

**Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee**  
**Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care**  
**March, 2016**

*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**

**September 2015** – Case out of Multnomah County involving a Somalian family consisting of two U.S. born children age newborn and a toddler, to East African

parents. Parents came to the U.S. in approximately 2008. DHS became involved as a result of serious injuries caused to one of the children as a result of abuse. After spending time in the hospital, the child was returned home with the mother. The father is not in the home pending the investigation and resolution of any criminal matters. The family is receiving multiple services from the community.

**Recommendations:** Refer the child to Disability Determination services; see if mother can get a downstairs apartment as it is difficult for her to take the injured child up a flight of stairs; DHS to have a meeting with if mother requests some privacy from the Somali community.

**November 2015** – Case out of Multnomah County involving a young mother and her 4 year old child. The family has been in the U.S. for about 4 weeks arriving from Africa. Mother has significant issues that impair her ability to safely parent the child. The child also has significant developmental issues of his own that mother is not able to manage at this time. As a result of the mother's needs and the child's needs, the child was placed in care.

**Recommendations:** Identify a culturally appropriate placement, that may also be skilled in meeting the child's extensive needs; identify appropriate training to be provided to the caretaker of the child; have mom spend as much time as possible with the child; referring child to other services available in the community; referral to mental health program and treating from a "trauma lens;" consideration be given to the DHS Child Welfare workers time and work load; contacting language access coordinator to identify a court certified interpreter; communication with the Liberian community will occur, Catholic Charities will provide DHS with vital data about the family.

This case was going to be re-staffed in December 2015, however, it was moved to January 2015.