

JOIN HANDS FOR CHILDREN
MINUTES FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SITE SELECTION AND TRANSITION
ISSUES

February 11, 2010

Members Present: Jeanine Livingston; Nancy Sutton; Mark Courtney; Tommy Williams; Mary Jeanne Smith; Brenda Lopez; Joe Mienko; Trudy Marcellay (on phone)

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

Others: Beth Canfield; Foster Parents Association of Washington; Stephanie Lee and Marna Miller, Washington State Institute of Public Policy; Lynnette Jordan, United Indians of All Tribes

Committee Co-Chairs Jeanine Livingston and Nancy Sutton conducted the welcome and committee/public introductions.

First Agenda Item: Review of the presentation of the quarterly report to the Children's Legislative Oversight Committee meeting.

Julie Dunnington reviewed the committee's recommendations and discussed the legislators' reactions. She mentioned that Senator Hargrove and Representative Kagi requested a follow-up meeting to discuss the recommendations in greater detail. The recommendations included: adding a foster youth as a voting member to the full CWTDC; extending the Phase I contract implementation period into a 6-month rolling period; extending the period where cases may be transferred to private case management agencies to six months; and requesting a 3-year demonstration site evaluation.

In response to the CWTDC recommendations, two bills were introduced, incorporating most of the committee's recommendations—Senate Bill 6832 and House Bill 3121. The Senate Bill incorporates all of the committee's recommendations except increasing the length of the evaluation period. The Senate bill also clarifies the definition of supervising agency to state that Indian tribes can provide their own child welfare programs. The bill also states that the implementation of performance-based contracts and selection of the demonstration sites must be done in a manner that maintains the care and placement authority of the DSHS at a level that does not jeopardize federal funding eligibility, and that also provides flexibility and maximizes federal funding opportunities. And, it states that for the purchases of child welfare services through performance-based contracts, including any expansion or continuation of the demonstration sites, after July 2, 2015, state employees, along with private nonprofit organizations and Indian tribes, are to be preferred contractors over private, for-profit entities. The House bill includes all of the committee's recommendations, but in contrast with the Senate bill, it pushes the beginning and end of Phase II back one year to allow for a longer planning period.

Second Agenda Item: Overview of Meeting with the Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA)

The discussion then shifted to review the results of the meeting with RDA at Children's Administration headquarters the day before. Sutton explained that during the meeting, the advisory committee had to further define some of the populations and characteristics of the

demonstration sites before RDA could continue working. The advisory committee also directed RDA to ensure that pilot sites be contiguous and that they incorporate both rural and urban areas. The advisory committee is going to meet with RDA in Olympia again before the next Site Selection meeting and asked that Matt Orme of Partners for Our Children assess the number of cases that open to a voluntary placement from July of 2009 onward and to review the baselines for permanency outcomes at the 18-month point-in-time.

Third Agenda Item: Further Discussion on Selecting Sites

The committee discussed the potential impact of changing the length of the demonstration site evaluation or changing the desired effects size on the overall yearly sample size needed for the demonstration sites. There was a longer conversation over whether the committee wished to proceed with using a 10% change in outcomes as the predetermined threshold for success. Some committee members were unclear if the committee had previously voted to move forward using a 10% change in outcomes and whether that threshold should be used to determine success for every outcome measure.

The advisory committee talked about the need to choose a few key outcomes for each major segment of children in the system. Each of these key outcomes could then be used to aid in scaling the size of the demonstration sites. For instance, the committee could choose the rate of reunification among children in out-of-home care as the key outcome for children in out-of-home care.

After a short discussion, the committee agreed to move forward with using a 10% increase in the rate of reunification for children in out-of-home care as one key measure of system change. The committee also determined that they wanted to choose an outcome for children who enter in-home placements. Unfortunately, the committee did not know the number of referrals that open into in-home cases. The committee decided that children using Family Reconciliation Services (FRS), a voluntary service offered to families seeking help in managing family disputes, should be incorporated in the population of children that don't enter out-of-home care. They agreed to this because these families also require case-management services. Mark Courtney advocated to not scaling the demonstration sites based on statistically rare outcomes such as re-entry rates for children that exit out-of-home care. He suggested that a third potential outcome measuring permanence could look at 18-month outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

There was a question whether the demonstration sites would continue operating past the end of the evaluation period. The committee's interpretation of the law is that the demonstrations would continue until a decision is handed down from the governor.

The committee then discussed caseworker training practices and how that relates to the hand-off of case management to private agencies. The committee was curious whether private contractors will have access to CA's Academy training program. Sutton said that Academy is likely to change forms over the course of this process. The committee also wondered whether private contractors would have access to the FamLink system. Livingston added that it would be a good idea to reflect back on the original charge of the advisory committee for guidance before the committee embarks on any new transition issue discussions. Courtney said that the committee is best-suited to air any transition issues rather than prepare detailed prescriptions. The advisory committee also agreed to review advisory committee expectations within the statute in preparation of such a discussion.

There were some concerns from advisory committee members around CA's construction of the contracts and the relatively small number of times to provide feedback.

Public Comment

There was no public comment. Meeting adjourned.