



FINAL

DHS Children, Adults and Families
Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Future Issues Work Group
February 13, 2008

Attending: Janet Arenz, Mike Balter Iris Bell, Benjamin Hazelton, Nancy Keeling, Mickey Serice, Angela Sherbo by phone, Judy Stiegler

Guest: Eva Jackson

Minutes recorded by Pam Pearson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 10, 2007, FIWG meeting were approved.

RECONNECTING FOSTER CHILDREN WITH THEIR FAMILIES INITIATIVE – Eva Jackson, Oregon Commission on Children and Families

- Bell: Introduced Eva Jackson, who is here to familiarize FIWG with the Reconnecting Families Initiative. Asked that FIWG decide if the same presentation should be made to CWAC.
- Jackson: Distributed packets of information and summarized the contents. The initiative is a partnership between DHS and OCCF to assist DHS with identifying, locating and possibly establishing relationships with relatives of children in foster care. The goal is to reconnect foster children with their families. Referred to the key principles and objectives in the Status Report.
- Keeling: This is a good program because it works to reconnect foster children with their families and is not focused only on finding a relative placement.
- Arenz: How will it align with the runaway and homeless initiative?
- Bell: Jean Lasater and Eva work closely together.
- Jackson: When relatives are found, they are not necessarily contacted. Had hoped to show a video clip of a “60 Minutes” interview of Kevin Campbell, but it is not working properly. Continued the verbal discussion.
- Stiegler: There are some who are critical of spending the time and money to find relatives if placement is not the goal. If the goal is to connect children with relatives rather than placement, you need to be able to respond to those criticisms.
- Bell: We explain that connecting to family is a human need. Children have better outcomes and improved behaviors when they have someone with whom to link. It is not necessary for the relative to be a placement resource to get these outcomes. Knowledge of family alone can make the difference.

- Jackson: Placement may occur, but it is not the only measure of success. The work is collaborative between DHS and OCCF because DHS cannot do the work alone.
- Bell: Sometimes it is the caseworker or CASA who finds the relatives. There is a draft DHS policy option package to enhance the search for relatives and it includes this initiative. The Casey Foundation and Judge Nan Waller have expressed interest.
- Arenz: The Casey Foundation does good work handling disproportionality issues.
- Jackson: The initiative addresses the goals of prevention and intervention.
- Stiegler: Regarding intervention, the sooner the process to find relatives begins, the better the chances are that the child will not have to stay in care as long. Funding is, of course, an issue.
- Bell: Some counties are picking up the costs. The Governor has gone to Senator Ron Wyden's office for appropriations for the most critical population, i.e., foster children who are about to age out of the system. But we have to serve the whole continuum because if you help the younger children, you have fewer aging out.
- Keeling: DHS does a better job finding relatives than getting them involved in the children's lives. When a relative is found, we should not then move the child out of the area.
- Stiegler: That is why placement cannot be the only measure of success.
- Jackson: We are hoping to add training on family engagement. We also recognize that there are some relatives with whom the child should not become involved.
- Bell: We are working to identify barriers that impede the process such as laws or lack of training.
- Balter: This conversation should occur in the context of DHS' struggle to get foster care payments for relatives. Asked why the initiative is outside DHS when searching for relatives is fundamental casework. Also, we minimize the complexity when we say finding the relative is the answer. Removing this work from DHS increases the risk of stopping the work when the relatives are found. Pilots should be done to take it to the next step in connecting the foster children to the relatives. Boys and Girls Aid Society would be happy to help. There is research on post-adoption searches that confirms the importance of finding family. Also suggested working with federally funded transitional planning and housing programs so that you don't lose the children when they age out.

- Keeling: Supporting research can help when going to the Legislature for funding because some legislators do not agree that it is important to search for relatives.

ACTION: Eva Jackson will contact Mike Balter about Boys and Girls Aid Society's offer to pilot efforts to connect foster children with the found relatives.

The video presentation will be added to a pending list of items for future CWAC agendas.

FRAME ISSUES FOR MARCH 12 AND FUTURE CWAC MEETINGS

Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan and Policy Option Packages Overlay

- Sherbo: Able to participate by phone for only the beginning of this agenda item. On February 4, the Oregon Child Welfare Program Improvement Plan Workgroup met to frame the state's response to the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). She requested that during the March 12 meeting, CWAC make a recommendation as to what should be in the program improvement plan (PIP) just as other groups are doing.
- Stiegler: As we plan for the March 12 agenda, we will add to the list of issues this item of having CWAC review the PIP and possibly make recommendations regarding it. In today's meeting packet, the gray paper provides a list of issues culled from previous meetings plus requests that came to us independently of CWAC meetings. We will use this list to build the CWAC agenda. In addition, we need to add an item for Bryan Johnston's assistant director report: update on the policy option packages (POPs).
- Arenz: Have we thought about overlaying the DHS process for budget and policy development with the schedule of CWAC meetings? This would help us know in advance when opportunities are coming. Her concerns came out of the process used earlier this month to prepare the 2/8/08 letter to Bruce Goldberg with CWAC's prioritized list of POPs.
- Stiegler: We need to leave ourselves open to opportunities that fall between meeting times. These may include opportunities to make recommendations to DHS or to respond/react to something proposed outside DHS. They may require special meetings outside our regular schedule.

- Arenz: We know what our mission and objectives are and we should be submitting them proactively as a committee rather than only reacting.
- Stiegler: We have become more proactive. Last fall before the POPs were written we were asked what we saw as emergent issues and what we wanted the department to do. We submitted the recommendation that the two priorities for DHS Child Welfare should be to keep children out of foster care and to keep them safe while they are in care. Our recommended actions were to address the barriers to A&D and mental health treatment for parents and to increase the percentage of face-to-face visits.
- Keeling: Sometimes it is difficult to know if input is from CWAC members individually or as a committee. The letter from Judy to Bruce dated 2/8/08 that prioritized the POPs is very helpful and is clearly coming from CWAC as a committee.
- Stiegler: There were no POPs submitted from CWAC as a committee.
- Balter: When CWAC was asked to submit ideas for POPs, he had asked if he was doing so as a representative of the adoption coalition or as a CWAC member. He was told to ask his constituents for ideas.
- Hazelton: The January meeting during even-numbered years should be a time to get a sense of what will be proposed as POPs and legislative concepts.
- Stiegler: It would be good to have a process in developing our agendas in which we know what budget and policy decision points are coming. This does not prevent individual members from submitting input from their own perspectives.
- Hazelton: The strengths of CWAC are that it is a group of people representing different constituencies and it can help DHS see things from those vantage points.
- Stiegler: Each member bringing what they get from their constituencies is helpful.
- Balter: We are a collective and we are individuals. We did the best we could at the moment to prepare our prioritized list of POPs.
- Keeling: This year is also a learning experience for DHS because it is the first time we are having open conversations so early in the development of POPs. Next time, she hopes to be able to have conversations before POPs get on paper. When she met with her staff regarding POPs, she referred to CWAC's "Principles for Child Welfare Change."
- Balter: To get back to the task of setting the March 12 agenda, suggested sorting the list of issues under the same four overarching key goals CWAC used to prioritize the POPs:

1. Preventing foster care placement;
 2. Assuring that children placed in foster care are safe and are thriving ;
 3. Providing permanency for children placed in foster care in a timely manner; and
 4. Identifying strategies to reduce over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system.
- Balter: Is our agenda driven by others or by the issues important to us?
 - Stiegler: FIWG is the filter to put issues into the context of policy and operations.
 - Balter: Use of key phrases such as “keeping kids out of foster care” and “getting kids out of foster care” can guide us.
 - Stiegler: We do identify issues as policy or operations issues on the CWAC agendas.
 - Balter: If we are not careful, there will be too many operations issues and we won’t get to the policy issues.
 - Hazelton: Or operations end up creating policy.
 - Balter: For example, the PIP should drive the POPs.
 - Arenz: Raised the issue of foster care by the private sector, which is not bound by the same federal restraints. How are the achievements of private foster and residential care tracked?
 - Stiegler: Those issues fit into the above four goals.
 - Balter: Private placements are methods to reach the same goals. Wants to get some alignment with the Legislature.
 - Keeling: Has heard the Governor and some legislators acknowledge child welfare has not been resourced adequately.
 - Balter: DHS needs advocacy in the next four months so that the message comes from outside the agency.
 - Stiegler: We will add “Continuing Advice and Input on POPs” to the list of issues. We want to be proactive and not wait until we are asked. We will also add “Input on the Development of the PIP” to the list.
 - Keeling: Several CWAC members are on some of the PIP work groups already.
 - Balter: We are already giving advice on the PIP and POPs. We should look at how they affect the four goals.
 - Stiegler: We will focus on the PIP and POPs during the March meeting to not miss our opportunity to provide input.
 - Bell: Will we be able to see the work of the PIP work groups prior to the March meeting?

- Keeling: Suggested inviting Kathy Ledesma to the March 12 meeting.
- Balter: There may be a need to hold a special CWAC meeting in order to provide input before the federal deadline. During the March meeting, we should first educate CWAC to the PIP and POPs processes because not all members are familiar with them.
- Keeling: The PIP domains are set by the feds. They all fall within the four goals. DHS is not able to choose which domains to work on.
- Arenz: CWAC can look at the agency's strategies and whether they will get the desired achievements.
- Stiegler: So for the March meeting, we would first educate CWAC and then make a recommendation on whether or not DHS is picking the right strategies in the PIP.
- Keeling: CWAC's list is one strategy of many. We are looking at how to use the PIP to meet these strategies.
- Stiegler: On March 12, we will do the education piece and then filter the POPs through what is going to happen in the PIP. We may not be ready for a recommendation yet.
- Balter: Our recommendation may be to list the PIP domains that are most important and those that DHS will likely fail again.
- Keeling: We cannot agree to fail in a PIP domain; however, we can negotiate to achieve at a lower standard.
- Stiegler: Kathy Ledesma will need to understand what CWAC is seeking from her. CWAC received the CFSR executive summary earlier. Kathy may have a summary that includes what the domains are. The idea is to be partners in developing the PIP.
- Balter: When FIWG was preparing the 2/8/08 letter to Bruce on the POPs prioritization, Angela Sherbo prepared a document that aligned POPs with the PIP. Suggested using that as an example of work already done by one member from that member's point of view.
- Stiegler: If CWAC pushes to do more past what we accomplish on March 12, an additional meeting may be necessary in order to meet timelines under which DHS has no control. We will ask Kathy to bring the most current draft PIP.
- Keeling: CWAC members may want to join some of the existing work groups.

CIRT Process

- Stiegler: CWAC is charged with a quarterly review of the CIRT process. This was brought to our attention by Greg Parker.

- **Keeling:** Bruce Goldberg has convened a CIRT work group that is looking at the entire CIRT process, including this review function. This item should be pended until that review is completed. Suggested having Bryan give an update during his assistant director's report.

CWAC and Sensitive Review Committee Interface

Put on the pending list or ask Bryan to talk about it during his assistant director's report.

Oregon Prescription Drug Program

Information from Betty Wilton has been shared via email with CWAC. The urgency of other matters does not allow time on future CWAC agendas for a presentation so FIWG considers this item completed and removed it from the list of issues. **[Note: 2/14/08 – CAF Field Services is in contact with Betty Wilton to schedule her for a presentation at future field program managers (Self Sufficiency and Child Welfare) meetings]**

Reconnections Foster Children with their Families Initiative

Added to pending list.

McKinsey Report on Child Welfare Staffing

Add to Bryan's assistant director's report for March 12.

ACTION:

The following table sorts the list of issues currently on CWAC's table into policy or operations issues. The columns are divided into the four goals¹. In parentheses after each goal, the related PIP domains² are listed. The issues are bulleted under

¹ Four Goals:

1. Preventing foster care placement;
2. Assuring that children placed in foster care are safe and are thriving ;
3. Providing permanency for children placed in foster care in a timely manner; and
4. Identifying strategies to reduce over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system.

² PIP Domains:

1. Service Array
2. Caseworker Contact
3. Child Safety
4. Child/Family Involvement
5. Concurrent Planning
6. Foster Care

the goals and may appear under more than one goal. The items followed with a * will be part of the PIP/POP overlay discussion on March 12.

Policy Issues	Operations Issues
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preventing foster care placement (PIP Domains: 1, 3, 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnecting Families 2. Assuring that children placed in foster care are safe and are thriving (PIP Domains: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnecting Families • Relative Care* 3. Providing permanency for children placed in foster care in a timely manner (PIP Domains: 1, 3, 4, 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnecting Families • Connection between reason for entry into care and success at exit* • Adoptions/Resource Center Report • Relative Care* 4. Identifying strategies to reduce over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system (PIP Domains: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overrepresentation* 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preventing foster care placement (PIP Domains: 1, 3, 4) 2. Assuring that children placed in foster care are safe and are thriving (PIP Domains: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation to school 3. Providing permanency for children placed in foster care in a timely manner (PIP Domains: 1, 3, 4, 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoptions/Resource Center 4. Identifying strategies to reduce over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system (PIP Domains: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overrepresentation*

The following issues are pending for future consideration.

- CIRT Review Process
- CWAC / Sensitive Review Committee Interface

- Oregon Safety Model as addressed by Teen Issues in Child Welfare Subcommittee
- Reconnecting Families
- Adoptions/Resource Center Report
- Transportation to school

Meeting adjourned