

Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care for 2004 to 2005

About the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee

The goal of the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee (RCWAC) is to promote the implementation of cross cultural sensitivity and ethnically competent services to best meet the needs of refugee communities in Oregon and to assure the protection and appropriate treatment of refugee children by child welfare staff.

The stated purpose of RCWAC in Oregon Revises Statute 418.941 is to advise DHS on the development and administration of child welfare policies, programs and practices that affect refugee children and their families. Committee members represent and advocate for the interest of refugee children and their families through the following activities:

- Provide consultation and advice regarding the culturally appropriate placement of refugee children and availability of resources for refugee children and families,
- Provide to the Committee timely, accurate information regarding the impact of policy, program, budget and legislation changes with their agencies, branches of government, institutions, and/or communities that affect refugee child welfare services;
- Develop recommendations for consideration by DHS Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Assistant Director in the area of child welfare, refugee children and families;
- Represent the broad interests of child welfare services, refugee stakeholders, including clients, staff and providers;
- Represent the interests of their agency, institution, branch of government and/or community and keep them informed of the work of the Committee;
- Provide opportunities to receive information about child welfare issues from the refugee community.

One of the methods by which RCWAC implements this process, is to meet with DHS caseworkers who have placed a refugee child in protective custody. Committee members are

able to provide the worker with information about the child's culture and traditions and to assist the worker in developing culturally appropriate services for family members.

The Department of Human Services (DHS), is required by ORS 418. 943 to provide an annual report of refugee children in the Department's care. The following information is to be included:

- legal status of the child,
- living arrangement,
- demographic information such as age, sex, race,
- accumulated length in foster care,
- other demographic information deemed appropriate.

The report also explains the extent to which DHS complied with ORS 418.925 to .945 including descriptions of the methods of compliance. Compliance issues include two considerations: the reason that removal of the child is "necessary to prevent imminent serious emotional or physical harm to the child and the reason that provision of preventative or remedial services do not alleviate the harm. The child's culture and tradition are also considered in making a placement decision. The child is placed in the following order of preference

- natural parent
- extended family members
- members of the same cultural heritage
- persons with knowledge & appreciation of the child's cultural heritage

Refugee Children in the Department's Care

From 2004 to 2005, DHS placed nine refugee children in protective custody. All families were residing in Multnomah County at the time of removal.

A 14 year old Haitian girl was removed because of physical abuse by her father. After considerable recruitment in the Haitian community the child was placed with a family having knowledge of her culture, and she continues in foster care. She is receiving treatment services from Morrison Center for behavioral problems. She has regular visits with her father and siblings. However her continued behavioral problems and conflicts with her stepmother continue to prevent her return home.

While in residence together in a domestic violence shelter, the mother of a 4 month old Russian girl was observed physically abusing the child. The case is currently open. After a brief placement in shelter care, the child was placed with her paternal grandparents. The

mother is receiving services and has regular visits with the child at the grandparents' home.

Six Somali children were placed in shelter care as the result of their mother's mental health issues which put the children at risk. The children were returned home when their father returned. OHSU Intercultural Psychiatric Program is providing services to the entire family.

A 12 year old Somali girl was physically abused by her mother. The child was placed in temporary shelter then returned to her mother when services were in place. Because of the child's behavioral problems, she was placed for treatment at Christie School. The Juvenile Department was also involved in the residential treatment placement.

(Please see attached chart for additional information.)

Refugee Children in DHS Care and Custody 2004 to July, 2005

<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country Of Origin</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Legal Status</i>	<i>Current Living Situation</i>	<i>Time In Care</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Other</i>
14 yrs.	female	Haitian	Multnomah	DHS custody	permanent foster care with someone having knowledge of child's culture	placed 10/22/03 to current	treatment for behavioral problems at Morrison Center	regular visits with father & siblings
4 mo.	female	Russian	Multnomah	DHS custody	currently placed with paternal grandparents	placed 8/12/04 to 10/6/04	services to mother-parent trainer & case worker speak Russian	regular visits with mother in relative home
9 yrs. 7 yrs. 6 yrs. 4 yrs. 2 yrs. 1 yr.	4 female 2 male	Somali	Multnomah	petition dismissed	shelter placement only in-home services provided in 2003	placed 1/14/05 to 1/24/05	assessment of mother's mental health needs and referral for treatment	services with OHSU Intercultural Psychiatric Program
12 yrs.	female	Somali	Multnomah	DHS custody while placed	returned home case closed	placed 6/8/04 to 8/17/04	child placed at Christie school for treatment of behavioral problems	