



**FINAL**

DHS Children, Adults and Families  
Child Welfare Advisory Committee  
**Future Issues Work Group**  
June 10, 2009

Attending: Janet Arenz, Mike Balter by phone, Iris Bell, Benjamin Hazelton,  
Erinn Kelley-Siel

Minutes by Pam Pearson

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The 2/11/09 and 4/8/09 FIWG minutes were approved.

## **SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE NEXT YEAR AND FUTURE OF CWAC**

- Hazelton: Today's discussion will focus on what direction CWAC should take in light of:
  - The CAF child welfare strategic plan and 12 month work plan.
  - The relationship to the Disproportionality Task Force.
  - Engaging others outside the I-5 corridor, including representation from the local CWACs.
  - Moving from passive to active and becoming a voice for public dialogue regarding child welfare.
- Kelley-Siel: Referred to CAF Child Welfare draft strategic plan, which goes beyond the Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan (CFSR-PIP). Some of the efforts are already underway. This is a tool to track our progress of our priorities and what we want to improve. An end goal of the plan is to have a reasonable set of goals that is not so overwhelming as to be unreachable. We will have thoughtful discussions on how to reach the goals and be proactive in prioritizing our work. A next activity is to inventory the PIP activities and other work efforts, new projects and improvement efforts. A final 12 month work plan will be ready for CWAC review at the July 8 meeting. It will propose a list of what is most critical for the next 12 months – what CAF will and will not be working on. If the Legislature directs us to do something, we will be able to look at our work plan and decide what to not do in order to take on the new work. This will help us get community support by working more deliberately with them and being clear on what we can accomplish and what is on standby. We are vetting this with the district and child welfare program managers at the same time we are bringing this to CWAC. In our inventory, we are including the reasons why we are doing the work. In some cases, such as foster care rate redesign, the work is required due to federal or state mandates.

- Arenz: Does it show where it links to the PIP?
- Kelley-Siel: The 12 month work plan will show those links. They are not on the draft strategic plan. We do have to follow through and finish the PIP, but like the Casey work, the PIP is seen as a tool. Neither of those should become the drivers. We made a commitment to the feds to accomplish what is in the PIP and are moving along to do so.
- Kelley-Siel: The CFSR measures and tracks much of what we are trying to accomplish. When we have access to better data through OR-Kids, we will be able to drill to more detail. The purpose of bringing this to FIWG is to see how we can couple a 12 month CAF work plan with a 12 month CWAC work plan.

Regarding the Disproportionality Task Force, there is a growing appreciation that we are trying to leverage with partners who are not normally considered child welfare experts. We are learning there is a conversation with them on how to support the goals of the agency that is very different from our internal conversations. We are also acknowledging that the Casey work is different than the work of CAF, though they are parallel tracks. The Disproportionality Task Force is a place when the cross over is more apparent. It is a statewide task force and a tool for a statewide effort to serve children of color more equitably, not only for the eight counties in the Casey project. This is our opportunity to engage more meaningfully with communities of color and they are ready to do so.

- Arenz: Is MEPA and IEPA still alive?
- Kelley-Siel: Yes. They are still laws that require us to be totally “color-blind.” The first task force meeting was very meaningful. The members were honest in their descriptions and impressions of CAF. They will focus on foster care prevention, relatives and ILP (Independent Living Program) children leaving the system. They acknowledge the need to recognize that a disproportionate number of children of color are referred to DHS Child Welfare and services need to reflect that. We may need to contract specifically with resources in communities of color. A recent summit of the nine Indian tribes was held. The tribes have developed action plans (including training, access to information and prevention of foster care entry) that were shared with the task force. Central Office staff are meeting with PSU on training and looking at how to address the issues of individual and institutional bias in the training. CWAC has the expertise in policy to help us move forward in our statewide goals. Also, the local child welfare advisory committees want to be connected to the statewide CWAC.

- Arenz: The draft strategic plan is an exciting document. It looks planful, direct and easy to measure. The challenge will be to coordinate and link the various pieces together. There are some meaty policy discussions that need to happen.
- Kelley-Siel: It will be good to consider what those policy discussions need to be. For example, one might be to ask how we evaluate Oregon Safety Model implementation. Where does it need fine tuning? What is its impact on children of color? Where are there philosophical struggles in implementing?
- Arenz: Part of the focus of the Casey work is to look at decision points to see if things can be done differently to get better outcomes.
- Kelley-Siel: The Casey decision point analysis is focused on children of color, not the OSM. It looks at 5-6 global decision points to evaluate how race/ethnicity factors in or not. From there we will need to drill down to see where the greatest disparities exist and why.
- Hazelton: Going back to the idea of FIWG developing a 12 month CWAC work plan, we may want to examine policies, Casey work, Disproportionality Task Force, foster care rate redesign and family based services redesign and how they address the goal of safety reducing foster care.
- Arenz: Making the cultural shift to change can feel overwhelming, but these policy conversations can help explain the shift so that the change is not driven by the data.
- Hazelton: Appreciates the efforts made to organize and contain the strategic plan. Suggested maybe looking at priorities that Lois Day may have and look for threads where policy exists, asking if it is adequate to address the goals CWAC has and if we have suggestions for change in the policies.
- Kelley-Siel: The feds pointed out system wide challenges and developed our PIP. They were clear that we were to identify those things we could accomplish in 1-2 years that did not require new resources so the PIP goals would be manageable. They admitted that approach may not result in passing a third PIP, but they want to be able to show progress is being made. She appreciates the approach the feds took because there are consequences if we don't accomplish all the PIP requires. The PIP is a tool, not an end in itself. We also have the normal budget development process and CWAC can help with the next budget and legislative agenda. We could dedicate certain CWAC meetings to drill deep into something, with FIWG identifying in advance specific questions to answer. We may want to include some case studies on some tough cases.
- Arenz: Case studies can test policies in a real environment.

- Kelley-Siel: Another idea: We will provide monthly or quarterly updates to district managers. We could also share those updates with CWAC and CWAC could help hold us accountable to the work plan.
- Balter: Much work has already been done on the plan. Asked if some of the items listed in the ‘Drivers’ column are barriers that are too great. It can be demoralizing if the feeling is that the agency cannot accomplish that which it is already supposed to do. You have to give people permission to stop doing something if you are going to make them do something else. We have identified two important issues: Oregon has a higher than national rate of children entering care and being placed in foster care. We should ask what it is about Oregon’s child welfare system that makes this so. We need to get to some higher agreement on what is driving things and make declarations about how the system should work. For example, if there is a belief that poverty or training of parents are drivers, then major investments should be made in those arenas.
- Kelley-Siel: Asked Mike if he agrees or disagrees that domestic violence and drug/alcohol addictions are major drivers for why children come into care.
- Balter: Agrees that drug and alcohol addictions are drivers, but is not sure if domestic violence is. If DV is a driver, what should be done? Will the investment of having a DV specialist in every child welfare office be the answer?
- Kelley-Siel: The strategic plan will help make our work meaningful. Also, we can see who each action touches and help them understand the “why”. If the plan touches one group too many times, then the work will not be sustainable. We have asked the Legislature to identify what DHS Child Welfare can stop doing.
- Balter: We need to decide what the most important beliefs are and acknowledge that while some might disagree, they need to accept these beliefs as the expectation because the evidence we have today supports those beliefs. Then measure and look at the results.
- Arenz: Mike’s notion is intriguing but may be too big for CWAC. Likes the draft strategic plan because it captures a moment in time, is narrowly focused, has many action items and is within the scope of the division’s structure.
- Balter: What he is trying to say is he wants to know that somewhere there is a discussion to pick the right things for CAF to do. Right now he is not confident that is happening.
- Arenz: Assumes some of that conversation has occurred and that is how the strategic plan was developed.

- Kelley-Siel: Yes. One goal in the plan is to meet the federal standard in foster care. To get there, actions include but are not limited to addressing capacity, engaging nontraditional families to support children in the system, involving communities of color, and making changes to the home study process. We have had the conversation about our beliefs with the child welfare program managers. With this much change, where we have disagreement we have to state that this is the direction we are taking.
- Hazelton: If FIWG / CWAC knows what is coming up, we can better plan our agendas, including the vision for the vacant chair position.
- Kelley-Siel: We don't have the child welfare 12 month plan ready today. Suggested using the July CWAC to develop the CWAC work plan because the child welfare plan will be ready by then. It will include our major initiatives and policy issues.
- Arenz: It usually works better when FIWG puts a plan forward for CWAC to react to rather than have the full CWAC develop a plan.
- Bell: Have we considered a CWAC retreat with a facilitator? It would focus on how we do business. A regular CWAC meeting does not give us enough time to have a discussion and develop our 12 month plan and outcomes. We may want to revisit the CWAC goals. Suggested using the July 8 CWAC meeting date and extending it to a full day retreat. Use the strategic plan and child welfare 12 month work plan as the drivers.
- Kelley-Siel: Will ask Ben deHaan if he can facilitate. Also, will find out if the Casey folks have resources to present information on what other states' CWACs do. She will ask Lois Day, Kory Murphy and Catherine Stelzer to attend. Asked Iris to invite Mickey Lansing.
- Balter: Supports holding a retreat. Suggested starting it by reminding the CWAC of decisions already made and that the CWAC's role is not to micromanage.
- Bell: CAF is attempting to move in a different direction and CWAC needs to decide how to support that. We need to reinform ourselves and reset our course. There are nationwide issues so it could be beneficial to hear about other states' advisory committees.
- Arenz: Offered her office as the retreat location.
- Bell: At a minimum the FIWG would need to stay for the afternoon portion of the retreat to shape what is learned during the morning. But it would be good to have as many members stay as possible.

- Hazelton: Would it be a good idea to invite some people from the local child welfare advisory committees? They are interested in linking with CWAC.
- Bell: That may be a good idea because they should hear some of this information too. There should be a close connection between us and them.
- Arenz: It may be better to have them attend our September meeting when they can react to what we have decided.
- Balter: We look at things from a different horizon than the local committees.
- Bell: Suggested inviting them to a fall CWAC meeting and dedicating that meeting to sharing our plan with them.
- Hazelton: Moving on to framing the retreat agenda, one topic is to discuss how to engage and increase the connections between the state and local advisory groups.
- Kelley-Siel: Some of the materials that will be provided to CWAC at least one week prior to the retreat:
  - DHS Child Welfare Strategic Plan
  - DHS CAF 12 Month Plan
  - Calendar with key points in time (budget, legislature, PIP, Casey, etc.)
  - Information from Casey or Ben deHaan on other states' advisory committees.
- Bell: Suggested using small groups to go through the strategic plan. If we get nothing else from the retreat, we can at least self-correct our direction.
- Kelley-Siel: Being prepared for the conversation around the roles will drive it toward a broader policy discussion. In refreshing the committee to what has already been done, we need to be prepared that some members may want to move the discussion toward micromanagement of the agency. Questions need to be structured to help avoid that. CWAC input before our strategic plan is finished would be good, however, we are not willing to renegotiate on the four initiatives.
- Arenz: There is much to be done in the strategic plan and in current events and we need to take advantage of the opportunities. The challenge is the document can lead to the path of micromanaging the accomplishment of the tasks. Instead, we need to use it as a pathway to policy.
- Bell: Identify the gaps and barriers and then either look outside DHS to fill those gaps or recognize those gaps will exist.

## **ACTION:**

- **Benjamin Hazelton will send a notice to CWAC within the next few days alerting them that the July 8 CWAC will be an all day facilitated retreat. [Done: 6/11/09]**
- **Janet Arenz has reserved a conference room at her office.**
- **Erinn Kelley-Siel will secure a facilitator.**
- **Materials that will be sent to CWAC in preparation of the retreat:**
  - **CAF Child Welfare Strategic Plan**
  - **CAF Child Welfare 12 Month Plan**
  - **CAF Child Welfare calendar of key points**
  - **Information from other states' advisory committees.**
  - **Previous documents from CWAC regarding their focus and mission.**
- **Agenda topics:**
  - **Review previous CWAC agreements**
  - **Refresh, don't reinvent**
  - **Inform on practices in other states**
  - **Review the CAF Child Welfare Strategic Plan and 12 Month Plan (small groups?)**
  - **Decision Point: What is CWAC's role in supporting CAF Child Welfare to do their best to support children and families?**
  - **Outcome: CWAC 12 Month Plan**

## **BUDGET UPDATE**

- **Kelley-Siel: Gave a brief budget update, recognizing that anything said today could possibly change. Some TANF stimulus money allowed some reductions to come off the table. We will still have some reductions in child welfare and self sufficiency. Family Support and Connections was preserved.**

At the last CWAC meeting, we were asked to price the recommendations in the Child Safety Work Group report. Most of the recommendations are resource driven. The recommendations and pricing may be things CWAC will want to revisit for the 2011-13 budget and legislative agenda. They are not necessarily documents for the retreat however.

We have seen a 10% reduction in foster care and a reduction in reentry. The economic downturn may cause them to rise again.

- **Hazelton: The courts saw increased numbers of petitions in the first quarter of 2009.**

- Arenz: It may be good to give a quick picture of the environment as it exists under the Legislatively Approved Budget at the retreat.
- Kelley-Siel: There are things that can be done to strengthen the child welfare system without creating more work. These are conversations outside the budget and are about a broader public communication strategy in child welfare. A long term project will be to improve the public's knowledge about what the system needs to serve children. Cathy Kaufmann, Children First for Oregon, received a grant to work on this. It is not only for the media, but for a message to send to our community partners and their constituencies.
- Hazelton: The community needs to be informed and engaged to support children and families in their communities.

**ACTION: It was suggested that Cathy Kaufmann gives an update at a future CWAC meeting on the Children First for Oregon media campaign.**

## **CWAC CHAIR**

**ACTION: Once CWAC has a 12 month plan in place, Erinn will be able to consider who will be best to shepherd that plan.**

Meeting adjourned.