

*DRAFT – January 20, 2009*

**“Safely Reducing the Number of Children in Foster Care” initiative  
Washington County Meeting Notes  
January 5, 2009**

Following is a summary of the notes from the Washington County foster care discussion in Salem on January 5, 2009. The list of participants is provided in a separate document.

Governor designated Convener: Martha Brooks, Fight Crime State Director

Facilitator: Anne Badgley, Oregon Solutions

Note-taker: Nancy Keeling, Child and Family Services

**Agenda for county discussion:**

1. Define “where we are at”
  - a. Safety model
  - b. Model court
  - c. Agency work
  - d. CASA
  - e. Others:
2. Discuss
  - a. How organizations work with each other
  - b. What does work?
  - c. What doesn’t work?
3. Review the data
4. List other partners
5. Discuss 6 statewide goals

**Discussion:**

1. Define “where we are at”; discuss roles of agencies (what works, what doesn’t work)
  - Agency work/Safety model (Tom Vlahos, CAF Program Manager and others): Tom briefly described the safety model and procedures manual. The process used to be simply an incident report. The new process includes an information gathering process involving the whole family. The goal is to determine if the child can be managed safely in the home? A full family analysis is conducted to allow for a transition to a permanent or on-going worker. The focus is on safety. A protective capacity assessment is made to better able workers to assist the family in the first 30-45 days, rather than simply focusing on the first week after the incident. The goal is to identify how the situation needs to change to safely return the child home. The “safety model” gives workers tools to use to develop plans to safely manage the child while he/she is in the home. Tom noted that Beaverton provides bilingual and bicultural staff to support most of the teen cases in one of the units. Hillsboro has specialized workers in all of the four units. Both processes are designed to limit transfers and reduce delay in the cases. Kim described specialized positions for adoption cases. Tom noted the need to provide for consistency in applying the “safety model” across the state. Jackie asked

about how the system handles siblings. Tom indicated that DHS looks at what is driving the cases and keep the siblings together if possible if the siblings are involved in the same case.

- Model court (Kim Keller, CAF Supervisor): There are model court teams in each county set up to address issues that the Judge mentioned earlier in the day. The team includes: CRB, CASA, two Juvenile Court Judges, one or two attorneys, children and parents, DHS, and supervisors out of Beaverton. The group meets once a month to discuss the court identified issues. The team tries to resolve the issues and reduce the timelines.
- CASA (Sarah Kopplin, CASA Supervisor): The CASA role is to nudge the agency planning along. It is not the job of the CASA representative to find placements. They don't locate the relatives of the child but assist, as advocates for the child, in discussions about possible placements.
- Others issues:
  - a. Oregon Health Program eligibility: Concern was voiced that kids who transition to home from foster care may lose Oregon Health Plan eligibility. There is a very high need for the child to have a transition period when returning home and to continue services as long as necessary.
  - b. Mental Health services: A question was asked about the number of situations where continued mental health services are needed for kids in their own home. Answer was that mental health services can be suggested to the family, but not forced unless these is a safety issue.

2. Review the data (Bill Vlahos, CAF Program Manager):

The data is from 2006. In reviewing the data two issues of ethnic identify are raised: the need to look at the number of Hispanic children in the community and the proportionality issue; the need to find out more information about the Native population. Should the group talk with key representatives from the Oregon tribes? Lots of questions are raised by the data. (Note: see list of information needs below.). Questions that are raised by the data include:

- What factors led to the child being in foster care?
- What does the data tell use about the behaviors of the child(or family situation) that provide us with information about what could be done to prevent placement? Are there generalities that can be gathered from the data?
- What can be done locally to wrap around the existing services?
- A fundamental need is housing assistance for families. Is there a way for the community to help with housing needs?
- It was noted that Washington County has a lower than the state average for entries into the foster care system; perhaps the county should focus on reducing the number of children in care?

**Information Needs identified by the group:**

1. List of team members for the Washington county Model Court
2. Data regarding timing of CASA assignments (when is the advocate assigned). How does the timing of the assignment relate to the outcome for the child?

3. Need clarification of percentages in six goals: 20% of what; what year is baseline?
4. Look at data regarding who is graduating/ staying in/out of foster care so that decisions can be made regarding the most effective use of resources. What are the family factors? For example, who is likely to go home within 60 days?
5. Need additional information regarding federal guidelines that Washington County did/did not meet
6. Need terminology list

**Issues/questions raised:**

1. What do you do when youth is offender?
2. Need more CASA representatives & money to support volunteers
3. When reunify with parents, loose OHP eligibility
4. No mechanism for maintaining foster care if goes to higher level care
5. Can't force family to receive services (mental health assessment) School based health centers?
6. Get Nicole back- doing what she was doing!
7. Not enough people to staff after hours with law enforcement- DHS
8. Expand "family find" program
  - a. At different stages
9. Institutionalize "family finders"
  - a. Need system to respond
10. What can be done to help families to avoid short term placement

**Washington County Plan:**

*Focus on Outcomes:*

1. Improve safety of those who are brought to attention
2. Reduce reliance on out-of-home care (support relative placement)
3. Reduce situation where children languish in care
4. Reduce multiple placements
5. Address disproportionality issue

**Begin identifying County action items related to the statewide goals?**

**Goal #1:** *Safely reduce children in foster care by 20% by 2011.*

- Develop & implement "family find" in Washington County

**Goal #2:** *Increase & implement relative placements by 50%.*

- Develop & implement "family find" in Washington County

**Goal #3:** *Reduce children entering care by 10%.*

- Develop & implement "family find" in Washington County

**Goal #4:** *Increase foster care exits by 20%.*

- Develop & implement "family find" in Washington County

**Goal #5:** *Reduce the disproportionality index for children and families of color.*

**Goal #6:** *Hold the child re-abuse and neglect rate at or below 7.9%.*

**Partners: Potential additional attendees at the next meeting:**

- DHS

- Commission
- Court- Judge Fun
- CASA
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Mental health
- Attorneys (Representing kids, representing parents)
- District Attorney – Jeff ?
- MDT Representative
- DHS staff
- Workers (info re: what is keeping from sending kids home)
- Foster parents (Adoptive, birth)
- Youth
- “Healing start” rep
- Relative worked with in past
- Latino organization
- Native American rep
- Schools
- Suggest that identify other groups, subgroups

**Term list (Martha to provide additional list):**

CRB- Citizen Review Board

MDT- Multi-disciplinary team

ONR or O&R - *Tom to provide acronym*

BHAG- Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal

QSR- Quality Service Review

MSW/ BSW- Masters/ Bachelors of Social Work

PS- Protective Service Worker

PRTS- Psych Residential Treatment

BRS- Behavioral Rehabilitation Services

CASA- Court Appointed Special Advocate

OHP- Oregon Health Plan

CASII- Child & Adolescent Service Intensity Instrument

RFP- Request for Proposal

**Next Steps:**

1. Put together notes (Nancy/ Anne- Martha review)
2. Terms list- Martha
3. Martha send email to all
4. Next meeting- focus on strategies
5. Tom contact Judge Fun reschedule

