

Attending: Judy Stiegler, Mike Balter, Janet Arenz, Pam Pearson, Pam Patton by phone, Benjamin Hazelton, Iris Bell

MINUTES

The minutes of the January 4, 2007, meeting were approved.

TEENS SUBCOMMITTEE

- Stiegler: CWAC adopted FIWG's recommendation to continue the Teens Subcommittee as a focused and project-oriented committee. The caveat was that it will exist only if a chair is found. To date, no one has volunteered.
- Patton: Previously, it was a large subcommittee in order to include representatives from all parts of the system that serves teens. Its perspective was to be on how to make child welfare better for teens.
- Stiegler: The membership will continue to be inclusive. However, there has been no feedback on the chair position or interest in reappointment.
- Patton: She has heard from members that they want the subcommittee to continue. She understood that the narrowed focus would determine the membership. Agrees that a chair is needed first.
- Stiegler: The subcommittee has not had a chair for quite some time and the burden has fallen on staff.
- Arenz: Asked what are the chair's duties?
- Stiegler: The primary duties are to set the agenda and run the meetings. She has been trying for more than a year to get a chair. Even when the subcommittee was actively working on a project, she could not find someone willing to chair. The subcommittee has produced a report, but it was never formally adopted by CWAC.
- Patton: That report did go to CWAC several times in draft form. A timing problem caused it to not go back for an official vote. As a result of that a recommendations from that first report and at Nancy Keeling's suggestion, the subcommittee looked at continuity across the state on how teens are taken into the child welfare system. At that time, the membership represented a diverse spectrum of systems and providers. The discussion spread to looking at how communities get at-risk teens into the whole system, not just the child welfare system. We wanted to see if there were existing models that other communities could use. If we found working models, they could be shared with other communities.

- Stiegler: There was consensus at CWAC that the subcommittee report was not presented in final format. She referred back to the 11/8/06 CWAC minutes.
- Arenz: Suggested that rather than disbanding because there is no chair, a specific task be identified first. Then, based on the topic, the appropriate person to serve as chair will become apparent.
- Stiegler: The consensus of CWAC was that the subcommittee first needs a chair or it will be disbanded.
- Patton: Offered to chair the Teens Subcommittee, but would need to leave FIWG to do so. She would also need DHS staff support to make it possible. Acknowledged that it is appropriate and necessary that Judy chair FIWG. In the past, Mickey Serice chaired the Teens and Legislative Subcommittees.
- Stiegler: The Teens Subcommittee agreed that it needed to be narrowed and reconstituted. They brought that recommendation to FIWG. It agreed that it was a subcommittee that worked best when focused on a project. It spun out of control when it starting looking too broadly at issues.
- Patton: It was focused on the belief that there was inconsistency in how teens get into the child welfare system. In order to look at that issue, they looked broader and did not focus on child welfare. That caused some members to lose interest.
- Stiegler: CWAC had grown accustomed to staff running the committee and subcommittees. When she was asked to chair, the goal was to make the CWAC operate as an advisory committee and not a staff committee in which partners participate. That lead to an effort to have subcommittees chaired by non-DHS staff. The subcommittee chair is instrumental in appointing its members. Appreciates Pam's offer to chair the Teens Subcommittee. The subcommittee will need a specific task to accomplish.
- Hazelton: Does the subcommittee disband when a project is completed?
- Stiegler: No, it is a standing subcommittee, but may be inactive at times. Its charge and function will be refined and it will be task-oriented.
- Balter: Would like to give Pam Patton support by narrowing the topic today. His experience with DHS raises a question on CAF's commitment to teens. He continues to not be convinced that that commitment exists. The Teens Subcommittee was diverted to analyzing how individual branches handle teens. That is an agency responsibility. We should be asking what is CAF's commitment to the teens coming into its system. What is CAF's commitment to children, 12 and older, who are not abused or neglected?
- Patton: Where do homeless or runaway youth fit into the child welfare system? What system and policy changes are needed so that teens get the services they

need, so they are not kicked out or run away from it? Other issues are: youth 18 and older and teens for whom no foster home is designed to care for them. Agrees with Mike that our role is not to analyze what is working or not, but to give higher level advice on how to better serve teens.

- Bell: Mentioned the Reconnecting Families Project currently in 14 counties. Kin that are able to support teens coming out, aging out or not yet in the system can be the key for those teens.
- Stiegler: This discussion illustrates how difficult this area is. Resource issues can dictate the conversation. We need to bring the focus down from the giant beast to the core issues for analysis and recommendation.
- Arenz: That could be the charge subcommittee, unless we recommend something to them. Perhaps they should take a recommendation from their earlier report or the homeless/runaway issue.
- Balter: There should be dialogue between FIWG and the Teens Subcommittee in selecting the issue so that it stays focused. Also, DHS needs to identify a management level teen champion.
- Patton: Rosemary Iavenditti, the Independent Living Program Coordinator, was on the subcommittee and is a champion in Child Welfare for teens, but as a champion she has reported that even with her work not all branches understand the ILP, and her role focuses mostly on older teens. Ramona Foley was seen as the teens' champion when she came to Oregon, but now part of the reason there is no teens' champion in child welfare is because the issues cross multiple areas. We need one person at a high level that has authority and responsibility across multiple areas in Child Welfare to be assigned that position. Now is the time for a position to be established that reports to Ramona on only teens in Child Welfare. Child welfare is there to protect children. How to protect teens is different than for younger children.
- Stiegler: A recommendation may be that the structure in the agency itself needs to be changed. Appreciates Pam's offer to chair the subcommittee, but does not want her to do it only because no one else will.
- Patton: She is willing to chair the subcommittee if she can get staff support to get movement on making policy and funding level recommendations to CWAC, such as a recommendation to have a management person designated in charge of teens programs.
- Stiegler: The first step for the subcommittee will be to look at the material they already have.
- Arenz: They need to look at the subcommittee material and the wealth of research already done.

- ACTION:**
- **Pam Pearson will send a list of the previous Teens Subcommittee membership to Judy and Pam so they can decide how broad or narrow to make the new membership.**
 - **Invitations will be sent to the previous members according how Judy and Pam determine the new committee will be formed.**
 - **A kick-off meeting will include both the FIWG and Teens Subcommittee to assure the subcommittee purpose and project are clearly communicated to the membership.**

Possible Projects (all issues need to be kept at policy / funding levels):

- **Review the previous Teens Subcommittee report(s) for policy and/or funding issues.**
- **What is DHS Child Welfare's commitment to the teens coming into its system?**
- **What is DHS Child Welfare's commitment to children, 12 and older, who are not abused or neglected?**
- **Where do homeless or runaway outh fit into the child welfare system?**
- **What system and policy changes are needed so that teens get the services they need from the child welfare system, so they are not kicked out or run away from it?**
- **What does DHS Child Welfare provide for youth 18 and older?**
- **What does DHS Child Welfare provide for teens for whom no foster home is designed to care for them?**

**DEFINITION OF "SPECIAL NEEDS" IN ADOPTION ASSISTANCE –
DRAFT LETTER TO RAMONA FOLEY**

- **Stiegler:** Thanked Benjamin for preparing the initial draft letter. She reviewed past minutes to add the history and context in the first paragraph. The final letter will be reviewed by FIWG, but not by CWAC, before it is sent to Ramona Foley.
- **Hazelton:** The first sentence in the second paragraph needs a stronger statement than "more as a supplement."
- **Balter:** Suggested "necessary support."

- Stiegler: This paragraph is meant to dispel the myth that adoption assistance is an incentive and that it is not cost effective.
- Arenz: The other sentences in that paragraph should be moved to separate paragraphs.
- Stiegler: The second paragraph will focus on adoption assistance being child-centered, which is our primary statement. The following paragraphs will focus on dispelling myths, our secondary statement.
- Patton: Begin the second paragraph with, "Adoption assistance is not seen by the CWAC as an incentive, but rather as a necessary support for the child."
- Stiegler: Modify that sentence, "...necessary support in the best interests of the child."
- Arenz: Include in that paragraph, "There is no documentation showing that adoption assistance in an abused incentive."
- Hazelton: Modify the last sentence in the first paragraph to, "...freed and placed."

ACTION: Judy will send a revised draft to FIWG based on these edits. Upon FIWG's review and approval, it will be finalized, signed by Judy and sent to Ramona Foley.

HOW TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE AND DECREASE NUMBERS IN FOSTER CARE

- Stiegler: We have already prepared a recommendation regarding how to decrease the numbers in foster care.
- Balter: That recommendation was for an increase in A&D treatment.
- Hazelton: Some children are in foster care because their parents are waiting for A&D treatment.
- Arenz: There is an emphasis towards increasing A&D treatment in the Governor's Recommended Budget and proposed tax increases, with the treatment targeted to families with children.
- Balter: Bruce Goldberg had asked CWAC that if we could do one thing to decrease the numbers in foster care, what would it be. We answered to make A&D treatment available and targeted to parents with children in foster care.
- Stiegler: We identified three issues: how to keep children out of foster care, how to get them out of foster care sooner, and how to keep them safe. A&D treatment and follow up services such as housing, training and employment were our answer to the second issue.

- Bell: We seek to get parents at the front of the line for treatment. What if everyone in line is a parent with a child in foster care and there is no “front of the line”?
- Balter: Our recommendation is that funds be increased and realigned. It also needs to ask if DHS has the authority to make these changes.
- Stiegler: We need data on the number of cases where A&D or mental health is the primary presenting problem.
- Balter: It is not only about needing more A&D treatment. We need to know the number of children who are in foster care for this reason and if some prototype cases can show some strategies for getting the parents into treatment.
- Stiegler: We have that recommendation completed. Now we need to look at how to keep children safe. We listed three issues, but if children are kept safe, that also addresses keeping children out of foster care. Is abuse and neglect while in foster care a caseload issue?
- Arenz: Safety while in care and safety when sent home are two issues.
- Balter: The key is more face-to-face contact. When children have more interaction with adults, they have more opportunity to talk about not being safe.
- Arenz: Both the NRCCPS report and the Juvenile Rights Project state that more face-to-face contact is needed.
- Balter: But is once a month enough?
- Hazelton: Data shows that only 68% of children receive face-to-face visits monthly. Parents in a reunification plan receive even less: 30% for mothers and 20% for fathers.
- Arenz: We should recommend increased face-to-face contact. How is it that Oregon reports doing well in the federal Child and Family Services Review?
- Balter: Because other states are also struggling. Oregon shows progress in its program improvement plan. We should give a specific target, such as increasing face-to-face visits from 68% to 85% in the next year. Though our goal should be 100%, we need to stair-step it.
- Hazelton: Another concern is the exception policy for permanent foster care that allows 90 days between face-to-face visits. It tends to be an automatic practice to blanket all permanent foster care placements with this exception.
- Stiegler: Suggested recommendation: Move face-to-face visits from 68% to 80% compliance in the next year.
- Arenz: Our recommendation is to raise the bar. It is DHS’ responsibility to determine how to get there.

- Balter: Another recommendation can be to raise the contact with mothers and fathers the same 12%.
- Hazelton: Will verify these percentages.
- Balter: Do we have a recommendation for keeping children out of foster care?
- Stiegler: Bruce Goldberg asked for ways to handle the agency's caseload.
- Patton: Asked if he was also talking about children coming into the system that could be served while staying home.
- Hazelton: Those cases still require face-to-face visits.
- Arenz: We could include the need for Healthy Start and prevention, long before a family needs TANF or comes into the child welfare system.
- Hazelton: Bruce Goldberg's charge to CWAC is for input on what can be done in the child welfare system, not outside that.
- Balter: Is there an opportunity for intervention for children that come to the attention of child welfare, but do not meet the threshold to open a case? Should we recommend there be a strategy with partners and communities to look at these at-risk children?
- Stiegler: This gets to the need for foster care in the first place.
- Hazelton: Is concerned that DHS' new rules appear to be restrictive of voluntary services.
- Stiegler: We need to touch on the group of children that are under the DHS child welfare umbrella, but not in foster care, and the safety issues for them. Face-to-face contact is essential to keeping them safe.
- Balter: Another idea would be to look at the interface with TANF in identifying at-risk families, such as a mother not feeding her children or on drugs and pregnant. A new threshold in TANF could make such factors an automatic referral to child welfare.

ACTION RE: Decreasing the number in foster care:

- **Judy will redraft the recommendation to consider that DHS may not have the authority to make all the changes we recommend.**
- **Data requested: What is the number of child welfare cases in which A&D or mental health issues are the primary presenting problem? Are there prototype cases that can show some strategies for getting parents into treatment?**

ACTION RE: Keeping children in the child welfare system safe:

- **Judy will draft the recommendation, which will include:**

- **While recognizing that 100 percent compliance is the goal, we recommend for the next 12 months, face-to-face visits with children increase from 68% to 80% (BENJAMIN TO CONFIRM THIS 68% NUMBER).**
- **We also recommend that face-to-face visits with parents in a reunification plan increase by a corresponding 12%: from 30% to 42% for mothers and from 20% to 32% for fathers (BENJAMIN TO CONFIRM THESE NUMBERS).**
- **We recommend that a threshold in TANF applicants be established that results in an automatic child welfare referral. For examples: mothers not feeding their children and women who are using drugs while pregnant.**
- **We do not have a recommendation at this time regarding at-risk children not yet in the child welfare system.**

DATES OF FIWG MEETINGS

It was decided that FIWG will use the time previously set aside for Teens Subcommittee meetings. The Teens Subcommittee will establish a new meeting schedule when it becomes active again. FIWG meetings for 2007 are: April 11, June 13, August 8, October 10 and December 12. They will run from 8:30 – 10:15.

FRAME ISSUES FOR FUTURE CWAC MEETINGS

- Stiegler: We need to allow more time for this topic at the next meeting and so have it earlier on the agenda. We have an ongoing list of issues that is added to as topics are raised at CWAC meetings. Part of FIWG's charge is to vet the issues in order to make CWAC's time more constructive. FIWG members are each asked to prioritize the list individually before the next meeting. During the April 11 meeting, we will see how the prioritization compares between members and decide which issues to address and in what order.
- Patton: On the List of Issues, these can be deleted:
 - *Impact on girls when a program loses or changes direction*
 - *Children's system change initiative*
- Stiegler: The March agenda includes time for discussion on the NRCOI report. It had been sent to CWAC one day before the January meeting, which meant there was not sufficient time for members to read and digest the contents prior to that meeting. Therefore, they have been given the opportunity to submit their questions in advance of the March meeting. These questions will be used to

frame the discussion at the March meeting. A reminder will be sent because no questions have been received to date.

- Balter: Another agenda item should be the agency's rulemaking process. When a major rule change is made, the process should be slowed down to give adequate opportunity for public comment. We need to keep CWAC's issues at the policy level. Sometimes the issues raised during CWAC meetings are individual members' issues and are not at the policy level. Those issues should be vetted by FIWG to determine if they can be framed as policy level issues. We should do that for all the items on the List of Issues.
- Stiegler: FIWG should also be raising issues, such as the rulemaking process and the impact it has.
- Arenz: Suggested that when draft rules are sent out by email for comment, the cover email include a summary paragraph about the rule change. Also suggested that partners be given the opportunity to get involved earlier in the process.
- Balter: Director Bruce Goldberg has time on the agenda. It would be helpful to know what topics he plans to discuss in advance.
- Arenz: One topic to discuss with Bruce would be CWAC's recommendations that we discussed earlier today. Also, he needs to understand why the conversation about the definition of "special needs" was so controversial.
- Balter: Knowing in advance what Bruce and Ramona plan to bring to CWAC allows for a dialogue, rather than a blind conversation.
- Arenz: The department needs to be aware of how challenging it is to resolve some of these issues.

ACTION:

- **Framing issues for future CWAC meetings will be placed early on the next FIWG agenda.**
- **FIWG members are to individually prioritize the list of future issues. We will compare the prioritization at the next FIWG meeting.**
- **A reminder will be sent to CWAC that questions about the NRCOI report are due by 3/2/07.**
- **Add to the list of future issues the DHS rulemaking process and how to allow for adequate opportunity for public comment.**
- **The items on the list of issues need to be framed as policy/funding level issues.**

Meeting adjourned.