

## Dependency/Model Court Meeting 1/27/09 Participant Feedback

### Goal 1: Safely Reduce the number of Foster Kids in Care by 20% by 2011

- Talk to parents at PTA meetings.
- The private sector needs to understand that substance abuse treatment works (not always the first time) but without safe affordable housing we can't keep people sober and safe
- Private sector should be trained/educated about the number of abuse cases (small) vs neglect (large) and intimately neglect is tied into poverty
- Private sector needs to understand barriers that exist to child welfare families actually making a transition out of poverty into self sufficiency. Talk to parent mentors and other "life experienced" workers about their experiences.
- Identify parents, kin with previous or current criminal justice involvement who can regain, maintain or get custody with supportive family services.  
(Lauren Booth, Children's Justice Alliance,  
[Lauren@childrensjusticealliance.org](mailto:Lauren@childrensjusticealliance.org) 503-977-6399
- Engage biological parents who have been through "the system" in program improvement (trainings, 4 case workers, foster care reduction planning) to ensure that our system created every opportunity for kids to return to their biological parents.  
( Mary Kirchoff, MC, CCF)
- Provide family decision meetings
- Reconfigure DHS, CAF program to have an "in home program". CAF is structurally set up to support foster care
- Increase use of family meetings
- In situations in which a child, parent or parents are arrested, strongly encourage police or DHS to investigate family resources and place children as appropriate without filing a case if possible.
- Strengthen the ability to identify parents, provide patient management training and facilitate the connection between children and caregivers for Oregon prisoners. ( Sharon, Director of Pathfinders, 503 307-2380)
- Re-configure FBS contracts so they focus on safety services and keeping kids at home.
- Consider comparing the cost of 40 hours of in-home hands on support with the cost of foster care. In home support keeps children safe at home for nearly the same cost.
- The current "special rates" system encourages foster parents to stay foster parents rather than rewarding adoption as a choice. Increasing adoption subsidies would decrease total costs by

increasing adoptions and decreasing permanent foster care. (Steve McCrea 503 988-4175)

- Permanent foster care is often the result for kids who are participants in our mental health system. MH services that are fragmented, ineffective, and culturally insensitive make kids worse! An empowering approach to mental health issues will reduce the number of kids in foster care. ( Steve McCrea)

## **Goal 2: Increase Relative Placements by 50%**

- Provide supports for relatives to navigate the child welfare system and access community resources that assist relatives in raising children. Partner with grassroots groups like *grandparents raising grandkids*
- Engage dads. Have cases listed under children's names rather than under mother's names. Encourages DHS and family to see engagement as paternal and maternal.
- Chris Otis- Children's Relief Nursery: We would be interested in helping relative placements manage and transition of a foster child to their care. We are experienced in working with trauma in families and young children.
- Work units that specialize in finding and engaging families
- Contact faith communities, school and recreational groups the child is connected to. Invite them to planning meeting for children.
- Increase connections with child care systems such as child care licensing and child care resource and referral to increase awareness of the community goal of foster care reduction. Develop systems that bring child welfare work with childcare in their work with families.
- Make FDMs more flexible to allow families to drive agenda and develop solutions. The current format is very rigid. Invite kith and kin to meetings. Currently participation is very limited.
- Prioritize mining files periodically to uncover relatives
- Continued and increased training for child welfare professionals about children of justice-involved, importance of maintaining parent-child relationship, addressing these families and kids' cumulative risk factors, etc. (Lauren Booth, CJA)
- Conduct relative search for all kids in permanent planning unit
- Increase use of family meetings
- Fully implement family find
- Re-look at relatives periodically to see if their situation can now accommodate a child
- Provide supportive services such as in-home family therapy to relative caregivers
- Engage churches and other informal community networks in searching for families and relatives

- Assist qualified relatives secure appropriate housing arrangement if that is determined as an impediment to accepting prospective child in care
- Look more closely and “staff” a family if they are in DHS history before a decision is made to rule them out.
- Clarify permanent placement adoption and criteria for relative placements. ( Lynn Travis- 503-988-4173)
- Change DHS policy on current caretakers adopting from 6mo-1 year. Change policy so that you can not be a current caretaker if there is an approved relative resource.

**Goal 3: Reduce Children Entering Care by 10%**

- Increase focus on court finding of reasonable efforts to prevent placement
- Chris Otis, Children’s Relief Nursery: We would like to explore working with additional referrals from DHS to look at ways we can support intact families to help prevent removal.
- Increase affordable addiction treatment
- Provide family decision meetings to prevent removal of children.
- Provide family therapy as soon as family is identified as being at risk of having a child(ren) removed from the home vs. late in the case
- Child abuse prevention programming for families at risk of abuse, neglect, criminal system involvement, etc.
- Support services for children with parents in the criminal justice system
- Need to engage local TV, print, radio, internet, media in how to provide messages about communities supporting families to prevent child abuse
- Project to minimize the length of time children/families are in the DHS system to 90 days.
- Domestic violence advocates in each DHS protective services unit
- Family meetings at all points, especially early
- Parent/child residential drug treatment
- Increase availability of Childrens Relief Nursery
- Develop plan for connecting families at risk of removal of children with CRN
- Involve schools and teachers in plan for child and family
- More family meetings prior to court and prior to jurisdiction
- System for immediate search of kith and kin at time of first contact with the child facing decision to remove so that they go to someone they have a connection with

#### **Goal 4: Increase Foster Care Exits by 20%**

- Early identification and treatment for trauma. Trauma specific services
- REAL diligent recruitment. Broaden the scope of recruitment to communities of color
- Reduce case workers case load. Increase worker retention. Reduce clinical task of case workers
- Better support for guardianships.( Money and service)
- Increase use of family meetings.
- Connect Oregon Mentors to try to identify mentors for 80% of kids over 5yrs old in foster care
- Take 50 minority kids who have been in care too long and really focus on getting them out of care
- Chris Otis, Child Relief Nursery: We would like to explore working closer with DHS to increase opportunities for reunification

#### **Goal 5: Reduce Disproportionality for Children and Families of Color**

- Develop specialized CRB review protocol for APPLA cases to include issues impacting permanency
- Fully engage communities of color to help DHS understand their attitudes and experiences around child welfare. Jointly identify and implement strategies to facilitate placements and permanency for children into the community including faith communities and schools and recreational centers.
- True reduction in overrepresentation of minorities requires specific, concrete tools at key decision points, similar to the RAI used for detention decisions. Turnover is so high that such tools are crucial to sustainability. (Steve McCrea 503-988-4175)
- Increase connections with all Head Start/ Early Head Start programs. Provide training at all levels of staff. Work to align work with families and within both systems.
- Place with relative caregivers and provide family meetings
- Target increase of relative placement for children of color. Provide additional transition and post placement supports for relative placements
- Fairness and Impartiality
- Provide a series of small group trainings for supervisors and caseworkers regarding the impact of personal biases on case plan outcomes.
- Utilize Multnomah County Oregon Safety Model committee to review decision points, structure, and context in the OSM to increase focus on positively impacting over representation
- Mental health system is very “medical model” driven and hence is insensitive to differing cultural conceptions of mental health.

Inclusion of alternative, culturally specific approaches to mental health is critical. ( Steve McCrea 503 988-4175)

**Goal 6: Hold the Child Re-Abuse Rate at 7.5%**

- Offer continuing Community Connection services
- Chris Otis Children's Relief Nursery: CRN works specifically with high-risk families with children under 5 to help re-abuse and prevent abuse and neglect. We would like to collaborate as community partner on this goal.
- Angela Cause (503) 977-3111. Dist 2 Multnomah DHS after 2-9-09

**Data Questions**

- Are there data available to show what risk factors present in relative's homes are truly a risk to children's safety? Are we acting in an evidence based process?
- We must first identify our population before we can start initiatives to reduce DMR. We won't have an ability to measure our successes without that data. Our community may not find our efforts credible without that data.