

Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care
March, 2008

About the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee

The goal of the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee (RCWAC) is to promote the implementation of cross cultural competent and ethnically sensitivity services to 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 through the following activities:

- Provide consultation and advice regarding the culturally appropriate placement of refugee children and availability of resources for refugee children and families.
- Provide the Committee with information regarding the impact of policy, program, budget and legislation changes with their agencies, branches of government, institutions, and/or communities 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 with 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;
- Provide opportunities to receive information about child welfare issues from the refugee community.

One of the methods by which RCWAC implements this process is to meet 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 language appropriate services for family members.

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
- living arrangement
- demographic information such as age, sex, race
- accumulated length 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 is necessary to prevent imminent serious emotional or physical harm to the child and
2. reason that 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 is placed in the following order of preference as follows:

- 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

June, 2007 –Referral received from Midtown Branch a refugee family from Somalia regarding they had been working with since 4/30/07. The family came to DHS’s attention due to mom’s mental health issues; apparent lack of supervision, unstable financial situation, and the 9 year old’s special needs.

There are 6 children in the family ages 11 years to 4 months. All **six** children and the two parents are living together. There was a previous report of neglect taken in 1/07 with an Unable to Determine disposition.

The family was connected with Self Sufficiency Programs for increased financial, day care and medical services; OHSU for evaluation and treatment services; OHSU will assist with referrals to day treatment for child and with SSI referral. Family will be connected with Africa House for additional supportive services and culturally appropriate day care within the housing complex. The children were not removed. Services were sufficient to maintain the children in their home.

July, 2007- The Committee was contacted regarding a family as a result of a CPS allegation for physical abuse. The case had been open for two years and the family had been receiving in-home services. At the time of contact, the older child was placed in out of home care. There are 2 children in the family- 9 and 12 years old.

Services: This family was referred for and continues to receive multiple services through both Multnomah County Mental Health as well as Washington County Mental Health and the Somali Action Team; OHSU- provided and continues to provide culturally appropriate assessments/referrals and intensive family and individual counseling to each of the family members. Easter Seals provides services and equipment for the younger child’s special needs; intensive in home services continues for this family.

Current Living Situation – Both of the children are in the mother’s physical care - the older child was returned to mother’s care in January 2008; after being in out of home care (including residential treatment) since June, 2007.

August 2, 2007 – received a call from Midtown Branch regarding another Somali family already involved in our care. After discussion, it was determined that the family did not fall under the Refugee Act because they have been in the USA for greater than ten years. However, the Committee offered resources to assist the worker in connecting the family with in order to ensure that services they were receiving were indeed culturally appropriate.

Sept. 13, 2007 - RCWAC staffed a CW case that was previously identified by DHS as a Somali refugee case. It came to the Committee's attention through a Refugee services provider who had concerned about the family. After a staffing it was determined that the family did not meet the requirements under the Refugee Act because they had been in the USA for greater than ten years. The Committee made recommendations for culturally appropriate resources to the workers involved with this family.

(Please see attached chart for additional information.)

2008 Annual Report - Case Information

<u>Child/ren Age/s at Case Opening</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Country Of Origin</u>	<u>County & Legal Status</u>	<u>Current Living Situation</u>	<u>Time In Care</u>	<u>Services</u>	<u>Other</u>
<p><i>11 yrs</i> <i>9 yrs</i> <i>7 yrs</i> <i>4 yrs</i> <i>2 yrs</i> <i>4 mos.</i></p>	<p><i>F</i> <i>M</i> <i>M</i> <i>F</i> <i>F</i> <i>F</i></p>	<p><i>Somalia</i></p>	<p><i>Multnomah</i> <i>No court</i> <i>involvement</i></p>	<p><i>With</i> <i>parents</i></p>	<p><i>Not</i> <i>removed</i></p>	<p><i>Referred to Self</i> <i>Sufficiency for</i> <i>financial support,</i> <i>child care and</i> <i>medical services</i></p>	<p><i>Connected with</i> <i>Africa House for</i> <i>further supportive</i> <i>services and</i> <i>culturally</i> <i>appropriate day</i> <i>care available in</i> <i>their housing</i> <i>complex</i></p>
<p><i>12 yrs</i> <i>9 yrs</i></p>	<p><i>F</i> <i>F</i></p>	<p><i>Somalia</i></p>	<p><i>Court</i> <i>wardship</i> <i>originally</i> <i>Multnomah</i> <i>then</i> <i>Washington</i></p>	<p><i>With</i> <i>mother</i></p>	<p><i>7.5</i> <i>months</i></p>	<p><i>Referred for mental</i> <i>health services at</i> <i>the Somali Action</i> <i>Team and county</i> <i>mental health</i></p> <p><i>OHSU providing</i> <i>assessments/referral</i> <i>s; intensive family</i> <i>and individual</i> <i>counseling for all</i> <i>family members</i></p>	<p><i>Easter Seals</i> <i>providing services</i> <i>and equipment for</i> <i>younger child's</i> <i>special needs</i></p>