

Family Services Review Commission Meeting

**June 5, 2008
8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
HSB 252**

Members present: Jessica Chanay, Ellen Gradison, Diane Cohen-Alpert, Maggie Bagon, Rosemary Lazzari, Doreen Binder and Michael Ware (by phone)

Members excused: Kim Freeman, Peggy Kennerly, Mavel Morales

DHS Staff present: Vic Todd, Jim Neely, Robert Trachtenberg, Dr. Bruce Goldberg, Xochitl Esparza, Mickey Serice, Lauri Stewart, Candi Quintall

Guest: Yesenia Gutierrez

Handouts at the meeting:

- Memo – DRAFT Hearings Information Brochure (DHS 9003)

Greeting and Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 8:30am and introductions were made.

MOTION: Doreen motioned to approve the May minutes, Diane seconded. Motion approved.

DHS Presentation

Forums – The DHS budget forums have been well received. In the future, DHS will look into offering the forums in the evening. Feedback has rather been consistent around the state.

DHS will have a draft high level summary of the DHS budget and some line item detail within the next two weeks. The link to the website will be sent to the members.

FSRC members shared feedback from their participation in the forums. Jessica was felt the turnout was good in Portland. The presentation seemed to be well received. She heard that this year's forums were better than previous years. Rosemary felt there was a limitation in providing the long list of the needs and that this new process is inspiring. Liked the passion and the compassion in the room. Diane felt it was a good forum and very well organized. There was a strong emphasis on partnership and good speakers. Maggie asked about the participants. It was mainly providers and advocates and some clients.

Phase II of the Transformation initiative

DHS is in the process of selecting a contractor for phase II of the transformation initiative, which will be focused more on service. There will be opportunities for clients and partners to submit feedback although the specific opportunities have not been selected. There was a discussion about the cycle of staff burnout. There needs to be appropriate training built into programs. Appropriate tools and resources will be available to staff.

Jessica asked about the client feedback – how it will be used when developing processes; how the feedback will be gathered; if it will be gathered consistently statewide; how it will be evaluated; and how the outcomes will be developed and measured.

Action item: Fairborz will be invited to future meetings for regular updates and discussions.

Dr. Goldberg talked about the pilot that created efficiencies within DHS. The transformation initiative was a follow up to the pilot process. Ellen asked how much money was spent on the pilot. Dr. Goldberg explained that they have spent approximately \$650,000 on the pilot and it has shown a return on the investment.

Diane mentioned that training is not enough for staff. There needs to be models developed for better communication.

Vic discussed the Dr. Ford model and the summits being held around the state this summer. Dr. Ford will be providing the training at several of the summits. The training provides a refresher of the strength-based model. The summits are not mandated for staff; however, there is a strong desire from staff to attend. There is a movement to extend the Dr. Ford model to the eligibility side of the program. There are plans to develop trainings for Line Managers and support staff.

Action item: The schedule of the summits will be sent to commissioners so they can attend the trainings.

Re-engagement report

Improvement has been significant - the number of the cases sanctioned have dropped by more than half. However staff has identified multiple issues with the new process, primarily with respect to ensuring all steps are completed within the allotted timeframes.

Jessica inquired about difference in the measurement used between the previous report and the current update. Xochitl acknowledged that they did not measure the same timeframe or amount of cases as the previous report.

Rosemary asked about the connection to domestic violence and the challenges some clients experience in convincing their case managers that they are in a D.V. situation. Training is required for case carrying staff to attend a D.V. training.

Action item: Xochitl will provide the D.V. training materials to the commission.

Jessica asked if there could be goals set for reducing the amount of cases that are sanctioned. Vic responded that he would rather set a goal for program participation. Utilization of Post-TANF and SFPSSI could better outcomes to focus on.

Doreen asked about the affects of the economy on caseloads. The amount of intakes are up and caseloads are increasing. **Note:** This will be a future agenda item

Diane discussed the re-engagement program and the importance of holding clients accountable. Discussed the importance of being upfront and unearthing the reasons of the client's actions.

Hearings Information Brochure

Distributed and reviewed the DRAFT Hearings Information Brochure (DHS 9003). Robert Trachtenberg reviewed the process of a client requesting a hearing. The brochure is provided to the client following the request for a hearing. There will be a need to control the use of the brochure. It can't be made available in the lobby; unless there are revisions added that includes hearing rights.

FSRC presented recommendation for the Hearings Brochure:

Reading Skill - A suggestion was to add a sentence letting clients know who they can contact if they don't understand the brochure or some of the legal terminology.

Pictures – discussed the images that are included in the brochure, the need for them to include more pictures of what DHS clients and families look like, what the hearing process looks like, and less pictures overall.

Formatting – Would like to have the color boxes removed. Include the participants of the hearing process. Include different sections (before the hearings, during the hearing, and after the hearing).

Informal conferences – felt that the section on informal conferences was confusing. Discussed how clients feel about the informal conference - is it optional? Should they attend? Need to include information on the potential outcomes of attending or not attending the informal conference.

Flow chart – a suggestion was to develop a flow chart that displays the options of requesting a hearing. Discussed the difficulty in adding this due to cost and the need to collaborate with other divisions.

Posters – A suggestion was made to have a poster displayed in the lobby that outlines the process.

Acronyms – A request was made to explain acronyms at the top of every page.

Representation – need clarification on the rights of the client for representation and that DHS usually is represented by a Hearings Officer, not an attorney.

Oregon State Bar Number – Request to include a number to contact the Oregon State Bar.

“What you need to prove” – This does not apply to intentional program violations, where the burden of proof is on the agency. The statement that “you must prove you are entitled to the level of benefits you are seeking” does not cover overpayment cases. Some modifications will need to be made to incorporate different scenarios.

Evidence – A request was made to reform the section on evidence.

Copies – Include a section explaining that clients can ask DHS for copies of documents.

Decision – A suggestion was made to not have the client ask the ALJ about the decision.

Expedited Hearings – The brochure does not currently address the expedited hearings process. The process is the same; however, the timeframes are condensed. This could impact evidence that needs to be collected or witnesses that need to be subpoenaed.

Implementation of decision – A request was made to have information regarding what happens after the hearing in terms of implementation of a decision. It was explained that this could be difficult due to reading levels, different division requirements, and varying scenarios. A suggestion was to narrow the scope and include a high level summary.

Receipt of decision – a request was made to include a contact if a client has not received a decision notice.

Submission of evidence – a request was to include contact information for where they need to submit their evidence.

Documents to reference – a request was made to include the three documents the client should reference when preparing for the hearing.

Length of time – A request was to include information on the length of the time of the hearing.

Action item: Robert will send out the revised version.

Membership Update

Some interest has been expressed from the recruitment letter that was sent out. More information should come soon.

Mavel will be stepping down due to constraints at her new job.

Yesenia Gutierrez submitted an application and attended the June FSRC meeting. Yesenia provided an overview of her current position, her background and explained why she was interested in joining the commission.

MOTION: The commission discussed Yesenia's application. Diane motioned to recommend Yesenia and Rosemary seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Strategic Planning

Committees will be developed for each goal. Three members will take leadership for the three committees.

- Client Service (goals 1 and 2) outreach, access and customer service
- Internal capacity development
- Strategic partnerships

Proposal in lieu of having a July meeting, have the committees begin their work on the goals.

Action item: Jessica will send out the goal definitions to the commission members.

A meeting will be scheduled for the Client Service committee and all interested parties will be invited to attend. Rosemary, Diane and Michael want to be included in the initial meeting. A request was made to have the meeting held in Portland and provide VCON and phone conferencing.

Action item: A meeting wizard will be sent from Jessica to schedule the initial meeting.

Future agenda items:

- Farm Bill
- Increasing caseloads, increasing costs (gas, food, etc)
- Increased DHS workloads on caseworkers
- Current recipients, diversity, culturally, gender balance