

Foster Care Statewide Planning Meeting

Salem, Oregon

Jan. 5, 2009

Multnomah County Group Discussion

Participants: *Rich Brown, Convener (Bank of America, OCCF, MC CCFC), Angela Sherbow (Juvenile Rights Project), Carol Gelfer (Oregon Solutions), Rick Acevedo (Tribal Council), Carolyn Graf (DHS), Jerry Burns (DHS), Kerina Ritenburgh (DHS Case worker), Nichole Maher (NAYA), Cheryl Baldomaro-Lucas (DHS Rockwood), Melissa Sampson (Reconnecting Families), Nan Waller (MC Juvenile Court Justice), Kay Toran (VOA), Susan Smith (Casey), Susan Weiss (Casey), Wendy Lebow (MC CCFC), and Mary Kirchoff (MC CCFC)*

Goals:

1. Safely reduce the number of Oregon Children in foster care by 20% by 2011.
2. Increase relative placements by 50%. (MC uses kith and kin in definition of relative)
3. Reduce children entering care by 10%. (Need actual numbers)
4. Increase foster care exists by 20%.
5. Reduce disproportionality for children and families of color (number TBD by 2009)
6. Hold the child re-abuse rate at 7.9% (Need actual numbers)

Statewide Strategies for Achieving Goals:

1. Fully implement the Oregon Safety Model and reconcile with principals of the System of Care
2. Make child welfare decisions based on high-quality data
3. Train and support staff at all points in the child welfare system
4. Increase community participation, ownership, and collaboration
5. Consider policy and legislative changes that further the goal.

Disparity Discussion:

- Discussion regarding relative placement and what has been taking place in Multnomah County. Carolyn Graf gave an update and handed out a sheet of information (see attached pdf)
- Majority of kids in foster care are kids of color
- 20% of kids in foster care in MC are Native American
- Native American MC rates are much higher than the state rate, but the population is also much greater
- Discussion regarding higher standards to place ICWA kids in care, and new ways to pursue tribal connections for non-ICWA Native kids
- African Americans come into the system at a lower rate than Caucasian kids but stay longer and have more difficulty finding a final placement
- Native American kids go into homes with multiple other kids while Caucasian are placed in homes with only one child

Data Requests:

- Create separate lines for ICWA and all Native kids in care
- Baseline Data for Multnomah County on each goal (percent and raw number)
- Up-to-date research on best practices on what has worked for other systems
- Length of stay by ethnicity (1-12 months, 1-2 yrs., 2-5 yrs., 5 yrs +)

- Relative placement by ethnicity
- Carolyn/Cheryl will work on collecting needed data, JCIP also has data

Who else should be part of these discussions?

- Dependency/Model Court meeting
- Marcus – Urban league
- Parents, Foster parents, Youth (DHS Youth Advisory Committee)
- Children’s Investment Fund
- NARA
- Representatives from employment, treatment, and educational organizations
- Expert on Juvenile Justice disproportionality in delinquency
- Katherine Kahn, PSU
- Bill Farver, PSU
- Representative from the Casey Family Foundation

Brainstormed Local Strategies:

- Early Family Engagement with resources on every case, this would be a strategy to increase kinship involvement and reduce unnecessary placement
- Relatives face unique challenges in raising children, so they should receive additional unique supports
- Portland State is participating in a project that evaluates decision points throughout the system, to identify where issues exist
- Create a map of the county that shows where children are coming from who are entering foster care, to determine what communities may need to support families
- Identify areas in a district with higher rates of placement-engage CPS supervisors for training
- Prioritize in-home services
- Focus the best of the best of our strategies on kids who have been in foster care for a long time
- Create a report of kids in care more than five years, make renewed efforts to pursue relative resources and track school achievement (goal: every child leaves system with a family connection)
- Have Oregon Mentors commit to 50 kids who have been in care for more than five years
- Identify cohorts of named kids
- Front end decision making needs more scrutiny- if the decision is determined to be wrong, end it immediately
- Systematic changes that are targeted at improving services for African American and Native American families
- Real time foster care data (weekly or monthly by branch)

Planning Committee (January-March)

Work with the Dependency/ Model Court group which meets the 4th Tuesday of the month. Invite some additional people to attend (see a list of possible candidates above). Maintain a steering committee to meet between large group meetings.

By March: Create a list of strategies to address the goals, who is responsible for implementing each strategy, and a timeline for implementation in a matrix (However, the point is not to worry about March, but rather to focus on the next three years)

After March: Cory will be a liaison between the new state advisory committee and all 8 counties. The MC steering committee may continue to meet quarterly after the document is developed.

Preparation for January 27th meeting:

Bonnie will convene a meeting with Rich Brown, Jerry Burns, Carolyn Graf, Wendy Lebow, Carol Gelfer and Mary Kirchoff to prepare for the meeting on January 27th. DHS and MC CCFC will discuss potential new partners, and prepare materials (best practices, data, Casey Fdn). prior to large group meeting on 1/27/09.