

Child Welfare Project and Implementation Plan Steering Team

Thursday, March 7, 2019

1:30PM-3:00PM

Department of Human Services Building (HSB-137 A-D)

500 Summer Street NE, Salem, OR

Vision: Every child and family has a safe and positive environment in which to live and develop.

Conference call information:

Dial in: 1-888-204-5984

Participant Code: 547086

Members

Dana Ainam, Social Services Department Manager, Grand Ronde Tribe	Tami Kane-Suleiman, Child Protective Services Manager, DHS	Fariborz Pakseresht, Director, DHS
Shannon Biteng, Child Welfare Field Administrator, DHS	Belinda Kjensrud, Parent Mentor, Parents Anonymous	Kimberly Ricketts, Strategic Consulting Managing Director, Casey Family Programs
Peter Buckley, Former Legislator, Oregon State Representative	Anani Kuffner, Mentoring Assisting and Promoting Success, DHS	Ben Sand, CEO, Portland Leadership Foundation – Embrace
Sara Gelser, Senator, Oregon State Senate	Margie Macleod, Vice President of Quality Management, Morrison Child & Family Services	Derenda Schubert, Executive Director, Bridge Meadows
Carolyn Graf, Board Member, Oregon Foster Parent Association	Francis Maher, Executive Director, St. Mary's Home for Boys	Nathaniel Schwab, Representative, Oregon Foster Youth Connection
Dana Hargunani, Chief Medical Officer, Oregon Health Authority	Leola McKenzie, Director, Oregon Judicial Department	Kris Scrobeck, Community Resource Manager, Oregon Youth Authority
Hon. Patrick Henry, Multnomah County Circuit Court	Jana Mclellan, Child Welfare Deputy Director, DHS	Wenonoa Spivak, Director of Programs & Education, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Jackson County
Traci Savoy Jack, Strategic Consulting Director, Casey Family Programs	Lisa McMahan, Program Director, Oregon Foster Youth Connection	Kalisha Stout, Permanency Supervisor for District 2, DHS
Ajit Jetmalani, M.D., Child Psychiatry, Oregon Health & Science University	Amy Miller, Deputy Director, Oregon Office of Public Defense	
Marilyn Jones, Child Welfare Director, DHS	April Munks, Child Welfare District 10 Program Manager, DHS	

TIME	TOPIC	PURPOSE	PRESENTER
1:30-1:40 (10 Min)	Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • What this meeting will accomplish 	Shannon Biteng
1:40-1:55 (15 Min)	Overview of projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project status update sheet 	Shannon Biteng
1:55-2:05 (10 Min)	Child Welfare Procedure Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review final procedure manual 	Lee Lower
2:05-2:25 (20 min)	Caregiver Retention and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response from Foster Care and Youth Transition Program Manager 	Greg Westbrooks
2:25-2:40 (15 min)	Realistic Job Preview Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview what this project will bring 	Brooke Hall
2:40-2:50 (10 Min)	Child Welfare updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear from Child Welfare leadership 	Marilyn Jones
2:50-3:00 (10 Min)	Action Items / Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize any action items 	Shannon Biteng

Action Items

Assign Date	Action	Due Date	Owner

Parking lot

Date	Topic / Purpose	Date to revisit

Completed Action Items

Assign Date	Action	Date Completed	Owner

Decision Log

Decision	Date of decision	Who made decision?

Child Welfare Project and Implementation Plan Tracking Sheet

Project Name	Project Manager	Program Lead	Targeted Completion	Handoff Status	December Status	Current Status	Status Update
Enhance state and district level community engagement		Stacy Lake and Melissa Sampson-Grier	March 2019	Proceed with caution	Proceed with caution	On track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Workgroup presented to the Steering Team on December 18, 2019. The Workgroup authored the Principles of Community Engagement report and provided to the Child Welfare Director and Deputy Director. Child Welfare Executive Leadership will respond to workgroup recommendations in March 2019. Elements of this project work is being incorporated enterprise wide. Child Welfare will be developing an infrastructure for annual community forums.
Completion of the state wide listening tour and report development	Kelsi Eisele	Shannon Biteng	March 2019	NA	Proceed with caution	On track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening tours completed in all districts except District 1 (Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia Counties and District 14 (Malheur, Harney and Grant). These counties will be visited in 2019. Office of Organizational Change submitted a draft Listening Tour report in February 2019. Child Welfare is in the process of reviewing the report. Report will be published in March 2019.
Supervisor training redesign	Kim Lorz, Brooke Hall and Erin Anhoury	Shannon Biteng	Spring 2020	At risk	At risk	Proceed with caution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reset of project with focus group identified milestones and timeframes. Oregon Executive Leadership project around clinical supervision incorporated into foundation building of supervisor training. New workgroup in development to include existing workgroup members from the project and clinical supervision workgroup led by the Oregon Executive Leadership Team. Supervisor competencies have been developed and finalized. Curriculum research conducted by Casey Family Programs. New project plan in development.
Coordinated response to abuse	Erin Anhoury	Lacey Andresen, Tami Kane-Suleiman, and Greg Westbrooks	June 2019	On track	At risk	Proceed with Caution	Update Sensitive Issue Review Protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of current process occurring with respective Central Office Program Managers. Project framework in development.
						Proceed with Caution	Review of foster home certification exceptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Certification and Well-Being Staffings beginning.
						Closed – January 2018	OCWP policy making procedure (closed)
Recruitment and retention of SSS1's	Brooke Hall and Erin Anhoury	Shannon Biteng	March 2019	On track	On track	Closed – March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workgroup researched and mapped gaps in Child Welfare business onboarding process. Gaps were identified in several systems. Child Welfare partnering with the Director's Office to identify steps and solutions to gaps to streamline business on-boarding process. Child Welfare partnering with Office of Equity and Multicultural Services on tasks. Engagement survey developed with Office of Reporting, Research, Analytics, and Implementation (ORRAI) and deployed to staff, new caseworker staff (quarterly) and staff over three years (annually) in 2018. Exit Survey developed with ORRAI and it is prepared to launch. Target statewide implementation for April 2019. Workload Surveys (RMS) for SSSI, MAPS and Active Efforts Specialists developed with ORRAI and deployed in 2019. Realistic Job Preview (RJP) project on target. Filming to begin in April with a completion date of May 31, 2019. RJP videos will be embedded into DHS website and other organizations and university websites. Project Manager working with Human Resources to embed RJP videos in application process for respective positions; Screening, CPS, Permanency, Certification and Adoptions. Message from Child Welfare Director included. Workforce Development research on-going.

Project Name	Project Manager	Program Lead	Targeted Completion	Handoff Status	December Status	Current Status	Status Update
Caregiver training redesign	Rose Cokeley	Greg Westbrooks	February 2019	On track	On track	Closed – February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workgroup has developed the ASK (Areas of Skills and Knowledge) for caregivers which will be used to design training curriculum. Portland State University submitted a proposal to Child Welfare to design and provide the training. The training foundation has been developed and the design and development is moving forward. Curriculum will be opened for public review and comments. Workgroup is now an advisory body meeting on a quarterly basis. Project work has moved to implementation within Child Welfare.
Caregiver retention and support	Rose Cokeley	Greg Westbrooks	February 2019	At risk	Proceed with caution	Closed – February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workgroup presented recommendations to the Steering Team at the December 18, 2018 meeting. Draft proposal submitted to Foster Care Program Manager. Foster Care Program Manager responded to Workgroup recommendations. Foster Care Program Manager to discuss recommendations and response. Workgroup will be continuing as an advisory body for Foster Care Program. Emergency Board request developed this Workgroup for foster parent supports was gifted by the legislature. Respite care reimbursement, flexible funds for tangible goods for placement and Foster Parent Night Out supports implemented by Child welfare.
Practice model fidelity	Brooke Hall and Erin Anhoury	Tami-Kane Suleiman and Lacey Andresen	February 2019	On track	Proceed with caution	Closed – February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Report (court report, case plan and child specific case plan) combined into one report. Family Transition Meeting for CPS and Permanency developed. Pilots for the Family Report and Family Transition Meeting in Lane, Roseburg and Klamath Counties piloted began in February 2019. Statewide implementation of Family Report and Family Transition Meeting in July 2019.
Aligning policy, procedure and best practice	Lee Lower	Shannon Biteng	January 2019	Proceed with caution	On track	Closed - January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedure manual distributed to staff.
Certification and well-being staffing's		Greg Westbrooks	December 2018	On track	Closed – December 2018		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of foster home certification exceptions. This project has closed as the work is underway within program.
Centralized screening	Alain Datcher	Kristen Khamnohack	December 2018 Go Live: April 2019	Proceed with caution	Closed - December 2018		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ORCAH now screens reports for all counties except Multnomah, Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia. ORCAH will be fully operational, 24/7, April 2019.

PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT: Caregiver Support and Retention

*Prepared by Caregiver Support and Development Workgroup,
STATEWIDE FOSTER CARE STEERING COMMITTEE
December 7, 2018*

Workgroup Members

- Andrea Birchman, DHS Child Welfare
- Kathy Bracken, Relative Foster Parent
- Karen Brelje, Neurotherapeutic Pediatric Therapies, Foster/Adoptive Parent
- Rohanna Buchanan, Oregon Social Learning Center
- Greg Dalton, CASA of Coos County
- Ana Day, Oregon Community Programs
- Anthony Fox, KEEP Program, DHS Child Welfare
- Brooke Gray, Every Child Oregon, Foster Parent
- Marissa Johnson, Homes of Healing Coalition, Former Foster Parent
- Dana Leno, Grand Ronde Tribe
- John Linn, DHS Child Welfare
- Jessica Lloyd-Rogers, Oregon Foster Parent Association
- Roxanne Lovelace, Oregon Foster Parent Association
- Angelica Quintero, DHS Child Welfare
- Stephanie Simmons, DCHS Multnomah County, Foster Parent
- Lori Simpson, Catholic Community Services
- Liz Sumner, Oregon Foster Parent Association

DHS Staff Leaders: Rose Cokeley

Overview

The Caregiver Support and Development Workgroup formed in November 2017 with the objective of helping DHS Child Welfare with its internal strategy and practices to enhance support of Oregon foster parents and to increase foster parent retention. The group—a collective of foster parents, community organizations, leaders of color, and DHS staff—identified core areas of need in the effort to retain foster families and relative caregivers.

Over months of meetings, the Caregiver Support and Development Workgroup advised on the distribution of Emergency Board funds (HB 5201) and suggested additional communication strategies associated with the foster parent childcare subsidy. Additionally, the group identified the support areas needed for a foster family who is caring for children or youth in their home.

Recognizing that some support efforts exist in regions across the state, the Workgroup focused on current gaps geographically and in services across Oregon. Please see Appendix A for the map of current support programs across Oregon.

Recommendations

The Workgroup identified the following nine areas of support a foster parent needs from DHS Child Welfare to be successful and sustainable. These conditions were developed with the vision that foster parents are an active, equal, and respected part of the case team, and should be supported throughout their fostering journey.

Vision Conditions include:



1. **Communication:** Foster Parents receive clear and consistent communication from DHS
2. **Tangible Support of Basic Needs:** Foster Parents' basic needs are met to care for child or youth
3. **Responsiveness:** Foster Parents receive timely response, especially in times of crisis
4. **Respect:** Foster Parents are respected as team members, as stated in the Foster Parent Bill of Rights
5. **Being Heard:** Foster Parents feel heard and listened to
6. **Trust:** Foster Parents feel trusted and can fully trust DHS
7. **Sharing Information:** Foster Parents are fully informed about child(ren) being placed in their home and their case plan
8. **Teach & Train:** Foster Parents receive evidence-based training and are engaged in co-training with other caregivers and DHS staff
9. **Celebration:** Successes are celebrated

From these nine identified priorities, the Workgroup decided to focus on two areas for this initial recommendation. Both "Communication" and "Teach and Train" were identified as the most critical areas to support retention efforts. Further recommendations around the other vision areas will be shared with the Foster Care Program Manager in future months.

PRIORITY 1: COMMUNICATION

Foster Parents often feel:

- Left waiting for answers/responses for too long (especially in urgent situations)
- Left out of the loop, or purposely omitted from communications
- Confused by receiving varied answers from different contacts
- Like their concerns are not being heard, or are being dismissed
- Shut down in their efforts to advocate for the needs of the children and youth in their care

Healthy and frequent communication is critical because:

1. Consistent and accurate communication helps prevent incorrect information being spread.
2. It builds trust and strengthens relationships between foster parents and DHS staff.
3. Being equally informed as a team member helps to alleviate the power differential that exists in the foster parent-DHS relationship.
4. Professional communication preserves relationships, sets expectations for interactions and behaviors, and confirms that foster parents are part of the team.
5. Healthy, accurate, timely and supportive communication DIRECTLY leads to retention. Foster Parents stay when they feel safe, included, informed and supported.

Recommendations for Priority 1

1. Before the rollout of new policies, standards, tangible items, etc. that directly affect foster parents, actively seek and consider input from the Caregiver Support and Development Workgroup and foster parents on the structure, impact, and potential consequences of new policy, standard, etc.
2. Prior to the roll-out/implementation of new policies, standards, etc., set a timeline and create a robust communication strategy that provides multiple avenues of communication and engages foster parents and community partners (generally three months before roll-out or implementation).
3. Establish a single point-of-contact for troubleshooting new policy questions and resource information at each branch.
4. Create a monthly Foster Care Newsletter (see “Additional Action Steps”).
5. Emphasize the importance of timely communication and collaboration regarding foster parents across DHS staff trainings.
6. Include foster parent speakers during CORE training to provide insight and perspective on common caseworker-foster parent issues (lack of timely communication, ill-planned child transitions, feelings of being excluded from case planning, etc.).
7. Increase marketing and outreach for the foster parent warm-line 211.
8. Provide uniform updates regarding policy changes to foster parents and DHS staff simultaneously, from a centralized source using multiple channels of communication such as email, newsletter, conference calls, etc.
9. Foster parents receive timely and consistent responses to questions and concerns.
10. Foster parents receive consistent support for advocacy efforts on behalf of the children and youth in their care.

PRIORITY 2: TEACH AND TRAIN

Foster Parents often feel:

- There is an overwhelming amount of material presented in Foundations training
- Foundations training is too theoretical and lacks the real-world substance that foster parents with lived experience could provide. Prospective foster parents want to know what foster parenting will “really” be like.
- It is challenging to retain 100% of training material after Foundations training is complete
- Information regarding policy and procedure is not shared equally between DHS workers and foster parents, nor is it shared in a timely manner.
- The Certification process and Foundations Training does not prepare foster parents for the real-world experience of fostering and all the situations that will likely arise.
- Foster parent training must be ongoing, relevant, child specific, real time and consistent.
- Training must create an environment of safety where foster parents are comfortable admitting any difficulties or frustrations with parenting and must include real time support for these frustrations or difficulties.
- Foster families (including birth family living in the home) should have access to emotional supports during their certification and after a child leaves their home, including but not limited to: grief and loss support.

Effective, thorough, and ongoing teaching and training is critical because:

- Intentional, consistent training around policy, protocol, and expectations creates knowledgeable, empowered foster parents.
- When foster parents and DHS are not equally informed on policy, procedure, or other relevant information, it causes confusion, misinformation, and creates dissonance.
- The emotional challenging and complex nature of fostering cannot be taught in a classroom setting without context.
- Foster families will be retained longer if they are supported on an ongoing basis.
- Child outcomes will improve with effective and ongoing parent training.
- There will be a direct positive impact on the recruitment and retention of foster families.

Four primary gaps currently exist in training:

1. Consistent communication in DHS Staff training and Foundations training around foster parents' role as advocates
2. Real-life context and interaction with other foster parents during training and after certification
3. Shared learning environment between DHS staff and foster parents
4. An evaluation baseline for improvements made in training that correlates to the preparation and retention of foster families, and regular audits for evaluation of training

Recommendation for Priority 2

1. Utilize current foster parents—especially relative caregivers and caregivers from diverse communities and communities of color—to teach portions of training and share real-life context and application for principles.
2. Further support peer-to-peer mentorship programs.
3. Provide co-training for foster parents and DHS workers to mitigate the power differential, create camaraderie, ensure uniform dissemination of information and improve overall communication.

4. Agency to provide ongoing training and therapeutic support services, including the topics of grief and loss, attachment, trauma, and self-care to all foster families.

In addition to encouraging retention, following these recommendations will help create and enable safe, secure, and supported foster parents which will help ensure safe, secure, and supported children and youth in care.

Additional Action Steps

In addition to the recommendations reflected for the two priority areas, the Workgroup recommends the following action steps in response to this proposal:

1) Foster Care Program Manager to respond to this formal proposal within 60 days with communication on planned implementation and/or alternate suggestable steps with accompanied explanation.

2) The Caregiver Support & Retention Workgroup continues to meet monthly.

Noting that this is the only DHS workgroup DIRECTLY related to foster parent retention, we request to continue meeting monthly to further develop recommendations and action steps on the other identified support needs areas, and to keep recommendations and action steps reflected in this proposal moving forward.

3) Statewide Foster Care Steering Committee meets bi-monthly

Believing that actions are the strongest demonstration of the stated commitment to foster parent retention, members of our Workgroup request more frequent meetings of the Statewide Foster Care Steering Committee. Every other month would be ideal, but quarterly meetings would be sufficient, to further support the efforts of this and other Workgroups.

With increased opportunities to make recommendations and propose action steps, this Workgroup would be able to address foster care providers' identified areas of support and needs simultaneously and create solutions that can be implemented more quickly.

4) The creation, development & distribution of an Oregon Foster Care Monthly Newsletter.

To be co-developed with the support and collaboration of this Caregiver Support and Retention Workgroup, we request that a regular monthly newsletter be created and sent to all DHS employees and foster care providers across the state of Oregon.

The goals for this newsletter are to:

1. Create a regular channel of communication to share what is currently being done to better the foster care system;
2. Provide shared information, education, policy updates and changes;
3. Create a stronger sense of unity between DHS and foster providers; and

4. Reinforce motivation and collaborative successes by sharing inspirational stories from within the Oregon Foster Care.

Implementing this newsletter will help foster parents to become a valued and integral part of the Care Provider Team, worthy of equal information sharing. It will also reduce the spread of misinformation and will build trust between foster providers and DHS.

This newsletter should include a brief communication from the leadership of Child Welfare (Director of DHS Child Welfare, Deputy Director of Child Welfare, or the Foster Care Program Manager), with relevant and important plans, developments, updates, and highlights/success stories.

This newsletter should include pieces of communication that address the following areas as needed: policy and procedure, legislative proposals and actions, information regarding pilot programs and their progress across Oregon, resources for assistance or education, information regarding programs as they are implemented (I.e.: child care stipend, respite care, foster parent mentor programs, training opportunities), case-studies and FAQ's about foster care, and highlights/good news/success stories from foster care.

A regularly published newsletter will help foster parents develop the expectation of routine communication and help eliminate uneven and inaccurate information.

This newsletter should be available to be received via e-mail, accessible to download for print online, and printed at each local branch for the Foster Parent waiting rooms and distributed to Certifiers to hand out during check-in visits.

5) The Workgroup to receive every-other-month reporting—to follow impact of Workgroup work and DHS retention efforts—with the following data points for each county in Oregon: ***

- Total number of Foster Homes (point in time)
 - General Applicant
 - Child-Specific
- New Foster Homes, broken down by
 - General Applicant
 - Child-Specific
 - Evaluation of +/- from previous month
- Closed Foster Homes, broken down by
 - Adoption
 - Transition from general applicant to child specific home
 - Transition from child specific to general foster home
 - Children aging out of foster care
 - Exit the system (voluntary or involuntary)
 - Temporary Hold (allegation or foster parent break)
- How many foster parents have exited certification during the bi-monthly time period of report (voluntary and involuntary)
- Total number of foster parents who have exited certification per year (voluntary and involuntary)

- Number of Out-of-Home-Care Assessments, statewide or by district (*recognizing confidentiality is critical, this number is simply to help provide context for strain on foster families and inactive homes*)
 - # of founded
 - # of unfounded
 - # unable to determine or 'undetermined'
- Number of children in care by county (point-in-time)
 - # of children (ages 0-18) in general and child specific foster care
 - # of young adults in care, with placement type category
- Foundations Training
 - # of participants who have completed Foundations Training across the state
 - # of persons certified upon completion of Foundations Training across the state

****The Workgroup requests to meet with the Office of Reporting, Research, Analytics, and Implementation (ORRAI) regarding what data is being tracked currently, what information ORRAI believes would be helpful for this workgroup, and any other data that can be shared with this workgroup.*

MEMORANDUM

Date: 2/5/19

TO: Caregiver Support and Retention Workgroup
FROM: Greg Westbrooks, Foster Care and Transition Services Manager
RE: RESPONSE TO PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENT

INTRODUCTION:

My thanks to the workgroup for their efforts, thoughtful recommendations and guidance towards moving our system forward in ways that will benefit our caregivers and the children and families we serve. I found the focus and emphasis on communication and training to be extremely insightful and consistent with the messages DHS has received through the many listening sessions conducted by our leadership and the knowledge gained from our partners. I found myself agreeing with nearly every observation and recommendation made in your proposal from December 7, 2018. Below you will find my response following each of your recommendations. I am asking for your continued assistance as we move many of the recommendations forward.

PRIORITY 1: COMMUNICATION

Recommendations for Priority 1

1. Before the rollout of new policies, standards, tangible items, etc. that directly affect foster parents, actively seek and consider input from the Caregiver Support and Development Workgroup and foster parents on the structure, impact, and potential consequences of new policy, standard, etc.

Response: We will utilize the Caregiver Support and Development Workgroup ("workgroup") to review new policies, procedures or practice changes prior to roll out that may have a direct impact on Foster Caregivers.

2. Prior to the roll-out/implementation of the new policies, standards, etc., set a timeline and create a robust communication strategy that provides multiple avenues of communication and engages foster parents and community partners (generally three months before roll-out or implementation).

Response: We will utilize the workgroup to develop and implement communication plans around changes in policies, practices, trainings, etc. that may have a direct impact on Foster Caregivers to assure the timely dissemination of information to all relevant parties.

3. Establish a single point-of-contact for troubleshooting new policy questions and resource information at each branch.

Response: Foster parents and relative caregivers can always contact their local office certification worker or supervisor. These persons in the local branches will have the knowledge about local resource information. Foster families and relative caregivers may also contact our Central Office email box FosterFamily.Supports@dhsosha.state.or.us for questions that are of a broader focus regarding application of policy. We have created the Foster Parent Support and Community Engagement Champion position and are presently hiring these positions in 3 Districts with the goal of having at least 1 of these positions in each District depending upon legislative funding. These positions are designed in part to be liaisons with Foster Parents, Community Partners, Central and the District offices.

4. Create a monthly Foster Care Newsletter (see "Additional Action Steps").

Response: We do not have the staffing capability to create and maintain a monthly newsletter. We will continue to issue our quarterly newsletter and welcome any feedback on how we can continue to make it meaningful.

5. Emphasize the importance of timely communication and collaboration regarding foster parents across DHS staff trainings.

Response: Communication remains an integral part of staff training. This issue also directly relates to DHS's efforts to retain and recruit staff and provide staff with a manageable workload to allow them the opportunity to communicate with and be responsive to our foster families. DHS has also added MAPS positions which along with Permanency Consultants assist workers to better collaborate with families and Foster Caregivers. Our leadership continues to build and promote a culture that values our caregivers as essential and important team members.

6. Include foster parent speakers during CORE training to provide insight and perspective on common caseworker-foster parent issues (lack of timely communication, ill-planned child transitions, feelings of being excluded from case planning, etc.).

Response: Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers are currently included in a panel discussion as part of the New Worker/Essential Elements training provided to all new caseworkers. This training is presented and facilitated by Portland State University, Child Welfare Partnership. The panel is asked to come and discuss how foster parents would like to partner with DHS staff. If this group would like to provide an outline of more specific panel topics for foster parents and relative caregivers to discuss with new workers, we can pass that along to Portland State University.

7. Increase marketing and outreach for the foster parent warm-line 211.

Response: We would welcome input from the workgroup on how best to do this.

8. Provide uniform updates regarding policy changes to foster parents and DHS staff simultaneously, from a centralized source using multiple channels of communication such as email, newsletter, conference calls, etc.

Response: We will work with this workgroup and our communications department to coordinate the timing of these releases.

9. Foster parents receive timely and consistent responses to questions and concerns. **(See response to #5 above)**
10. Foster parents receive consistent support for advocacy efforts on behalf of the children and youth in their care. **(See response to #5 above)**

PRIORITY 2: TEACH AND TRAIN

Recommendation for Priority 2

1. Utilize current foster parents – especially relative caregivers and caregivers from diverse communities and communities of color – to teach portions of training and share real-life context and application for principles.

Response: DHS is committed to integrating Foster Parents into all training processes. We would welcome the workgroup's input in developing a co-trainer foster parent training model where DHS trainers would partner with a Foster Parent to train fundamentals. PSU will need to be involved in these discussions. Issues to consider – what training would the foster parent trainers require, how do we build the training team, how would the foster parents be compensated.

2. Further support peer-to-peer mentorship programs.

Response: We have awarded a Pilot project for Foster Parent Mentoring and will use the lessons learned to develop a statewide implementation plan. The Governor's Budget provides funding for the expansion of the KEEP model which is a foster family support program with a goal of implementing this model statewide. We will not know if the funding will be there for the expansion of this program until the end of the legislative session.

3. Provide co-training for foster parents and DHS workers to mitigate the power differential, create camaraderie, ensure uniform dissemination of information and improve overall communication.

Response: DHS is working with PSU to develop advanced joint training for Foster Caregivers and DHS staff. We will seek the input from this workgroup as this work progresses.

4. Agency to provide ongoing training and therapeutic support services, including the topics of grief and loss, attachment, trauma, and self-care to all foster families.

Response: While these topics are covered in the Foster Parent Curriculum we want to work with the workgroup to develop and integrate an individual ongoing training plan into practice for every foster parent to meet their specific needs.

Additional Action Steps

In addition to the recommendations reflected for the two priority areas, the Workgroup recommends the following actions steps in response to this proposal:

1. **Foster Care Program Manager to respond to this formal proposal within 60 days with communication on planned implementation and/or alternate suggestable septs with accompanied explanation.**

2. **The Caregiver Support & Retention Workgroup continues to meet monthly.**

Response: Arrangements and agreements have been made for this group to continue.

3. **Statewide Foster Care Steering Committee meets bi-monthly**

Response: The size and makeup of the Steering Committee would make this schedule very difficult. We believe that the ongoing work of this workgroup will be more effective in bringing about the evolution of our foster care system.

4. **The creating, development & distribution of an Oregon Foster Care Monthly Newsletter.**

Response: We do not have the resources to create and publish a monthly newsletter but intend to continue with our quarterly newsletter. We welcome input from the workgroup on content. The President of the Oregon Foster Parent Association has a regular column in the newsletter.

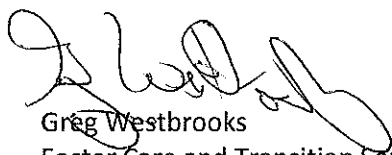
5. **The workgroup to receive every-other-month reporting – to follow impact of Workgroup work and DHS retention efforts - with the following data points for each county in Oregon: *****

Response: The Foster Care Team is working with ORRAI to develop meaningful and current reports relating to the issues referred to by this workgroup. We will provide those reports necessary to further the work of this group.

CONCLUSION:

I am very grateful for the opportunity to work with such a committed and compassionate group of people. I am also very optimistic that our work together will lead to better outcomes for our children and create an environment where our caregivers and foster families receive the support and respect they deserve.

Respectfully,



Greg Westbrook
Foster Care and Transition Services Manager,
DHS Child Welfare
400 Summer St.
Salem, Oregon 97301