



## MINUTES

### Governor's Child Foster Care Advisory Commission March 19, 2018

#### Members present:

- Carolyn Cruz - **Phone**
- Emily Reiman
- Bill Wagner
- Elliott Hinkle
- Tim Colahan
- Kari Reick
- Gina Valerie Colas
- Lluvia Merello

#### Staff:

- Kali Scolnick – Casey Foundation
- Rosa Klein
- Katherine Bartlett

#### Introductions

Introduction of Rosa Klein, Governor's Human Services Policy Advisor, Commission members, staff and guests.

On phone: Tracey Blood Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Oregon

#### Review and approve previous minutes

January Meeting Minutes

#### **Action to approve minutes:**

Motion to approve – Kari Reick  
Second – Gina Valerie Colas  
Aye - Unanimous

#### Public Comment

Jessica Lloyd-Rogers -- Member of Oregon Foster Parent Association

Citizen Review Board for Douglas County has a “representative” case. Wants the issue to be put somewhere on the agenda to look into because Jessica believes it impacts the safety of all youth in foster care. 12-year-old youth who was put into detention. Had many medical and mental health needs. Once he went into detention, his OHP was stopped. Has been in detention 5 months without care until yesterday when it was stirred up because many people know about it. During the discussion, JLR asked the caseworker if there were more youth like this in the state. The caseworker replied that she has 4 on her caseload. That is 5 people on one caseworkers load in one county. JLR's concern is that this is a black hole that people do not know about. We do not do that to adults, there is no reason to do that to children. Requests that the Commission look at this. In addition, if this is true that OHP stops coverage of young people when they go into

detention for long periods, we need to change that. These children are wards of the court and under the guardianship of DHS.

### Presentation and Group Activity

FosterClub Youth Perspective panel and group activity: “Journey Through Foster Care Training,” critical learning for stakeholders to better understand the child welfare system. Co-facilitated by five young people who have experienced foster care; trained and supported by FosterClub.

### Presentation and Discussion

Jaime Ralls - Secretary of State Child Welfare Audit

Bill Wagner: Asks the Commission to look at this as an initial presentation and discussion. If there are things in the audit that pertain to the work of each specific Committee, wants Committee members and Committee chairs to take this information back to their specific Committee.

Objective of this audit: Determine what changes and improvements DHS and the office of Child Welfare can make better to promote the well-being of children in foster care, and ensure they are protected and cared for. Getting to the root cause of what was happening and what we were hearing about going into the audit. This is just a snapshot. If there are questions on thing that we did not cover, we will let you know.

Three main findings:

1. DHS and Child Welfare struggle with chronic and systemic management shortcomings that have a detrimental effect on the agency’s ability to protect child safety. Management has failed to address a work culture of blame and distrust, plan adequately for costly initiatives, address the root causes of systemic issues, use data to inform key decisions, and promote lasting program improvements. As a result, the child welfare system, which includes the foster care program, is disorganized, inconsistent, and high risk for the children it serves.
2. DHS does not have enough foster placements to meet the needs of at-risk children, due in part to a lack of a robust foster parent recruitment program. The agency struggles to retain and support the foster homes it does have within its network. The agency also lacks crucial data regarding how many foster placements are needed and the capacity of current foster homes, inhibiting the agency’s ability to fully understand the scope of the problem.
3. A number of staffing challenges compromise the division’s ability to perform essential child welfare functions. These challenges include chronic understaffing, overwhelming workloads, high turnover, and a large proportion of inexperienced staff in need of better training, supervision, and guidance.

### **Q: Do you have any information around youth aging out of foster care, older youth?**

Approximately 500 per year aging out. It was not in the scope of the in depth analysis, but we can look and see if there is anything there.

One thing that was not in the brief presentation but has been talked about after the audit is the number of children coming into the system. One sentence in the audit states that Oregon is bringing in double the number of children as the national average. Our number is 9, the average

is 5. However, would caution everyone that there are two different measurements: 1: The number of children in FC, 2: Rate of entry into FC. The data indicates Oregon has double the youth in the system, but are right below the national average on the rate of entry into the FC. Both numbers have declined since 2006. More could be studied, but are cautious about benchmarking against other states because there are multiple measurements used by each state, so the data could be misleading.

Talked to current and former foster youth. More can be done in this area. Their needs are vastly different from younger youth. Program varied across geographical areas. Most services are contracted out.

**Q: Because they contract their services out, would your office ever have a role in auditing external contractors?**

We can. As part of our risk assessment and follow-up, we can look at this for consideration.

**Q: How are we doing in the legal cases where the children are not placed in what is considered “foster care?” Families that have a legal case, but are not in the FC report. They are not in an identified FC placement. Where the state has legal but not physical custody.**

That is included in the audit. We know there are definitions, but we chose the title “Foster Care.” We realized that if we only wanted to look at youth in FC, and had no idea how those youth were coming in or going out, we would be missing the whole picture so we looked at child welfare as a whole.

**Q: When DHS reports the number of children in FC, the data is specific to placement, vs the audit numbers. Trying to get a sense of how those two align.**

They were double the national average of children in FC. Are those in custody or FC?

Lauri Price: The numbers that were used in the audit report of 11,100 children who experienced FC are all children who were removed from their home for at least one night in FC. The 7600 were also children in FC.

Kari: That is one day in care but some of them never spent any days in care. Difficult to get numbers for those who have a legal case and may come into FC or never do but there is such a significant risk to the child, there has to be a legal . . .

Jaime: Back to my point of how it can be detrimental to look at state v state. We can look at the data behind the numbers and make sure we got what we think, and get back to you.

Laurie: Youth going to relative providers is something that may skew the numbers.

**Q: Is there a way of figuring out how many court cases there are from the DHS data and where exactly those children are placed?**

Lauri Price: For every child that has a court case, we have an open case in our casemanagement system, so we could pull that data.

**Q: Regarding work culture, blame, and distrust being a big thing. Is that within DHS or DHS relationship to the community?**

Within DHS.

**Q: Bill Wagner: Rosa Klein let us know that the Governor would like this commission to pay particular attention to recruitment, retention and training of foster parents. Do you have information on why we have lost foster parents? What is the difficulty in recruiting new parents and some things that can help us with some direction on how we can pay attention to the recruitment, retention and training of foster parents?**

There is a lot of information on that and we can see the numbers are going down on non-relative foster parents. Data is crucial here. This is an area where DHS can do more in balancing both recruitment and retention.

In recent years, DHS has focused more on recruiting families and child specific care providers than they have on general providers. Do not think the general providers are getting the support services they need and they were very vocal about it. Other states do a much better job of finding foster parents who match the dynamics of our children.

**Q: Regarding the beginnings of the recruitment campaign – Can you speak about how that may be culturally specific to recruit LGBTQ foster parents and culturally specific foster parents?**

Lauri Price: That is on the highest priority of our list. Match the child's needs with the placement. Updating records to accurately reflect the type of children that parents are willing to serve.

**Q: Did you look at housing trends?**

We did not take a deep dive into that, but we heard from people about the difficulties.

**Q: You had stats about the number of vacancies and other stats about the number of caseworkers out on leave. Is there a [inaudible] capacity stat to see what the current capacity our office is operated?**

Just looking at it from the outside, do not know enough of the factors to come to a determination of what their true capacity is. It is a complicated picture, but I would say true capacity is lower than the stated capacity.

Close of Meeting