

Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care
March, 2007

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 competent and ethnically sensitivity 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 Revised Statue 418.941 is to advise the Department of Human services (DHS) about 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 the Committee with 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 work with 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 child welfare workers 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 assist the worker in developing culturally and language appropriate services for family members.

DHS is required by ORS 418.943 to provide an annual report about refugee children in Department care including the following information:

- 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:

1. reason removal of the child is necessary to prevent imminent serious emotional or physical harm to the child and
2. reason that preventative or remedial services do not alleviate the harm.

The child's culture and tradition are to be considered in making a placement decision. The child is placed in the following order of preference as follows:

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

Refugee Children Staffed by the Committee

In March, 2006 the Committee staffed a **Haitian** family brought by the Hillsboro Branch. The family did not technically meet the definition of Refugee under the Refugee Act. They had been in the United States more than ten years. However, the Committee was able to provide support and resources for the case worker. The family was known to several Refugee Committee members as well as some child welfare staff from previous involvement when the family did meet the RCWAC criteria. One child left care when she reached 18 years of age. Four of the six children in this family remain in foster care and one child has been adopted. All these are placed with Haitian families, who attend the same church which supports the children maintaining contact with each other.

In March of 2006 the Committee also staffed a **Laotian/Hmong** family brought to its attention by the N/NE Branch. Again, this family did not technically meet the definition of Refugee under the Refugee Act because the family had been in the United States more than ten years. In this case, the caseworker was looking for additional supports or resources in order to effectively provide for the family's needs. The committee was able to provide the worker with information regarding culture and values as well as several culturally appropriate resources

Also in March of 2006, the Committee staffed a **Liberian** Family brought by the N/NE Branch and community partners. At the time of the staffing, children had not been removed from the home and many in-home services were in place. The committee was able to provide additional resources and information to better serve the family and their specific cultural needs.

(Please see attached chart for additional information.)

2007 Annual Report - Case Information

<u>Age Of Child When Case Opened</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Country Of Origin</u>	<u>County & Legal Status</u>	<u>Current Living Situation</u>	<u>Time In Care</u>	<u>Services</u>	<u>Other</u>
11 4 2 1 2 months 6 yrs. at placement	F M M F M M	Haitian	Washington	Emancipated Foster Care " " Adopted Foster Care	9 years 10 year 10 year 10 year 1 year 1 year	Parents did not cooperate with offered services. Parental rights terminated.	All children placed with Haitian families
6 6 5 4 2 1	M M F F M M	Laotian/ Hmong	Multnomah	Home " " " " Deceased due to medical reasons d	2 months	Foster care Medical services In home supervision	3/8/06 Staffed with RCWAC & Identified culturally appropriate services
6 1	F F	Liberian	Multnomah	Home	0	Follow up visits Communication with community partners	Allegations of neglect not substantiated