

Oregon DHS Child Welfare

A message from Director Lena Alhusseini



May 9, 2017

Thank you for the work you do every day to keep Oregon's children safe. A constant message I've heard is that you need more face-to-face time with children and families to do your job well.

Last year we brought together a group of front-line workers and others to serve on a Case Management Duties Workgroup, tasked with identifying specific ideas for how we might reduce the administrative burden on case workers and free up more of their time for face-to-face work with children and families. Knowing we are working with limited staffing and budget, we asked the team to generate ideas within our existing program design, staffing levels and resources. Implementation of the highest priority recommendation of the workgroup has begun.

I am happy to be able to tell you that over the next few months, all Case Workers will receive mobile technology to streamline their work and ultimately improve child safety through better engagement with children and families. First, all Case Workers will receive I-phones, with texting capability enabled. Shortly after, SurfacePro tablet computers with wireless internet cards will be provided to caseworkers, certifiers, and permanency workers.

Along with the mobile technology will come fresh guidelines about appropriate use that you'll need to pay close attention to, especially when it comes to texting with children and families, and keeping information secure. Your branch communications coordinators will be responsible for the ordering and distribution of the mobile technology, and distribution of the new usage guidelines. You will get more details and a timeline soon.

Research supports the link between mobile technology and increased productivity among social services workers, and Oregon is now among several states moving toward a more mobile workforce. For example, Miami-Dade County in Florida reported the adoption of smartphones and laptops led to a 30 percent increase in home visits and timelier reporting.

The mobile technology recommendation was the clear frontrunner among the more than 100 ideas the workgroup surfaced from member's own daily experience to reduce the administrative burden on Case Workers. The workgroup prioritized 21 improvement opportunities and presented them as recommendations. **A summary of the recommendations are at the end of this message.**

The recommendations fell into five categories:

- Communication;
- Partner collaboration, capacity and support;
- Process improvements;
- Staff support, training and retention; and,
- Technology and equipment.

Other recommendations to create a support line for foster parents, to launch a statewide foster parent recruitment effort, and to eliminate caretaker committees are nearly complete. Nearly all of the remaining recommendations have been assigned for next steps. Few of them are turn-key changes so there will be a wide range of follow-up activities. Making progress on some recommendations will involve in-depth analysis, others will require workgroups and a few may need a multi-phase approach over time.

Most of the recommendation follow-up will be blended into our statewide Program Improvement Plan (PIP) or the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan (Child Safety Plan) or assigned to the OR-Kids team. You will hear progress reports on the recommendations through these avenues of work.

I want to thank the Case Management Duties Workgroup whose members are listed below for its time and thoughtfulness. Our work is complex and we're working in a stretched system that makes it challenging to step out of our daily routine to explore ideas, plan, and make changes that make us better staff and a better system of care. I truly appreciate the workgroup recommendations and encourage everyone to continue sharing ideas with me.

Sincerely,
Lena

Workgroup Members

Laura Atkins, District 8

Elizabeth Crowe, District 9

Stacey Daeschner, District 3

Debbie Estabrook, Office of Information Services

Jessica Hunter, District 6

Kristen Khamnohack, District 16

Susan Lissman, District 9

Kelly Paluso, District 2

Angela Skyberg, OR-Kids

Meghan Smith, District 5

Toni Smith, District 7

Sarah Walker, District 15

Desta Walsh, District 6

Sheila Wegener, Child Welfare Central Office

Workgroup Facilitation & Support

Jeff Alberts, Emily Armstrong and Isaac Winegar, Office of Continuous Improvement

Lacey Andresen, Child Welfare Central Office

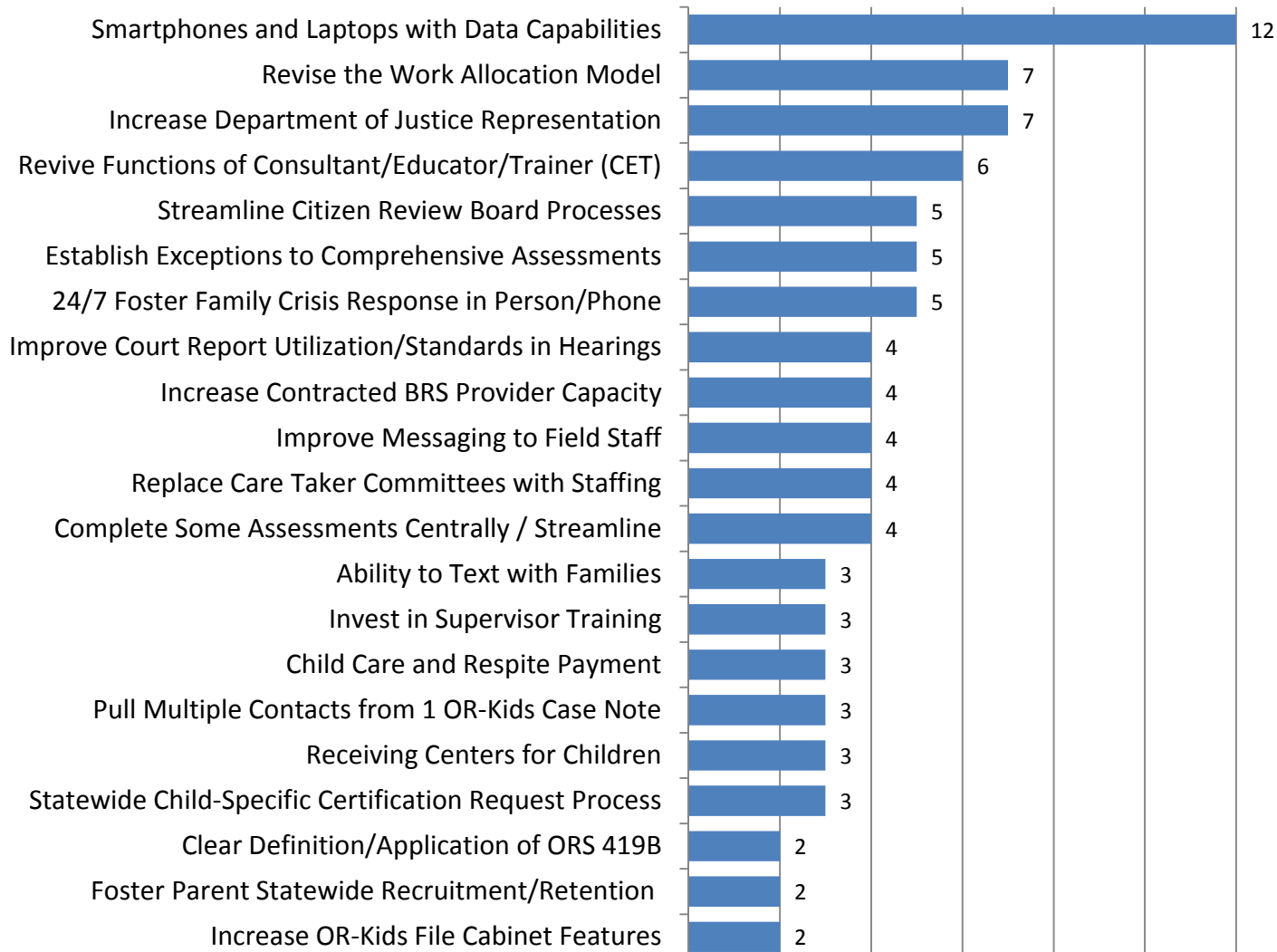
Christy Sinatra and Christine Whitaker, Office of the DHS Deputy Director

Child Welfare Program

Case Management Duties Workgroup Recommendations

Workgroup members participated in a prioritization exercise to identify recommendations from a list of more than 100 improvement ideas. Each workgroup member had 10 “votes” to cast. Improvement opportunities with more than two votes became the workgroup’s recommendations.

Top Recommendations by Vote



Case Management Duties Workgroup

Recommendation Descriptions

(Recommendations that are complete or in implementation are noted)

✓ Provide smartphones and laptops with Data Capabilities *(in implementation)*

- Provide for every case worker
- Increases safety
- Include data capability so case workers can access OR-Kids, Outlook, GPS, etc.
- Smartphones also would eliminate need for checking out cameras which aren't always available
- Prevents staff from using their personal devices

Revise the Work Allocation Model

- Ensure the model is part of ongoing conversations to project need
- Ensure the model can react to caseload changes
- Ensure the model reflects the full breadth and depths of the case management process

Increase Department of Justice (DOJ) Representation

- Establish a workgroup to assess what legal tasks workers are completing that should be done by DOJ. This would help reduce workload associated with court-mandated tasks that case workers can't comply with (ex: a placement that is not available).
- Have DOJ representation write all legal pleadings and briefs (petitions, motions, subpoenas, etc.), and attend all hearings.
- Have DOJ file appeals of judgments, court orders and decisions

Revive the functions of the Consultant/Educator/Trainer (CET) Position

- Make this support consistent across the state
- Consider creating a position to support staff with a specific list of duties including specialized capabilities in areas where staff need help
- The position or functions should replace those of the former Consultant/Educator/Trainer (CET) position
- The position needs to provide on-site, real-time coaching

Streamline Citizen Review Board (CRB) Processes

- Establish workgroup to review CRB packets, CRB panel training; rescheduling processes, and other processes for opportunities to streamline

Establish Exceptions to Comprehensive Assessments

- Establish workgroup to determine exceptions to comprehensive assessments
- Consider requiring comprehensive assessments only on cases to be opened where services will be provided as well as on founded referrals

◆ **24/7 Crisis Response for Foster Parents in Person/By Phone** *(Partially implemented; Contract with 211Info to provide Foster Parent Support Line implemented)*

Provide only court reports for hearings

- Explore establishing court reports (without case plans and child-specific plans) as sufficient for court hearings

Increase Contracted Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) Provider Capacity

Messaging to Field Staff

- Communication impacts morale and retention; increase positive messaging
- Align messaging with the philosophies we follow, especially the trauma informed workplace model

✓ Replace Current Caretaker Committees with Staffings *(Complete)*

Complete Certain Assessments Centrally

- Explore having certain assessments done centrally such as day care, out-of-home care, employee assessments and non-CCA providers

✓ Ability to Text with Families *(In implementation as part of mobile technology roll-out)*

- Give Case Workers the ability to text with children and families to prevent communication breakdowns

Invest in Supervisor Training

- Good supervision contributes to staff retention. Supervisors also need continuing support and training to best serve their teams
- Assist supervisors in growing capabilities beyond managing people; provide advanced training on leadership, creating culture, change management, etc.

Child Care and Respite Payment

- Pay for child care and respite care for foster parents
- Create a list of available resources

Create Ability to Pull Face-to-Face Contacts for Multiple Participants from one Case Note in OR-Kids

Receiving Centers for Children

- Have receiving centers where children can wait in a safe, comfortable place while paperwork and searches are being done

Create Statewide Child-Specific Certification Request Process

- Standardize the statewide child-specific certification process; ensure certification and case workers both have input

Clarify the Definition of ORS 419B and Application at Screening

✓ Statewide Recruitment and Retention Effort for Foster Parents *(In implementation with Embrace Oregon)*

- Establish a high-profile, statewide campaign to recruit general applicant foster parents

Increase OR-KIDS File Cabinet Features

- Drag and drop, multi-items, naming, editing, deleting, etc.