

JOIN HANDS FOR CHILDREN
MINUTES FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL ISSUES
JANUARY 21, 2010

Members Present: Jeanine Livingston; Carole Holland; Catherine Lanham (On Phone); Gwen Gua for Carleen Anderson; Rommel Buenafe for Sharon Osborne

Staff Present: Julie Dunnington, Melissa Takade and Benjamin Berres, POC

Others: Dana Phelps, Jann Hoppler and Molly Elliot, DSHS CA; Marna Miller and Stephanie Lee, Washington State Institute of Public Policy; Sandi Triggs, OFM; Michael Bezanson, Washington State Senate; Kelci Karl-Robinson, DSHS; Roberta Nestas, Lutheran Community Services; Wendy Tanner, Community Youth Services; Trudy Marcellay, Office of Indian Policy

Julie Dunnington welcomed advisory committee members and members of the public. She briefly discussed the committee's membership and introduced Gwen Gua and Rommel Buenafe, who were sitting in for absent committee members.

First Agenda Item: Review of the federally and state mandated services for children and families in the child welfare system.

Children's Administration (CA) provided forms containing the actual statutory language for reference. Gua requested that all forms citing any statutory language should include the mandated services contained within the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Dana Phelps of CA described the issues that result from having statutorily mandated services that have very broad language. She explained that while the list of services is very broad, it does give the committee some direction on what services must be available. Carole Holland pointed out that many statutorily required services are provided through traditional casework. Phelps said that it is difficult to cost the variety of services performed by caseworkers by the hour because caseworkers do not track their work to that degree of detail. There are, however, some formulas that help CA to discern some cost data, but she could not get that information before the meeting.

Holland asked which services on the list will be subject to the conversion to performance based contracting. Wendy Tanner of Community Youth Services asked if there has been a decision whether the 30-day caseworker visits by private contractor caseworkers would count toward the state 30-day caseworker visit requirement. Currently, the feds require that the public entity must perform those visits. There was a question about whether statutes are written with "may offer" or "must offer" next to specific services. Phelps explained that it differs from federal to state statute and from service to service. Many people wondered how to ensure that services will still be valid to receive Title IV-B federal funding.

It was asked if contractors would receive a different level of federal funding if they chose a different service array. The department is ensuring that, during the design of the service array, there will be individuals knowledgeable in federal funding who will ensure the state does not jeopardize any federal funds.

Holland asked if there are ways in which the budget is currently constructed that could create obstacles to providing services. She cited the example of funding programs through budget provisos. Phelps agreed that that will be a challenge because budget provisos will limit the flexibility of master contractors to provide certain services, which will require them to carefully

track and provide the services listed in the budget proviso. Holland also asked when the committee could expect a more defined plan from CA.

Jeanine Livingston asked whether CA had finalized the decision to use the four service bundles described in their major presentation during the December full committee meeting: family support; placement, reunification and permanency; treatment settings; and transitional services for youth. She was troubled by how few options there have been to offer input on those four service bundles and wants to make sure that there is greater availability afforded to offer input. Phelps said that from the initial feedback, there is positive feedback on those service bundles.

Holland requested that CA make public an update on this information as well as communicate the feelings of frustration from stakeholder groups who wish to offer feedback on this model but have not had the opportunity to Asst. Secretary Revels-Robinson.

Phelps and Jann Hoppler said that the schedule of meetings is posted to the Internet. Dunnington added that she will post the link on the Join Hands for Children website. There has been only one service provider meeting to date and that took place in Yakima. So far, the feedback meetings have been held over the Web-X medium. Gua also said that she also wants greater opportunity to provide feedback. Holland recognized these concerns and said that this entire process is still in its early phases and there is much refinement that must occur. Phelps concurred. Advisory committee members were concerned at the amount of work that must take place in a very short time span.

BRIEF BREAK – INTRODUCTIONS

Second Agenda Item: Review of services currently being offered by Children's Administration

The committee reviewed two documents prepared by CA. The first document was titled Children's Administration – Contracted Services. The second document – Service Description by PI – itemized every CA-contracted service and included a range of cost information: expenditure and case numbers by region; estimated range of payment; payment method; the Governor's budget reduction; and the source of the funding.

Phelps explained what is possible to discern from each of those documents. She noted that the Contracted Service document now lists the statutory citation. Kelci Karl-Robinson explained that even though there are statutory references, they don't always mandate that the service is required, they just provide guidance on how the service should be provided. Gua requested that ICWA requirements and services be listed on every official document. Phelps explained that these two documents are not currently aligned with the four service bundles that CA is contemplating.

The committee asked a number of questions around how the service bundle divisions will make sense when overlaid on these lists. The example on which the advisory committee focused was the BRS system. There were some comments in support of this model and some comments expressing caution.

Roberta Nestas of Lutheran Community Services commented on the large number of psychological contracts held by CA, saying that it greatly distorts how the total number of contracts is viewed. Phelps said that she calculated the total number of contracts for services for children and it is actually 1,317. Hoppler added that there are some additional contracts above that number, but that those are not for actual services for clients. Tanner of Community Youth Services asked how master contractors would be more effective at handling contracts

than the department. Carol Holland hopes that the reduced number of contracts will help to de-fragmentize the system.

Third Agenda Item: Update on list of core services being developed by Advisory Committee on Legal/Practice Issues

No update at this time.

Fourth Agenda Item: Children's Administration update on cost of current services

Karl-Robinson presented the Service Description by PI document and briefly explained how she was able to determine the information contained on that document. She gave one caveat that some of the case counts are from FamLink.

For the next meeting, there was a request for some information and instruction on how to draw down Title IV-B money from the federal government.

Fifth Agenda Item: Children's Home Society presentation on core services and costs associated with services

This presentation was postponed until the next meeting, when Sharon Osborne would be able to attend and present.

Sixth Agenda Item: Public Comment

The advisory committee opened up the floor for public comment.

Tanner had a number of other concerns that centered primarily around the costs of transitioning to the master contractor model. Holland responded by saying that this advisory committee will identify and address some of those costs in the near future. She said that she expected there will be some funding allocated for administrative costs, but there will be an expectation that master contractors be efficient with that funding. Nestas added that having a low administrative cost doesn't always correlate with high efficiency. She offered to circulate to the group a recent report based on a provider survey about service costs. Lastly, the advisory committee hoped that the committee consultants could provide some additional information on the costing models.

Holland thanked everyone for their hard work and attendance and adjourned the meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNED