

Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care
March, 2015

About the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee

The goal of the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee (RCWAC) is to implement culturally competent and ethnically sensitivity child welfare services that 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 in the following ways:

- Provide consultation and advice regarding the culturally appropriate placement of refugee children and availability of services and other resources for refugee children and families,
- Provide DHS with information regarding the impact of policy, program, budget and legislation changes 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 regarding 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, and
- Provide opportunities to receive information about child welfare issues from the refugee community.

One activity by which RCWAC carries out their mission is by meeting 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 linguistically appropriate services for family members.

About the Annual Report

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
- the child's living arrangement
- demographic information such as age, sex, race
- accumulated length of time 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 was necessary to prevent imminent serious emotional or physical harm to the child, and
2. Reason preventative or remedial services did not alleviate the harm

The child's culture and tradition are to be considered in making a placement decision. The child should be 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 Staffed by the Committee

May 2014 staffed a case from Multnomah County regarding a Somali family that consists of three children. A voluntary agreement was signed with the family

however it has become necessary to file for temporary custody of one of the children, a 16 year old female. There are concerns the mother is not meeting the child's needs and given the child's medically fragile state, intervention needed to occur so that her safety and medical needs could be met. The committee is in full support given the circumstances and provided the worker with referrals that may be helpful to the foster family and child. The worker was also encouraged to assist the child and mother to establish an amicable and supportive relationship and that family visits occur if it is safe to do so.