

Tillamook County Foster Care Reduction Planning Team

Meeting Notes

January 5, 2009 – Salem Red Lion

In attendance:

Shary Mason, CRB Community Outreach and Training Manager and Oregon Solutions Convener

Marlene Putman, TCCF Director

Lee Coleman, CAF District Manager

Stacey Watney, CAF Supervisor

Debbie Moberly, CASA Executive Director

Wendy -----, Tillamook Family Counseling Center

-----, FYST

Margaret Van Vliet, Oregon Solutions project manager

1. Data Review

The group reviewed the data sheets provided and sought clarification of some indicators and data points. Key points noted were

- a. The population of kids in care is so small that the confidentiality masking stood out as a barrier to understanding what was going on, for example with race and ethnicity numbers. We need data in a number format rather than percentage
- b. DHS staff believe that in some cases assigned staff are improperly coding race/ethnicity at the front end and this does not get corrected through time. There is also over-use of “unknown” believed to be in play. Better training would address this.
- c. Four recent cases – from which much of the current understanding of process and circumstances flow – were not included in this data.
- d. We see a decline in the number of cases, which DHS staff attribute to successful use of the OSM, specifically training and use of in-home safety plans.
- e. It would be useful to explore this assumption about the role of OSM in the two-year decline indicators.
- f. While not presented in this data set, Tillamook County does historically have a high rate of re-abuse. Whatever we do will need to incorporate a focus on this safety area.
- g. Some wondered if our county had already achieved a reduction consistent with the statewide goal, and what we would be expected to do if that were the case?
- h. This precipitated a discussion about what benchmarks were being set for each county, and how precisely we would all measure success.

- i. DHS staff expressed a value around relative connections being maintained even for kids permanently (or long-term) in F.C. Acknowledging the statewide goal for placement with relatives, there was a desire to be able to track success around connections with relatives, short of placement. We also wanted to be able to look at those cases with an APPLA plan to determine if it really was warranted and the best plan for the child.
- j. We wish we knew more about why kids enter care in our county. What are local drivers of “threat of harm?” Statewide issues of domestic violence, addiction, poverty, and police contact overlap and are hard to separate out from one another as causes.

2. How will our community define success?

There was a good discussion of what success might look like based on what the group came to understand about existing data. There was also discussion about who determines/provides the baseline and benchmarks.

- a. Our entrance rate into care is considered low at 3 per 1000. One “win” would be if we could maintain this low rate. This prompted more discussion about whether a decrease in this county was necessary. There was discussion about continuing to work with TANF families and Family Support and Connections
- b. An increase in the number of children with in-home safety plans could be one measure of success (*note from MSV: but would that still be true if it was caused by an increase in the incidences of abuse or neglect?*)
- c. An increase in “diligent efforts” around relative contacts might be a success. DHS staff feel they do a good job of this now, and are focused on expanding work in this area.
 - Unclear how we would measure and define success around such activities. I think we talked about measuring this by looking at the number of positive diligent efforts findings made by the Court and CRB
 - Is there a way for the community to help with this?
 - There was a suggestion that additional focus on the uninvolved parent (typically the father in circumstances where children raised by single mother) side of the family for relatives might be fruitful.
 - Teenagers who enter often have information about who else in family – and who might be considered “kith” – as potential resources.
- d. A reduction in the amount of time spent in foster care would be a success.
- e. Another “win” would be increase the number of available care slots within the county, as many of our kids must leave to be served.
 - Would development of a treatment foster care facility be possible with community-based resources?
- f. Enhanced awareness on the part of general members of the community about the needs of kids and families would be good for the child welfare system.

- Discussion ensued here about the way our community thinks about family. Team members agreed that the picture is less like Norman Rockwell's depiction of a family, and more like a Picasso.
- g. A win would be if involved partners all have access to good data and are positioned to share information easily such that they can readily intervene to help families, and support the system.
 - An existing YouthLink grant could be leveraged to help achieve this
- h. More volunteers on the ground helping DHS do its work would be a win.
- i. Reducing the amount of time that it takes cases to work through juvenile court system would help kids and families and be a win.
 - Engagement of the model court team and the Juvenile Court Improvement Project – as described by Judge Waller – would be helpful.
 - Not all team members were aware of the existing Model Court Team in Tillamook. Team wants to engage here outside of a specific case.

3. What else might community partners do to reduce reliance on foster care?

- a. Increase the number of CASA volunteers
 - i. Re-engage CASA as an entity in the system through the model court team -, and provide them notice of shelter hearings to be engaged as early as possible.
 - ii. Training for those who step up to be CASA volunteers to expand role and reach and get more in action.
- b. Increase general volunteer base
 - i. Those who initially come to CASA often decline as they had misunderstood what CASA's do. We should capture this interest in mentoring and child welfare and provide other places for such people to plug in.
 - ii. Note high number of retirees who want to help; we could channel this interest, too.
- c. General family support through mental health system
 - i. What happens on re-introduction of children into families
 - ii. How can we help guard against burn-out?
 - iii. Who are general community members that come in contact with family members and can provide support?
- d. Can parents who've been through the system be used as peer-supports?
- e. Continue and enhance Grandparenting support group
 - i. If we can provide education to those who might be ambivalent about committing to a new role in the life of a child it might make a difference
- f. Parenting Partners is a resource through the Children's Change Initiative that team member want to see continue.

- g. We would like to see community members help with development of a treatment foster care home in Tillamook County.
- h. Resource development targeted at Family Youth Service Team to help offset costs for mental health treatment for families at risk
- i. Engage faith community – which has expressed interest – in a more deliberate way in the lives of kids and families at risk
- j. FYST can intensify its engagement and planning work with families.
- k. FYST and DHS might benefit from role clarification work
- l. OJD can help bring people to the table, especially judges and others in the court system.
 - i. Shary in her role at CRB staff and local convener is well positioned to do this.
- m. OJD/CRB has access to a variety of data that could shed light on what's happening and help those in the system be proactive and make good decisions.
- n. OJD/CRB can be another player in rallying volunteer support for specific activities
- o. *Addition by MSV based on earlier discussion: create a public awareness campaign; see who can champion this for us.*

In all of these suggested activities, the group wants to be sure we take advantage of what other counties and other states have done related to this work so we don't "reinvent the wheel."

Note from MSV: The team should consider what things on our list might be considered "tinkering" with the existing system, and which ideas would be new and involving new actors. We will want to strive for an action agenda that brings new people and resources and energy to the cause of keeping kids safe while we reduce the number in foster care.

4. Who else needs to be brought to the table?

- a. Youth; contact Jenny Burt (ILP) to identify which youth, Stacey to talk with caseworkers.
- b. Business Community; George & Cindy Lewis (Roby's Furniture), Kathy & Harold Strunk (Creamery), new manager for Fred Meyer. Jim Mud, Economic Development – Chamber of Commerce.
- c. Foster Parents; Jeanine Christensen, Jolyen Mackecknie, Midge Brown
- d. Relatives; Wendy will check in with Grandparent group for a-resources.
- e. Recovery Community; Serenity House (Wendy will follow up).
- f. Education Community; Judy Marvis (High School), Lori Rhoades, Karen (Middle School), Connie Sutton – (Elementary), Lisa (Alternative School), Community College (Sidney Elliott),
- g. YMCA; Jenny Burt

- h. Attorney in the Community; Stacey Rodriguez, Tim Dolan, Donna (Defense Attorney)
- i. Judge; Roll and Trevino,
- j. Faith Community; Harry Hewitt,
- k. Seasonal owners –
- l. Legislative delegation for support; Betsy J., Debbie B, (others)
- m. Civic Groups; AAUW
- n. Former Client; Child Welfare parent.

Note from MSV: Team should consider inviting team members to next two meetings people and organizations who will have something tangible to bring to the action plan we will develop. There will be a long list of people beyond this team who are interested and want to stay close to our work. But let's try and focus the work of the team in our limited meeting availability on those who will contribute, and on those who have not previously been involved.

5. What else do we need?

- a. Clarify on data questions surfaced earlier
- b. Timeline, clarity of goals and benchmarks
- c. Clear agenda for inviting team members
- d. Strategy for inviting

6. Next steps

- Follow-up planning meeting scheduled for 1.16.09 at 11:00
- Next meeting of team will be 2.17.09; plan for a 2-3 hour meeting
- Final meeting in March
- Action plan and Declaration of Cooperation finished by March 31