

**Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee**  
**Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care**  
**March, 2009**

***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;
- 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
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**

**April, 2008** – A 15 year old Somali female was placed overnight following allegations of physical abuse by her mother. The teen returned home of her own accord the next day. Family counseling for mother and daughter was provided by OSHU Intercultural Psychology Department.

**August, 2008** - This was opened as an in-home case in Alberta Branch. At the staffing, the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee recommended various service resources for this Liberian family. These included- mental healthy services at the OHSU Intercultural Psychiatric Program , coordination with the SOAR Refugee Resettlement case manager for the family, identification of additional resources that may be available for the family through SOAR, Africa House or the African Women's Coalition.

**October, 2008** –Referral received from Midtown Branch regarding a refugee family from Somalia. The family came to DHS's attention because the 11 year old son was afraid of possible physical abuse by his mother when he returned home. Upon assessment it was determined there were concerns about lack of supervision.

Family was 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.

**October, 2008** A referral was made by the Midtown office regarding a Russian mother and her 3 year old son. The child had already been in care for 7 months. He was placed due to neglect resulting from the mother's addiction to methamphetamines. The child was in care with a Russian speaking foster mother. In November the mother went into residential treatment and the child was placed with her. Following that, mother and child lived with maternal grandmother while the mother continued out-patient treatment and looked for housing.

**October, 2008** A Burmese family including a mother and four children was referred for staffing. Three children were placed in care in July, 2008 when the mother overdosed on prescription medication and was hospitalized. The 11 year old son and 5 year old twins, continue in care with a regular foster family who lived in close proximity to the mother and to the children's school. The oldest child, a 14 year old daughter, lives with guardians in New York State.

Mother received counseling services through IRCO with a Laotian therapist who has experience with Burmese culture. The twins were referred to OSHU Intercultural Psychology Department for services.

**October, 2008**- A 14 year old Somali female was placed in care due to possible physical abuse by older siblings and mother. Her 16 year old brother was also placed due to possible medical neglect. The 16 year old was placed with a Somali family and returned home within 2 months after treatment was obtained for his medical issues. The 14 year old was placed in regular foster care and returned home in 3 months. She was returned when religious and cultural differences she experienced with other family members were resolved. Services were provided by Africa House including family counseling, parent education and individual counseling for the 14 year old.

**February, 2009**- The Committee was contacted regarding a 13 year old Kurdish female who was allegedly assaulted by both parents. At the time of the case staffing, the child was placed in out of home care. There are 4 children in the family with ages ranging from 16 to 1 year old. There were no reports of abuse for the other 3 children and none of them were removed. The case was subsequently staffed twice in April, 2009.

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 for the child and other family members. The daughter is still in an out of home placement but reunification plans have been initiated based on recommendations of the Committee.

**April, 2009** – Midtown workers staffed the case of a Somali family with 5 children ages 2 to 13 years and an unborn child. The 15<sup>th</sup> referral on this family involved allegations of physical abuse by both the mother and father of the 2 youngest children. There are considerable concerns about this family in the Somali community. However community members are tired of working with the mother. They have been working with her a long time and she is not making any changes. Once in placement there were considerable behavior problems with the 2 older sisters which resulted in some placement changes. At the time of this report, 2 children were with a paternal aunt, 2 children were placed with an African/Somali family and the 2 youngest were in regular foster care. Case planning includes identification of fathers or relatives for the 4 oldest children as potential placement and long term care resource. Treatment services were being provided to the mother and the 4 oldest children.

**April, 2009**- A 15 year old Somali female was placed in regular foster care after allegations of physical abuse. Other children in the home did not disclose abuse and were not removed. There is a history of previous physical abuse of an older daughter in another state. Both parents deny any current or past abuse of any of their children. Culturally appropriate counseling services were recommended for the 15 year old. The Committee also recommended possible resources to engage the parents in addressing the abuse issues.

**(Please see attached chart for additional information.)**

### **2009 Annual Report - Case Information**

<b><u>Child/ren Age/s</u></b>	<b><u>Sex</u></b>	<b><u>Country Of Origin</u></b>	<b><u>County &amp; Legal Status</u></b>	<b><u>Current Living Situation</u></b>	<b><u>Time In Care</u></b>	<b><u>Services</u></b>
15 yr	f	Somali	Multnomah Court Ward	Shelter care at Harry's Mother	Over night	OSHU Intercultural Psych. Depart provided family counseling
12 yr	f	Liberia	Multnomah Court ward		Served at home	-For mother counseling at OSHU Intercultural Psych. Depart  - additional services provided through Africa House.
3 yrs.	m	Russia	Multnomah Court Ward	With mother	9 months	-For mother. In & out-patient A & D treatment.  -For child, counseling at Lifeworks w/ Russian speaking therapist.

11 yr 5yr 5yr	m m m	Burmese	Multnomah Court Ward	In regular foster care	1 year	-For mother counseling at IRCO  -Children at OSHU Intercultural Psych. Depart.
13yrs 11 yrs 8 yrs 6 yrs 2 yrs 1 mo	f m f m m m	Somalia	Multnomah Court Ward	Children w/ mother at time of staffing.  Placed on recommendation of committee. -2 children w/ - paternal aunt -2 children w/ Somali family -2 children in regular foster care	3 month- at time of report	-IRCO-Africa House  -OHSU Intercultural Psych Dept.  -In home therapy for mother by African Women's Coalition  -For 2 children- Morrison Center- Somali/Bantu services  -For 2 children- specialized services through Albertina Kerr

16 yr 13 yr 8 yr 1 yr	m f m m	Kurdistan	Washington Court Ward	13 yr old in care Other children at home	4 months	-OHSU Intercultural Psych Dept providing services for child and family
16 yr 14 yr 12 yr 6 yr	m f f f	Somalia	Multnomah Court Ward	16 & 4yr olds were place.	16yr old- 1 month 14 yr old- 2 months	-Africa House- family counseling, parent education and individual counseling for 14 yr old.
17 yr 16 yr 15 yr 13 yr 8 yr 6 yr 2 yr	f m f f m m m	Somali	Washington Court Ward	15 year old placed in regular foster care	1 month to date	Working with Africa House to identify an advocate that can assist caseworker in addressing family needs.