such needs. The objective is to focus resources on the goal of reducing the need for foster care.

The companion piece is that parents must have supports in place so that once treatment has been completed they can provide a safe home for their children. These supports include housing, training and employment. If the parent does not have access to adequate housing, training or employment; TANF or other resources should be prioritized for use by these families so that children do not remain in or return to foster care.

CWAC recognizes and acknowledges that DHS may not have sole authority to implement changes recommended in this regard. Additionally, in an effort to maximize resources, DHS should examine if there are strategies already being used both within and without the child welfare system for getting parents into treatment.

**Advisory Committee to the Oregon Department of Human Services – Children, Adults and Families Division**  
500 Summer Street NE, E-62  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Bruce Goldberg, M.D.

April 22, 2007

Page 2

**Keeping Children Safe:**

The Child Welfare Advisory Committee determined that it was appropriate to approach this issue from the standpoint of children currently within the jurisdiction of the child welfare system, as this is the population over which DHS, CAF has direct authority. We acknowledge that much of the preventative work in keeping children safe is outside the authority of DHS, CAF. There is however, an intersection with at-risk child populations within the broad authority of DHS, and we have accordingly put forth a recommendation addressing this population as well.

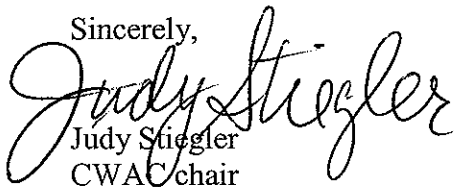
We determined that within the child welfare system, there is a direct correlation between the issue of safety and caseworkers' face-to-face contact with children and parents. It is the consensus of CWAC that the primary purpose of such visits is to assure the safety of the child by stabilizing the placement and moving the case plan forward. With this as a premise, CWAC makes the following recommendations for any open child welfare case, whether the child is residing in the parental home, foster care or other alternative placement:

- While recognizing that 100% compliance with DHS policy regarding face-to-face contact between caseworkers and children is the target, it is recommended that over the period of the next twelve months, such compliance increase from the current rate of 68%<sup>1</sup> to 80%.
- Likewise, it is recommended that in those cases involving parents in a reunification plan, the compliance rate for face-to-face contact between caseworker and parent increase from 53%<sup>1</sup> to 65%.

With respect to identifying potential at-risk children, DHS should look at the interface with populations within their agency, such as those receiving TANF, and determine factors which could be the basis for referral to child welfare, such as a mother not feeding her children or women on drugs while pregnant.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with these recommendations. Consistent with the "Operating Procedures" adopted by CWAC a year ago, we would ask that you provide a response to these recommendations. I am enclosing a copy of those procedures for your reference. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Judy Stiegler  
CWAC chair

cc: Ramona Foley  
CWAC members  
Mickey Serice  
Pam Pearson

---

<sup>1</sup> Percentages provided by DHS/CAF ORBITS data for the month of January 2007.