

Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee
Annual Report of Refugee Children in DHS Care
July, 2006

About the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee

The goal of the Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee (RCWAC) is to promote the implementation of cross cultural sensitivity and ethnically competent services to best meet the needs of refugee communities in Oregon and to assure the protection and appropriate treatment of refugee children by child welfare staff.

The stated purpose of RCWAC in Oregon Revised Statue 418.941 is to advise DHS on the development and administration of child welfare policies, programs and practices that affect refugee children and their families. Committee members represent and advocate for the interest of refugee children and their families through the following activities:

- Provide consultation and advice regarding the culturally appropriate placement of refugee children and availability of resources for refugee children and families.
- Provide to the Committee timely, accurate information regarding the impact of policy, program, budget and legislation changes with their agencies, branches of government, institutions, and/or communities that affect refugee child welfare services;
- Develop recommendations for consideration by DHS Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Assistant Director in the area of child welfare, refugee children and families;
- Represent the broad interests of child welfare services, refugee stakeholders, including clients, staff and providers;
- Represent the interests of their agency, institution, branch of government and/or community and keep them informed of the work of the Committee;
- Provide opportunities to receive information about child welfare issues from the refugee community.

One of the methods by which RCWAC implements this process is to meet with DHS child welfare workers who have placed a refugee child in protective custody.

Committee members are able to provide the worker with information about the child's culture and traditions and assist the worker in developing culturally appropriate services for family members.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is required by ORS 418. 943 to provide an annual report of refugee children in the Department's care. The following information is to be included:

- legal status of the child
- living arrangement
- demographic information such as age, sex, race
- accumulated length in foster care
- other demographic information deemed appropriate

The report also explains the extent to which DHS complied with ORS 418.925 to .945 including descriptions of the methods of compliance. Compliance issues include two considerations:

1. the reason removal of the child is "necessary to prevent imminent serious emotional or physical harm to the child and
2. the reason that preventative or remedial services do not alleviate the harm.

The child's culture and tradition are also considered in making a placement decision. The child is placed in the following order of preference as follows:

- natural parent
- extended family members
- members of the same cultural heritage
- persons with knowledge & appreciation of the child's cultural heritage

Refugee Children in the Department's Care

From July, 2005 to July, 2006, DHS child welfare was granted custody of seven refugee children.

Six Somali children were placed in shelter care because their mother's mental illness created a safety threat to the children's well being. The children were returned home after their father returned to the area after being gone due to work. OHSU Intercultural Psychiatric Program has provided services to the entire family.

We were first involved in January, 2005. The six children were in shelter placement from 1/14/05 and 1/24/05. The Court then ordered the children's placement with their father while the mother received mental health services.

The second family is Romanian. The child, an 8 year old boy, was removed from his mother on 11/10/05 and staffed before the Committee on 12/18/05. The child was placed with a friend of the family's that is able to meet his cultural and safety needs. The child continues in the same foster placement because the mother continues to serve a sentence in jail. The father was contacted and considered as a possible placement resource of the child. The father and child did not initially have an established relationship. The father has employment that requires him to move from site to site (across states). However, he is supportive of the current placement for his son, is involved in his planning and has established regular contact with his son since DHS's involvement. The case was re-staffed with the Committee on March 8th, 2006 and the worker commended for her cultural sensitivity and case management of this matter.

(Please see attached chart for additional information.)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Country Of Origin</i>	<i>County & Legal Status</i>	<i>Current Living Situation</i>	<i>Time In Care</i>	<i>Services</i>	<i>Other</i>
9 yrs. 7 yrs. 6 yrs. 4 yrs. 2 yrs. 1 yr.	4 female 2 male	Somalia	Multnomah petition dismissed	shelter placement only in-home services provided	placed 1/14/05 to 1/24/05	Assessed mother's mental health needs and impact. on children' safety Referred mother for treatment.	Services provided to all family members by OHSU Intercultural Psychiatric Program
8 yrs	male	Romania	Washington Ward of the court	Placed with family friend who has knowledge of child's culture	Placed 11/10/05 to present	Assessed child's safety, permanency & well being needs and developed an appropriate placement resource. Assessed father's ability to care and provide for child.	Provided information to mother about resources to assist with her immigration status. Involved father in planning & visitation.