

## Multnomah County 2009 Annual Report

**Panel Members (as of 09/30/09):**

Name	Agency
Abbasov, Alenka (Nov, Feb, May meetings)	CARES Northwest
Baker, Teresa (Aug meeting)	CARES Northwest
Baynes, Beth	Multnomah County Ed. Service District
Brandel, Judy	Multnomah County Health Dept.
Dowling, Kevin	CARES Northwest
Gibbs, Karen	DHS
Green, Miriam	DHS
Kaer, Jeff	Portland Police
Kelly, Pat	Portland Police
Keltner, Leila	CARES Northwest
Mowry, Heather	CAPTA Grant Coordinator/DHS
Stolebarger, Christine	Parent Mentor
Taylor, Ruth	Parents Anonymous, Morrison Center
Underhill, Rod	Multnomah County DA's Office

**In addition to the members listed above, the Multnomah County CAPTA Panel actively encourages other community members to attend and participate in meetings. Additional attendees over the course of the year included:**

Name	Agency
DeGennaro, Amy	DHS
Duncan, Melissa	DHS
Thompson, Chris	DHS
Wagenknecht, Matthew	Portland Police
Uehara, Chris	Portland Police
Bridenbaugh, Holly	CARES Northwest
Echeverria, Ana	CARES Northwest
Jenkins, Charlie	DHS
Slick, Janvier	DHS
Thompson, Gwen	DHS
Woods, Charlene	Multnomah County DA's Office

**Meetings:**

Meetings were held November 7, 2008, February 6, 2009, May 1, 2009, and August 7, 2009. All meetings were held at Emanuel Hospital from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm.

**Activities:**

At the November 2008 meeting, the Panel reviewed a case involving chronic neglect. The case involved a family with eleven prior referrals to DHS, all of them unfounded. It highlighted some of the benefits of the Oregon Safety Model. For example, it seemed the model helped the caseworkers more thoroughly assess parent protective capacity and the children's vulnerability. It also offered the structure and language needed to help clarify the safety threats to the children.

In February 2009 the CAPTA Panel reviewed responses to a survey sent to Panel members asking "What are your key questions for DHS about how they respond to child sex abuse cases? What are the gaps in their response? What are the strengths of their response?" We used the responses to begin our discussion about possible focus areas for 2009.

During the May 2009 meeting the CAPTA Panel agreed to focus on DHS' response to child sex abuse. The Panel discussed drafting a manual designed to help caseworkers respond more consistently to child sex abuse allegations. Once completed, the Panel would work to support a training or trainings for DHS staff (initially targeting managers and supervisors, then caseworkers) based on information in the manual.

At our August 2009 meeting, the Panel had lengthy discussions during a series of case reviews. The reviews raised a variety of questions and issues. For example, we realized the outdated "good touch bad touch" concept for interviewing children was still being used. The group agreed to review their agencies' various trainings to make sure the content was up to date. In addition, several recommendations came out of the case reviews. Those are highlighted below. The CAPTA Panel also reviewed a draft Table of Contents created by Karen Gibbs for the training manual. We discussed the idea of moving the project forward by drafting sections of the training manual, and seeking the CAPTA Panel members' expertise in reviewing the different sections.

*Subcommittees: No subcommittees were formed, however, Karen Gibbs and Kevin Dowling met a number of times between meetings to discuss the logistics of creating the training manual proposed by the Panel.*

### **Future Plans/Next Steps:**

Panel members were committed to the concept of supporting the creation of a training manual to assist caseworkers in consistently responding to child sex abuse cases. Unfortunately, we encountered some roadblocks. For example, we initially hoped Karen Gibbs could be granted time in her position at DHS to work on the manual. We explored DHS reallocating some of the funds for the CAPTA Panel to help support additional FTE for Karen's position, which would be focused on developing the manual. This idea was not possible, however, given the current priorities and needs at DHS. At this time, we continue to explore who might be able to draft the training manual, and how to reimburse the person for their time.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The Panel recommended DHS develop a training manual for DHS caseworkers to assist them in assessing cases of alleged child sexual abuse. (The Multnomah County CAPTA Panel would like to support DHS in this effort.)**

This recommendation was based on findings from multiple case reviews, and statements from caseworkers, highlighting the lack of specific guidelines for them to follow in assessing a case of child sex abuse. Topics might include:

- a. Responding to multiple sex abuse referrals on one family – how to evaluate multiple reports over time? Should a second or third allegation of sex abuse be treated differently than the first? If yes, what extra considerations should be taken?
- b. How do we ensure neutrality/privacy in an interview?
- c. How to assess for threat of harm sex abuse -- Who does the caseworker need to interview? What questions need to be asked? What documentation should be reviewed? What outside assessments are needed to help the caseworker determine whether a child is safe around someone with a history of a sexual offense? How does the caseworker evaluate the quality and recommendations found in a psychosexual evaluation?

- d. Teen “consensual” sex abuse.
- e. Recantation.

***Response:** DHS is currently facilitating a statewide work group with members representing a broad range of professionals involved with child sexual abuse and treatment of offenders. This group is developing protocols and guidelines to address various issues related to sexual abuse of children. These issues include recantation, psycho-social evaluations of offenders, threat of harm for sexual abuse, responding to the non-offending parent. It is anticipated that additional training will be provided for CPS workers based on the work group’s recommendations.*

*The CPS Program previously developed guidelines for responding to the sexual abuse of a teen by another teen.*

**2. The Panel recommended ongoing training for DHS staff on interviewing children in the field.**

We discussed the trainings being quarterly and no more than two hours in length. Training topics should include information on how children disclose. Law enforcement would ideally also be invited to the training. Note that Karen Gibbs (Multnomah County CPS Consultant) and Sue Lewis (CARES Northwest Regional Center Lead Interviewer) have already been conducting several of these types of trainings over the past few months, with good turnouts and positive reviews.

***Response:** Ongoing training for those interviewing alleged victims of child abuse is important to ensure they have access to the latest information about research and interviewing techniques. While initial training for CPS workers is provided by the Portland State University Child Welfare Partnership. Current resources do not allow DHS the opportunity to provide training on an ongoing basis. CPS workers are encouraged, when local training budgets allow, to obtain training at conferences or other venues.*

*The Children’s Justice Act Task Force is sponsoring 3 trainings on interview children with disabilities who may be abuse victims. The training is being held in 3 different locations of the state to make it as*

*accessible as possible and is taking place in June and July. The second day of this training is focused specifically on skill building for those who such as law enforcement and CPS who directly interview children.*

*Joint training for CPS and law enforcement personnel is sometimes available as part of the resources provided to each county's multidisciplinary child abuse team through the CAMI Program. The CPS Program Manager is a member of the CAMI Advisory Council and will convey to them the suggestion to provide joint CPS & LEA training on interviewing child abuse victims*

**3. The Panel recommended DHS focus on helping children and non-offending parents access therapy quickly in cases involving founded sex abuse.**

The Panel appreciated the numerous stressors for the child and non-offending parent in cases involving sex abuse, especially if the child is placed in protective custody or foster care. For example, if the safety plan involves the child remaining in the care of the non-offending parent, how does that parent get the information and support they need to help appropriately respond to their child and keep them safe? In addition, ideally, the child would have a consistent therapist who would be consulted regarding recommendations about the child's current functioning and needs.

***Response:** There are a variety of resources for non-offending parents if they are involved with child welfare. The new in-home services could be a source of support when children remain in the home. Both OHP and Crime Victims Compensation which provide mental health counseling for the child victim have provisions to assist parents in appropriately responding to and supporting their child's treatment needs. Issues regarding timeliness or access to services and consistency of a child's therapist are best addressed by the treatment provider.*

**4. The Panel recommended DHS explore replicating the case triage process used by the Multnomah County MDT in counties without a formal process.**

During the case triage meetings, caseworkers have the opportunity to present challenging cases to their MDT partners from law enforcement, the district attorney's office, and the local child abuse intervention center to help them determine resources available to the child/family and next steps in case assessment/planning.

***Response:** Many counties already use a similar process at MDT meetings. In some counties all cases either being assessed or criminal investigated for child abuse and neglect are staffed with the MDT.*

*The CPS Program Manager is a member of the CAMI Advisory Council and will work with that group to provide additional information to MDTs through the CAMI Program about the importance of case staffing.*

**5. The Panel recommended DHS implement a standard documentation tool to place at the beginning of a child's DHS chart to help summarize the totality of complex cases.**

This recommendation was generated after a case review that involved a child seen at CARES Northwest three times for alleged sexual abuse. The caseworker attending the third evaluation had just been assigned the complicated case, and understandably struggled to make sense of the complete history and not miss important details and connections that could impact the child's assessment and safety planning. A diagram at the beginning of the chart showing the key people involved, how they were related to the child, and information about known history or risk factors for each person would have been very helpful.

***Response:** The new State Automated Child Welfare Information System (OR-Kids) has been designed to make more comprehensive case information readily accessible. Caseworkers also receive training regarding the importance of doing a thorough review of case history when working on complex cases.*

**Looking Ahead:**

In 2010 we plan to continue to focus on the challenges DHS has in responding to child sex abuse, and support the creation of a manual to help guide caseworkers in responding to various types of child sex abuse

allegations. Once complete, the Panel intends to help develop and host a training based on the manual.

**Acknowledgements:**

We want to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of the Panel members and attendees, who gave of their time and expertise, and who made it a priority to participate on the CAPTA Panel despite the many other demands on their time. We appreciated the collaborative approach they brought to the meetings and their commitment to promoting the safety and well-being of our community's children.

In particular, we want to thank the Multnomah County DHS staff who participated as Panel members and who came to present cases for review. Their willingness to patiently explain policies and procedures, share their success and frustrations, and answer questions about casework served as the foundation for the work of the Panel.