DRAFT

DHS Children, Adults and Families Division
Child Welfare Advisory Committee
March 10, 2010

Members

☐ Dana Ainam	☒ Pamela Butler	☒ Helen Hoang	☒ Jerry Moore	☒ Christine Stolebarger
☒ Janet Arenz	☒ Leslie Currin	☒ Jean Lasater	☒ Pam Patton	☒ Ruth Taylor
☒ Mike Balter	☒ Don Darland	☒ Leola McKenzie	☒ Angela Sherbo	☒ Nan Waller
☒ Iris Bell	☐ Rep. Sara Gelser	☒ Debbie Moberly	☒ Christine Stetzer	

DHS Staff

☒ Erinn Kelley-Siel	☒ Mickey Serice	☒ Lois Day	☒ Bill Bouska	☒ Gene Evans

Minutes recorded by Pam Pearson

INTRODUCTIONS

While members introduced themselves it was noted:

- Moberly: Is on CWAC as chair of the statewide network of CASA. She is also the director of the Tillamook CASA.
- Patton: Announced that the Foster-Family Based Treatment Association's newsletter article on "Working with Girls in Treatment Foster Care" is comprehensive and translatable to girls in foster care. She would like to share it with CWAC. Feels that the budget stressors and important issues DHS Child Welfare has been facing may cause the division to lose focus on its policy for gender-specific services.
- Balter: CWAC doesn't have a policy on when to forward materials from other members to the committee and cautions against doing so too frequently. However, this article may be of enough interest that we will forward it.
- Stetzer: Announced she will be retiring in June and the May 12 meeting will be her last CWAC meeting.
- Balter: It is important to have a representative of schools and the northwest corner of the state on CWAC. Christine has identified a possible replacement.

AGENDA REVIEW

- Balter: A large volume of material was sent out before the meeting, which is a result of what we are trying to accomplish with the current agenda format. Encourages members to look at the materials in advance, with the goal that their questions can be directed to the author directly and immediately rather than having to wait until the meeting. We are not going to spend much time in the meetings on what is sent out in advance. Another challenge is the enormity and

pace of events in light of how we meet only every other month. A lot can happen between meetings. We have tools such as the calendar to help keep a string of the conversation between meetings.

MINUTES

The 1/13/2010 CWAC minutes were approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Calendar

- Balter: The calendar is a tool to help see what is coming up.
- Darland: Suggested the calendar have the acronyms defined.
- Balter: Part of Goal 3 of the CWAC Work Plan[1] is to stay connected to local areas and advisory committees. The Casey Partnership summits have been added to the calendar because they are one way to see how a local community is talking about foster care.

ACTION: An updated list of acronyms will be sent to CWAC. [*Completed 3/12/10*]

Data Report – Teen Access to DHS Child Welfare Services

- Balter: A question was asked about 18 months ago if the Oregon Safety Model (OSM) drove out teens. CWAC requested a review of the victims of founded dispositions and has received the data report every six months. The data shows no significant change. We will continue to receive this report because a recent CIRT finding indicates a further question.
- Day: In a recent CIRT of an incident in which a teen was killed by her parents we found we have some work to do around vulnerability and teens. The initial CIRT report has been published and the second report will be out soon. In the data report Mike references it appears the OSM did not negatively or positively impact the number of teens accessing DHS Child Welfare services, but the report does not answer if we are serving the right number of teens.
- Patton: To clarify the question CWAC asked: The question was if the OSM definition of vulnerability affected teens' access to DHS Child Welfare. It was found that the only data available was on founded dispositions and we could not

[1] Goal 3: To coordinate and leverage state and local efforts to improve policy, program, and practice.

get an answer to the question asked. We requested to receive the report every six months to see if the number of founded cases was affected by the OSM out of concern for the previous "level system" and the length of time it can take to change the mind set of people that teens are less vulnerable because they can "run away" from the dangerous situation. The agency is now looking at unfounded cases after the CIRT, but it begs the question of whether it took a child's death to make that happen. Looking at unfounded cases is just as important as looking at founded, even if it is only a one-time look.

- Day: Disagreed with the notion that it took a child's death to look at unfounded.
- Patton: It felt that way because it was in a CIRT recommendation.
- Day: The issue is where in the life of a case you assess vulnerability. The OSM strengthened the look at older children because it requires a face to face to asses vulnerability. At screening, the screener is to ask why the reporter believes the child is vulnerable. Then the vulnerability is assessed by the field worker face to face with the victim. Teens that are challenged in certain ways can be more vulnerable than some younger children that don't have those challenges and that can only be determined with a face to face. The assessment is not to occur at the screening. We will make sure the field is clear on that and that we are appropriately applying the OSM.
- Patton: The policies may be in place, but training is needed so workers can overcome their predisposed beliefs about who is vulnerable and who is not.
- Day: Agrees absolutely.
- Balter: Goal 4 of the CWAC Work Plan is to advise DHS on the practice of the OSM with the possibility of a CWAC subcommittee.

<u>Data Report – Child Welfare Data Book</u>

- Kelley-Siel: Previously known as the "Status of Children", the data book contains less verbiage to allow for earlier release of the data. The title "Status of Children" was misleading because it is a report on child welfare only. We are looking at publishing supplemental material with more detail on particular pieces of the data book.
- Balter: CWAC had recommended more than a year ago that the data needed to get out sooner and this new format allows for that.
- Arenz: Noted page 18 has data on teens in foster care.

<u>Briefing – Legislative Update</u>

- Serice: Referred to his written report. HB 3664 was the main piece of child welfare legislation during the February 2010 supplemental session. Funding comes from OF (other funds) which helped the bill to pass.
- Patton: Recognized Pamela Butler's efforts that helped the bill to pass.
- Serice: Five federal appropriations requests, including two child welfare related requests[2], were sent to Oregon's congressional delegation. We are now completing the second round of forms, which we assume means the requests are moving forward.
- Balter: These are commonly known as "earmarks" from individual members of Congress.
- Serice: If CWAC members support these appropriations requests, they may wish to send letters of support to the delegation. As for legislative concepts, we are in the early stages of development. Contact him if you have questions. The policy option packages (POPs) are from last session, however, one ~~plus one~~ for a SchoolWorks program, a project of the Juvenile Rights Project in Multnomah County, was mistakenly left off the list and will be added. Asked that CWAC members contact him if they have any additional legislative concepts or POPs. Community budget building meetings for DHS and OHA together are planned.
- Balter: The CWAC Future Issues Work Group (FIWG) is trying to find ways to get CWAC more involved where it can be more effective, such as in the earmark process or federal policy areas. Thanks the agency for getting materials to the committee as soon as it did on the federal policy conversations so that we know what CAF is submitting.

Briefing – Casey Initiative

No report given. FIWG will get an update in April for a CWAC presentation in May.

Briefing – Family Based Services – Jan Slick

- Balter: Family Based Services is undergoing a major system reorganization as did BRS (Behavior Rehabilitation Services) earlier. We knew this was coming and were on board earlier in the process than we were for BRS.
- Slick: Ruth Taylor served on the work group. To give some history; for the past 1.5 years we have been looking at how to use the funding for our contracted services more effectively to keep children at home or return them home sooner. A work group took the feedback from focus groups and available

[2] 1) Oregon Child Welfare Electronic Client Case File. 2) Domestic Violence State and Local Collaboration.

research to develop a proposal. We hope to release the RFP out this week and make the selections in June. Implementation of the contracts will take place October 1.

- Patton: Asked for more information on the discontinuing of family sex abuse treatment.
- Slick: Family sex abuse treatment (FSAT) will be discontinued and we will utilize other existing resources.
- Day: We are already training workers on how to access other resources such as Crime Victims Compensation funding so there is no lapse in service.
- Patton: Is concerned that while the funding may exist through Crime Victims Compensation or private insurance, the model of outpatient mental health services will not be successful for teen victims because it is for a limited amount of time and it can be difficult to get teens to come to a group. The FSAT was effective because it focused on sex abuse. The mental health system is not set up to provide long (1-2 year) term support. Also, you should not assume the treatment is going to be available for every child who needs it.
- Slick: The expertise that Pam refers to in Multnomah County does stand out, but much of the state does not have that expertise and has been contracting with mental health providers already. Changing the funding source will not change the level of expertise.
- Stolebarger: Will there be funding for education of the parent on how to keep their child safe? Parents who were abused as children have more difficulty understanding how to keep their own children safe.
- Slick: Yes, funding for parent education will continue.
- Balter: Will there be future opportunities for more input on the redesign or is it too far down the road?
- Slick: We are far down the road and have already considered these issues you have raised and how to address them within existing resources.
- Day: The goal is not to reduce services, but to get more unique services that meet the needs of the parents. Service gaps exist. We are not lowering our standards to the lowest level, but are focusing on the unique needs of the parent.
- Stolebarger: In group settings, parents can have interaction with other parents that they can't get with in home services.
- Day: This is not our only funding source.
- Bell: Will sex abuse treatment continue to be provided?
- Day: It is possible but not a given. Communities may come together to decide how they will provide those services in their communities. It won't be the same across the state.

- Balter: Please direct additional concerns to Lois and Jan. Our task today is not to redirect their course.
- Taylor: Was on the work group and disagreed with some of the content and direction taken. It was not a satisfactory process for her and she is hopeful the RFP will be better than what the work group proposed. She had written a paper to Jan to share her concerns as a work group member.
- Balter: There are concerns about the FBS redesign. We need to ask how we can improve CWAC's input on such a process. That may be something for FIWG – to look at what broke down or if the process worked and people are still not happy about the results.
- Kelley-Siel: She is open to having that discussion. There was a very extensive process used for both the BRS and FBS redesigns. For CWAC, how does it as a body participate other than having CWAC members embedded in the redesign efforts? And how are those members to report back to CWAC? We went into the redesign knowing not all would be satisfied with the direction taken. One issue is that if a family has a need that is not going to be met in the redesign, how is that need going to be met if the agency is obligated to meet it? Another issue is CWAC involvement – do we embed members in these efforts or is there a better way?
- Patton: Does not see a benefit to vetting the process. When system changes occur, what don't get answered are the unintended consequences. As an advisory committee, are we the voice of those unintended consequences? As for the FSAT program, she is not advocating that her organization, Morrison Center, get an FSAT program, but rather she wants to know what is going to replace what is being discontinued and how staff will be trained so children don't fall through the cracks during the system change.
- Balter: With every redesign, the too-small blanket providing services for children and families is moved uncovering some who were previously covered. Who are these children? As advocates we can say there are not enough resources to serve all (the blanket is too small) and some children will always be uncovered.

ACTION: **The 4/14/10 FIWG meeting will include time on how to improve CWAC's input on major system changes.**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Erinn Kelley-Siel

Federal Policy Position Papers

- Kelley-Siel: Referred to the two draft policy papers that will be shared with Oregon's congressional delegation to highlight Oregon's perspective on national policy priorities that have consequences for the families we serve. She had briefly mentioned this at the January CWAC meeting.

  First, TANF is under funded to meet federal mandates and we are also accruing penalties due to work participation rates. There is a link between TANF and child welfare in that one third of children in foster care was on TANF the previous month. The draft policy paper offers what Oregon sees as ways to strengthen TANF to benefit family economic stability and child safety.

  The second draft policy paper discusses opportunities in child welfare finance reform. We are engaged in conversations with national organizations. There is a push among some states to keep the reform cost neutral; however, Oregon does not want budget neutrality as our starting position.

  Fact sheets are being prepared for when we send these position papers to our delegation. Our request will be that the delegation support these papers and get these issues on their radar for when there are opportunities for earmarks. Other organizations have written letters of support and we would welcome support from any CWAC member's organization.
- Balter: Not all members will be interested in federal policy. What percentage of CAF's budget is federal funds?
- Kelley-Siel: About two thirds, mostly for food stamps.
- Balter: Oregon does not have a lot of federal influence because it is a small state, but we need to be aware of how we can nudge policy and not be quiet in the conversation. Most CWAC members are affiliated with national organizations that are effective in Washington, D.C. What would be in the interest of Oregon's children in these large federal policy issues?
- Kelley-Siel: Asking the feds to step up to make a bigger investment in child welfare and not limit it to foster care as it is currently. The feds say states should be working on prevention and toward more timely exit from foster care, but are not giving financial support at either end of the continuum, so states must shore them up. As state coffers shrink, we don't want to become only a foster care agency. The level of federal funding has declined over the past years. Would like to partner to move these position papers forward.

<u>Policy Option Packages (POPs)</u>

- Kelley-Siel: Asked that CWAC participate in the development of POPs. We want our key stakeholders (individuals and groups) to look at the POPs submitted last time. Please look at them through the CAF and CWAC goals.

Some have asked why we are moving forward with a needs-based budget when there is a funding hole. We want to put forward to the Governor the serious needs of children and families and not appear to settle with the current funding levels as adequate.

As the split into DHS and the Oregon Health Authority moves along, we need strong voices for the people who benefit from our services. We will have a new Governor who may revise the outgoing Governor's budget and use our Agency Request Budget to do so. As we update these POPs we will ball-park price them rather than devote large amounts of time to provide a detailed budget build for each one due to the realities of the budget climate.

ACTION: **CWAC members are invited to send feedback on POPs and legislative concepts to Erinn Kelley-Siel, Mickey Serice, or Lois Day. The feedback will be used to update the list that will be shared during the community forums. The dates and locations of the community forums will be shared with CWAC. [*Dates and locations sent to CWAC on 3/11/10*]**

- Balter: Now is the time to go back to your constituency groups to get their input and mobilize your constituents so we have something to go to the forums to advocate for. These forums give us an opportunity to testify early in the process. A legislator may be in the audience and may use what was said at the forums later in the budget building process.
- Kelley-Siel: The Child Safety Work Group's report included recommendations on other agencies. We are reaching out to them to develop ways to address those recommendations. If you have ideas about those other agency budgets, you may forward those ideas to her and she will carry the message to the other agency.
- Arenz: Asked if Erinn's request that CWAC look at the POPs is for CWAC to develop an organized committee response or for individuals to respond independently.
- Balter: First, go to the organizations you represent. FIWG will develop a process to organize, discuss and debate as a committee.
- Arenz: There are compressed timelines outside CAF control making a committee response difficult.
- Balter: Agrees. We may not be able to collectively respond to the POPs, but FIWG can look at how to rank the POPs. Right now the task is to generate new

ideas individually. As those come forward, CWAC may or may not have a role in sorting through them.

- Arenz: Appreciates Bruce Goldberg's and Erinn's willingness to move forward with POPs that recognize the need for increased funding. It is the legislature's responsibility to say yes or no to funding the needs-based proposal.

ACTION: FIWG will develop a way during its April meeting for CWAC to rank POPs.

CROSS OVER REPORTS

Child Welfare Racial Equity Task Force
No report given. Will be on the May 12 agenda.

HB 2009 and DHS / OHA Transition
No report given. Will be on the May 12 agenda.

Work Group on Three Branches of Government
No report given. Will be on the May 12 agenda.

Foster Care Safety Team

- Day: CWAC members (Pamela Butler, Don Darland, Leola McKenzie and Chief Jerry Moore) constituted half the team and there was an assumption there would be a CWAC role in the recommendations. The team determined findings #1, #5 and #6 are the three most important.

  Finding #1 found a foster care certifier's workload has too many roles and tool large a caseload. The team recommended a workload study. When a certifier works with a foster family for a period of time, a relationship is developed that can create a bias that needs to be mitigated.

  Finding #5 found that communication between intake screeners and certifiers is inconsistent when a report of alleged abuse in a foster home is made. A formal structure to standardize that communication is needed. The reports need to be looked at from a variety of views and expertise. Foster youth need to have an avenue to self report that does not impact their relationship with their caseworker or foster parent.
- Butler: One of the recommendations that involve CWAC is that CWAC look at moving the investigation to the Office of Investigations and Training when the alleged abuse occurs in a foster home.

- Stetzer: One avenue a child may currently use to report is to talk to a school counselor or teacher. If that person calls the caseworker, it can create a negative impact on the child's relationship with the caseworker.
- Day: Also a youth's observation of the relationship between the caseworker and foster parent may keep the youth from reporting. A formal structure can help remove these barriers.
- Patton: What is the current procedure if a teacher calls a child's caseworker in such a situation?
- Day: It is inconsistent around the state. We are concerned about the inconsistency, plus more than one set of eyes is needed to look at complaints about the treatment of children in foster care. Some workers will report to the hotline and a separate worker will be assigned to assess. Other branches don't do that. It also depends on whether the report is about abuse or a certification violation.
- Butler: All complaints need to go to one place rather than complaints about certification going to the certifier and complaints about abuse to the hotline.
- Darland: The concerns may indicate a foster parent is overloaded and this could bring support to providers before the smoke becomes fire.
- Patton: Sometimes a report may be from a girl who knows that if she reports abuse by an adult things happen. It may be the only way she knows to cry for help.
- Day: Currently reports of abuse are only documented in the child welfare file under the child's bio-parent's name, not under the foster parent's name. There is no automated cross reporting. OR-Kids will add that capability. Another recommendation in the report is to automatically look at a foster parent home when three certification concerns are raised. This is not to be seen as a judgment about the home, but to get help to the foster parent before there is an allegation of abuse.
- Darland: Agreed, it is not to be seen as punitive. There have been times when a foster parent doesn't find out about the certification concerns until years of concerns have accumulated. This would force the agency to talk to the foster parent sooner so the concerns can be addressed.
- Day: The report's last recommendations are to the CWAC. The recommendation to review closed at screening files would be to see if a different standard is used for reports about foster parents as compared to the general population. This gets back to the bias issue.
- Patton: This review could also look at whether teens are being screened out.

- Day: Handed out a first draft of our implementation strategy for the FCST's recommendations.
- Balter: We have heard that there are early indicators such as an inadequate certification process. These are excellent recommendations that point to a system breakdown when accommodating the pressure the system is under. We may ask Gene Evans to help us respond to the public regarding this report without apologizing for the system. But if resources are moved to cover these recommendations, what will be uncovered? A key concern for him individually is when children are placed with foster parents who are not adequately trained but still certified due to the shortage of homes.
- Currin: The report looks at the problems and solutions, but the fact that resources are inadequate means moving resources to meet these recommendations may make things worse somewhere else.
- Darland: Once the workload study is done, we can find a way to proceed with the recommendations about data. He is disturbed to see that we are losing more foster homes every year and he is not sure why. There were only 314 regular foster homes in 2009.
- Moore: We fool ourselves if we think things will get better before they get worse. DHS can't continue to do more with less. DHS has to be perfect when it comes to protecting kids but that is impossible. So do they minimize the bad things that are going to happen? Do they maximize where staff can make a difference?
- Butler: The FCST knows there is a lack of resources.
- Moore: But wrote the report to point out where DHS needs to focus what it has.
- Patton: If DHS continues to manage within what it has and then gets even less next time, they have to then stretch even more. Public education is not done very well when it comes to telling what could be done if adequate funds were available. Then when a report like this comes out, the public wants to know why we have a system like we do.
- Balter: We need to find a way for CWAC members to respond to the report in a way that is grounded in reality. Do you make the risk explicit, aka, what is our tolerance for child deaths? Currently we have a system that guarantees we will have a certain number of deaths.
- Kelley-Siel: Appreciates the spirit of the conversation and motivation to be better, meet expectations and be adequately funded to meet the need. Shared the story of a public opinion poll that asked which they would be willing to support: A school that was failing and what it needed to be successful or a school that was already successful. The public said they would support the

already successful school. Stories about child welfare's broken system don't encourage the public to support that system. Our presentations to the legislature have been clear about how we are under-resourced. Combining that with success stories is what is needed. As advocates, you have the ability to have a different voice.

- Evans: The reality of communications is that you must tell the good stories all the time. When a fatality occurs, the media interest is only on who was responsible and who got fired, putting the agency on the defense. The ground work has to be ongoing because we cannot predict when or where the next fatality will occur.
- Darland: We all agree there are not enough resources. A continual look to catch things earlier may prevent a crisis.
- Moore: People don't want to hear excuses. It is about building relationships. Does the community trust the organization? The community needs to trust that DHS is doing the best it can. Then when something bad happens, you deal with it openly.
- Bell: When you have a good system in place, when something bad happens, you can say what you had in place and did the best you could do.
- Lasater: Has been a CWAC member for a long time and sees that the public doesn't trust government. If the same story about trying to stretch the blanket is told over and over, we won't gain the public's trust. They are looking for community based connections and resources and how they as individuals can make a difference. DHS has been overwhelmed for a long time. There are many things working well where non-government organizations are stepping up. DHS needs to stop defending itself by saying it is doing the best it can do. If government can't keep up then bring in the faith communities, local commissions and citizens with some outside-the-box thinking.
- Darland: Suggested an update from the Children's Justice Act Task Force as a way to find out what is happening along the lines of what Jean said.
- Butler: Agrees with Jean that it is not about what the system can and can't do, but what each of us can do – community responsibility.
- Day: Asked that CWAC read the implementation plan, especially the part about the recommendations involving CWAC.
- Balter: FIWG will review and develop a way for CWAC to respond to the recommendations.
- Darland: The FCST looked at some data charts and suggested those charts be shared with CWAC. He and Lois will decide which ones to share with CWAC.

<u>ACTION:</u> FIWG will review and develop a way for CWAC to respond to the FCST recommendations. Don Darland and Lois Day will distribute to CWAC the data charts the FCST used in its research.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

<u>Report on Workload Staffing Model</u>
No report given.

<u>Interim Legislative Session</u>
See above under Legislative Update.

<u>Future Issues Work Group Membership</u>
Helen Hoang and Pamela Butler have been invited to join FIWG. Helen has accepted and Pamela has not yet committed. All others are welcome if they are interested.

CWAC WORK PLAN

<u>Goal #1</u> To advise the Department of Human Services (DHS) on development and administration of child welfare policies, programs and practices related to reducing over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system.

No discussion.

<u>Goal #2</u> To expand the representativeness in CWAC discussions.

- Balter: CWAC had asked FIWG to expand the representativeness in CWAC discussions. FIWG reviewed the current membership and is prepared to make recommendations to Erinn regarding reappointments, but first Mike Balter is calling certain members to see if they are interested in continuing on the committee. If a member is not interested in staying on CWAC, they will be asked for suggestions for another representative of their area of expertise or constituency.

- Butler: A youth voice is missing as she now represents a child advocacy organization and no longer sees herself as representative of foster youth. She will be sharing possible names with Mike.
- All: Agreed that the vacant 21st position be filled with a foster youth representative.
- Patton: Did FIWG look at geographic representation on CWAC?
- Balter: Right now we are looking at current membership and who wants to continue. When we know how many vacancies we have, then we can decide how to fill them. Anyone interested in joining in this task is welcome.

Goal #3 To coordinate and leverage state and local efforts to improve policy, program, and practice.

A list of local child welfare advisory committees was distributed and CWAC members were encouraged to attend a local advisory committee meeting. Mike will be writing to the chairs to let them know CWAC is interested in their work and to invite them to attend CWAC meetings.

Goal #4 To advise DHS on the practice of the Oregon Safety Model (OSM).

See above discussion under Data Report – Teen Access to DHS Child Welfare Services.

Meeting adjourned.