

Family Services Review Commission Meeting
August 3, 2006
HSB-252

Members present: Maggie Bagon, Doreen Binder, Diane Cohen-Alpert, Kim Freeman, Lorey Freeman, Bonnie Johnson, Rob Potter, and Angela Sanchez

Members excused: Bonnie Davidson and Michael Ware

Members absent: Jessica Chanay, Cassandra Garrison, Miranda Herrera and Shirley Kaping

Members appointed 08/01/2006 but unable to attend: Peggy Kennerly and Rosemary Lazzari

DHS staff present: Bruce Goldberg, Ramona Foley, Mickey Serice, Jim Neely, Vic Todd, Dave Lyda, Carolyn Ross, Karen House, Lori Nelson, John Swanson and Nancy Sathrum

Administrative Handouts, sent via email prior to the meeting: Meeting Agenda, Draft 2006-07 Strategic Plan, FSRC Policies and Operating Procedures, RFSRC Members List, May 4, 2006 Draft FSRC Minutes, June 1, 2006 Draft FSRC Strategic Planning Meeting Minutes, June 15, 2006 Draft Policy Subcommittee Minutes, FSRC Program Reports and attachments (TANF State Plan Update, Implications from the DRA of 2005 on Oregon's TANF Program, Degree Completion Initiative Update, Family Support and Connections (FS&C) Update, FS&C New Families with FC Codes, FS&C Measures, Complaints and Discrimination Report, Client Comment Form Report, **Administrative Handouts at meeting:** CAF Public Assistance Caseload Report for May and June 2006, Self-Sufficiency at a Glance for June 2006

Greeting and Introductions:

- Meeting convened at 8:35 a.m. with member quorum in attendance.
- May 4th action item follow-up: Kim will write and distribute via email, a support/thank you letter from the commission to the governor re: his remarks that the new TANF regulations and Deficit Reduction Act wasn't good for Oregon citizens. Member can send remarks to Rob, who will revise and send letter within one week of receipt.
- Doreen motioned and Kim Freeman seconded the approval of minutes from the May 4th FSRC meeting, the June 1st Strategic Planning meeting and the June 15th Policy Subcommittee meeting as written. Majority voted in favor.
- Commission member status update:
 - Lorey Freeman now works for the State Legislative Council and may need to resign from the FSRC. Michael Ware has agreed to temporarily chair the Policy Subcommittee. A new FSRC vice-chair will be needed if Lorey is asked to resign.

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- Two new members appointed this week: Peggy Kennerly, Douglas County Health and Social Services, previously worked for DHS; and Rosemary Lazzari, former recipient from Ashland, current student at SOU.
- FSRC members would like to receive information on potential new members before they are appointed. **ACTION: Nancy Sathrum will email Nancy Goss-Duran, Governor's Executive Appointments Office, and ask her to send a copy of the Interest Forms to Rob Potter at the same time she provides them to DHS. (Email sent 8/4/06.)**
- **TANF Reauthorization Committee:** Cassandra Garrison volunteered to represent the FSRC on this committee. Dave Lyda reported that they are reviewing the regulations released June 28th, and formulating and finalizing comments.
- **TANF Oversight Committee:** An oversight committee is being formed to provide input on proposed design concepts related to program components and structure. Two FSRC representatives have been invited to participate, as well as two House and two Senate members (Representatives Dalto and Schaufler, and Senators Schrader and Ferrioli have been suggested), Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO) and Budget and Management (BAM) analysts, Governor's Office staff, CAF Assistant Director and related program staff. **ACTION: Rob will send out an email asking for FSRC volunteers for this committee. (Email sent 8/4/06.)**

DHS Status Reports:

Based on discussions at the June Strategic Planning meeting, DHS staff has been asked to provide program summary reports prior to the meeting. The reports should include important upcoming issues and policy changes. How did/will this process work for DHS staff? Vic thinks it will work well and asked FSRC members to submit questions ahead of time so staff can research and be prepared to answer them at the meeting.

ACTION: Submit questions to Nancy (nancy.sathrum@state.or.us) with a cc: to Rob (rob.potter@pgn.com). Nancy will forward question to appropriate CAF program manager.

Budget – John Swanson, Deputy Administrator, DHS Budget Office

- Elyssa Tran has been hired as the new CAF Budget Manager (replacing Angela Long) and will begin work next week.
- Budget development: Eight public meetings were held around the state to gather public input. The DHS 2007-09 base budget is being established and Policy Packages are being developed and will be submitted later this month. They should be on the DHS web site fairly soon. The Governor's Office should have their recommended budget prepared by the end of October.
- How is TANF Reauthorization being handled in the budget process? We have a placeholder for the legislature to handle DRA policy and budget issues.

Grievance Report – Lori Nelson

Maggie heard from a client who feels that the FSRC should see client comments before the grievance process begins. Some clients feel they have no representation at grievance hearing. Grievance policy/brochure should include information on the process and client should be encouraged to bring a support person to meetings. The flyer used in the past also said that the client could request that the caseworker not be in attendance at the meeting.

ACTION: FSRC continues to wait for draft policy on grievance process. FSRC would like a customer service-based policy on how DHS will respond to clients and wants CAF to have a policy with timelines, rights of appeal, instructions, etc. A flyer outlining the policy should be available to all clients. Statute says we will have a grievance procedure in place. Forms are being updated for the discrimination policy and process. **Lori thought this project had been suspended but will continue work on policy.**

DHS Updates:

DHS Director's Report – Dr. Bruce Goldberg

DHS is in the process of preparing the agency requested budget and responding to the federal budget and the changes that have been made in budget and policy.

- Deficit Reduction Act: Proof of citizenship; our desire is to have the least possible impact on DHS clients by providing appropriate warning information.
 - We will have to live within the law but also want to protect people currently receiving benefits and figure out how we can verify citizenship without discontinuing benefits.
 - We currently have electronic access to Oregon's birth certificate data system and hope to establish an electronic sharing network with neighboring states (Washington, Idaho, California) to access their birth certificate records.
- TANF Reauthorization:
 - The feds are now moving towards defining case management in medical terms without regard to the other services necessary to keep individuals and families healthy; transportation, housing, food and access to other wrap-around services. DHS is concerned that they aren't looking at all aspects of care.
- Budget:
 - It appears we are on track to stay within the 05-07 budget as augmented by the E-Board but we still have a year left and many items will influence our spending. We have enormous challenges ahead as we continue to see a greater need for services. The economic future of our state indicates improvement, but increased cost of care may mean additional resources will be needed.

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Doreen confirmed that the people her program sees are also requesting more services and have less money than in the past. There are many contributing factors; the cost of providing services continues to increase, the poor continue to lose economic ground, and donations are down as the community believes the economy is improving.

There are no easy solutions to these problems. We need to better articulate the issue in a more compelling way and attempt, from a moral standpoint, to address the needs with the larger general public to show the financial impact on the community.

Maggie mentioned that some DHS staff believes clients “just need to get a job.”
ACTION: Ramona asked Maggie to discuss this with Rene DuBoise, who can address at a staff meeting. Ramona will discuss with Rene also.

Diane expressed appreciation for Bruce’s message and reported on the recent Homeless Family Connect Day that served 350 families, many of which are not currently receiving services. DHS staff was available to sign up people for services. Bruce agreed that this is a huge issue, that better outreach to this difficult to reach population is needed, and that corrective steps will hopefully be made. The department is currently working to provide all children with health care benefits.

FSRC Strategic Plan: The FSRC would like to be a proactive part of the DHS vision and help find solutions instead of just reacting to problems. They would appreciate receiving information in a timely manner to allow them to work with community contacts. Bruce welcomes this approach and agreed that DHS will benefit from the expertise of commission members. DHS has a new Public Relations/Communications Director, Ann Snyder, who will be involved in this process.

Other PR projects were mentioned:

- Possibly contacting Wieden & Kennedy to see if they have interest in pro-bono communications campaign.
- Michelle Cole, Oregonian reporter, has done a good job getting the DHS message out in terms that people can understand.
- Copies of New York Times article on child welfare “The Case of Marie and Her Sons” were distributed.

CAF Report – Ramona Foley, Mickey Serice, and Jim Neely

- New TANF regulations and policy (TANF Reauthorization): FSRC members appreciated the “Implications Report” that was included in handouts. Jim prefaced the discussion by saying that, although most states are feeling that Congress did a poor job in the new law and the feds did a poor job with the new regulations, it gives us an opportunity to take a fresh look at self sufficiency programs, something that hasn’t been done since the 1980’s when our economy was so poor. As we determine how Oregon will meet the new participation numbers, we will be forced to revisit how long clients remain on the program. Vic and Dave have done a good job of looking at the new regulations in a positive way.

Vic hopes to take this opportunity to review our programs to determine what has been left undone during the past five to six years. How can we restructure programs to assist clients to become successful? An internal group is brainstorming the future of the program and looking at strengths and weaknesses to determine how we can move forward in a positive way.

Dave went through the report, discussed time lines and highlights from the feds:

- The report covers the historical perspective as well as federal requirements. Our JOBS and TANF programs have been very successful in the past. With the current client base we must design a program to address current needs.
- Look at each particular component, define activities and participation.
- Review work verification plan to outline activities and how the system will verify and collect information by late September 2006.
- The adjustment for the caseload reduction credit will force us to look at participation in a new way. Expanded committees involving the Governor’s Office, advocacy groups, etc. will be formed to assist in finalizing plans.
- The report outlines the increased penalties and requirements for states. If federal funds are lost due to penalties, we will have to replace with state funds.
- Allowable MOE was expanded to include out of wedlock pregnancy prevention, healthy families, etc.

Concerns include:

- Degree Completion Initiative is now full and waiting list has been implemented. The new regulations clearly define allowable activities that will restrict upper level credits, vocational training, ESL, and basic education, not 4-year degrees.
- We were hoping to use expanded Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug, and Rehab services but timelines have been restricted.
- There will be a different approach to stabilization activities, community service and work experience.

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- Fair Labor Standards Act: Concerns with the clarity of implications and added piece of limited utilization of food stamps in the computation. We are continuing to research ways to include food stamp computation and this issue is being addressed by the feds.
- Includes changes to participation and reporting requirements but should have a minor impact for Oregon's mandatory population and it provides some relief for clients caring for disabled family members, but does not include children in school full time.

In summary, we will continue to work through the regulations and formulate comments but see this as an opportunity to look at our programs and determine what can be done to strengthen them. Vic and Dave have been invited to submit advance questions and participate in a small group forum with Wade Horn in Seattle.

Bonnie asked a question about fleeing felons; would kids become ineligible for temporary assistance if a parole violator was in the household? Parole violation doesn't automatically mean removable and placement of children in the child welfare system. The children would most likely continue to receive a child-only grant.

Comments on the new regulations are due on August 28th but the interim final regulations took effect immediately. DHS will be submitting comments. Regulations may be phased in because of necessary statutory changes and the fact that many states, including Oregon, won't have a session until 2007. Ramona mentioned that APHSA and NGO may have helpful information on their sites and asked Nancy to send FSRC members the web links. **ACTION: Nancy to send web link to APHSA and NGO. (Email sent 08/08/06.)**

The FSRC thanked Dave for the Implications Report which was much easier to understand than the Federal Register.

ACTION: Vic/Dave will notify staff of timelines and implementation process.

- Letter to clients regarding time limits: Recommendation made that DHS wait for policy before sending letter. An initial draft of guidance on time limits was given to the commission. Need to define which months should be counted and make an attempt to capture and count the months benefits were received from other states. We continue to work on getting an understandable definition of "Indian Country" since some of these months may not count. We are planning to track months a client is in domestic violence (DV) status and bank those months as automatic exemptions for extension to five year limit. How do we measure the beginning and ending of

DV status? Possibly count the time they are actively working on their safety plan or when their ability to work is compromised. Staff training will be needed on this subject so cases are correctly identified and coded.

Kim mentioned she initially was in favor of sending the time limits letter, but not until field staff are trained on the new regulations. DHS and contractor staff need to answer questions in a consistent manner. Is it practical to expect that the policy can be in place and staff trained so that the letter could go out in January 2007? A system needs to be in place so information is sent out periodically to ensure ongoing notification.

Policy Committee Report: Not discussed.

FSRC Strategic Planning Session Follow-up:

- **Discuss and Finalize 2006 – 2007 Strategic Plan**
 - No change to mission statement
 - Approve Goals and objectives: Provides new direction by incorporating four broad goals and additional objectives.
 - Cassandra Garrison volunteered to participate for the FSRC in the TANF Reauthorization Workgroup.
 - May need a partnership subcommittee to work on the merging of child welfare and TANF cases.

ACTION: Members were asked to re-read strategic plan and send Rob a prioritized list and comments regarding what should be worked on so this can be voted on and adopted at the September FSRC meeting. The Environmental Scan will remain in the document.

- Discuss subcommittee development: Subcommittees need clear work plans and direction before membership is established.
 - Suggested subcommittees include: Partnership Subcommittee (Ad hoc), Legislative/Budget Subcommittee (Ad hoc), and possible Customer Service Subcommittee
- Policy Subcommittee: Mike Ware has agreed to chair this subcommittee on an interim basis. If Lorey Freeman resigns her position with the FSRC, a new permanent Chair will be needed. A Portland DHS office was discussed where child welfare and TANF are doing a good job merging their cases. May want to visit and hold an on-site meeting to determine what is working and not working. If this is done, Jerry Burns, Carolyn Graf, and other SDA 2 staff should be invited to attend. It was suggested that FSRC members may benefit by attending a graduation ceremony to see the investment in and accomplishments of DHS clients.

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- **Review draft FSRC Operating Policies**

The FSRC Operating Policies will be a working document that includes administrative items, compliance issues, definitions, meeting schedule and agendas, voting, meeting minutes, records management, recruiting/filling vacant positions, expense reporting, expectations of members and DHS staff, working/interacting with DHS (needs additional work), by-laws, and subcommittee information. **ACTION: Document to be reviewed and updated next month.**

- **Update By-laws as necessary**

Current By-laws need to be changed to include change in day of monthly meetings. **ACTION: Send out current By-laws. (Nancy sent via email on 08/03/06.) When By-laws are updated, Nancy will request that they be posted to the FSRC section of the DHS web site.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon. The next FSRC meeting is scheduled for Sept. 7th, 8:30 a.m. to noon. Rob may not be able to attend and Maggie agreed to facilitate meeting if needed.

Preparation for next meeting: Documents and reports will be sent electronically. Please contact Nancy if hard copy is requested.