

**Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee**  
**Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care**  
**Annual report presented in March 2010**

*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***

**In 2009** – A 13 year old Liberian female was removed due to parents unable to control behavior and the minor being of low functioning combined with mental health issues and abuse perpetrated in the neighborhood. Services were provided through Morrison Center, Family Skills Builder, FSAT sex abuse therapy and Lutheran Family Services. Case dismissed.

**In 2009** – A 10 year old Somali female was placed in regular foster care and later in psychiatric services due to mental health and extreme out of control behavior. Parents worked in agreement with DHS as she presented a threat of harm to them. She continued in placement as she was unable to maintain in a non-secure facility and she exposed herself to harm. Services included Albertina Kerr, Lutheran Community Services.

**In 2009** - A Burmese family, consisting of 5 children, one female and three males age 6 and younger. Six year old is developmentally delayed. The case worker was requesting resources. The family was referred to DD services, school district advocacy, faith community, Health department and OHSU multicultural services.

**In 2009** – A Somali family of 7 children, 3 female and 4 males was referred due to Mental Health issues on the parent. Two older children are out of state with family, 5 made ward of court with short placement for the 9 and 8 year old for protection while 3 youngest remained in the home. Referrals made to parenting classes through the Africa House and Mental Health services through OHSU multicultural services.

**In 2009** - A family of 4 children, 2 female and 2 males, ranging in age 12 to 1 from Sudan was staffed. Children remained wards for 6 months and case was dismissed. Children remain with parents. Issues included mental health and psychiatric issues on the parent with intervention of IRCO and the OHSU Intercultural Psychiatric Department.

**In 2009** – A family of 7 children from Ukraine was staffed. There are 2 males and 5 females ranging from age 15 to an infant. Severe physical abuse led case to a termination of parental rights and adoption of the younger children, and guardianship and long term foster care for older minors. They are being cared for by relatives out of state. Parents were sentenced to long term incarceration. DHS provided culturally appropriate services utilizing local resources with interpretation and communication with family members. The committee supported the actions and protection of the children.

**In 2009** – A family from Ethiopia was staffed to inquire for culturally appropriate services. No dependency petition filed and case was not qualified as Refugee due to type of visa entering USA.

**In 2009** - A 17 y/o female from Somalia was staffed due to need for culturally appropriate services for the parents and the minor with juvenile issues. Services included referral to Africa House for family counseling and parent education.

**In 2009** - A family of 3 females of Congolese ages 5 and 3 and a 19 was staffed. Family is experiencing a high level of stress due to a divorce and searching for culturally appropriate services. Referred to Africa House and OHSU Intercultural services.

**In 2009** – A family of 7 Somali children, 3 female and 4 males, ranging from age 12 to an infant was staffed due to need of parenting classes and family counseling. The family is under stress due to the number of children and the cultural challenges. No dependency petition was filed. The family was referred to Africa House and OHSU intercultural services.

**In 2009** - A family of 8 Somali children, 3 females and 5 males ranging from age 16 to a newborn was re- staffed due to continued need for services as the two middle children remain in care due to high needs and behavior issues unable to be dealt in the home by the parents. Two of the children are out of state with family per family's own agreement. The family was referred to OHSU and Africa House for continued counseling and parenting orientation.