

JOIN HANDS FOR CHILDREN
MINUTES FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION ISSUES
FEBRUARY 2, 2010

Committee Members Present: Ken Nichols; Maureen McGrath; Onalee Stewart; Gwendolyn Lawson Townsend; Mark Courtney; Debra Ellsworth; Steve Hassett; Roy Hogan; Tom Crofoot, alternate for Marian Harris; Nancy Dufraine.

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

Others: Jann Hoppler, DSHS CA; Marna Miller and Stephanie Lee, Washington State Institute of Public Policy; Carrie Whitaker, Braam staff; Scott Hanauer and Trudy Soucup, Community Youth Services; Lee Grogg, Ryther Child Center; Alexia Everett, College Success Foundation; Danny Howe and Makeba Green, Children's Home Society of Washington; Nancy Roberts Brown, Catalyst for Kids

Brief Note: The Advisory Committee on Outcomes and Evaluation Issues and the Advisory Committee on Legal and Practice Issues met jointly on February 2, 2010 to coordinate efforts and to share information on the progress of each advisory committee. For the first hour and a half of the joint meeting, the two advisory committees met separately before joining in a group discussion and presentation. After noon, the Advisory Committee on Outcomes and Evaluation Issues committee adjourned and left the Advisory Committee on Legal and Practice Issues to continue their work independently.

Co-chair Ken Nichols called the Outcomes and Evaluation Issues meeting to order and conducted introductions. Committee moved to the first agenda item.

First Agenda Item: Review of the Glossary

The committee reviewed the glossary and Mark Courtney asked if there were any additions. Nichols reviewed common terms, such as "baseline" and "performance indicators". Courtney suggested adding "measures under Braam". The committee concurred, and Courtney will have Ben Berres of Partners for Our Children (who created the document) add the term to the document. Steve Hassett asked if these terms are specific for the document or if they were standard. Nichols answered that it was probably a little of both. A question was asked if these are the terms that will be used in the performance-based contracts. Nichols confirmed the terms would be used. Tom Crofoot asked that "disproportionality" and "disparity" be added. Hassett asked that the term "performance-based" be added. Courtney said we'll make an attempt, but it's difficult to be general enough to work. Courtney will ask Berres to define with some generality, but specific enough for our uses. Nichols closed this agenda item.

Second agenda item: Review of the Next Draft of the Outcomes Document.

Nichols asked for comments on the draft. Courtney went through the document and reviewed his additions and changes. Hassett asked if the data would look at tribal affiliation or ethnicity. Courtney said, for research purposes, he has to look at it by tribal affiliation. The AGO views it as more an ethnicity question – a child could be part of an unrecognized tribe so they might use self-identification. Courtney has no problem with broadening it, but in terms of performance-based contracts, the data gathering must be done carefully. We want to honor those who self-define, but with performance-based contracts we have to be careful.

Nancy Dufraine brought up that CA policy recognizes other tribes (such as Canadian First Nations), more broadly than the federal definition. Courtney proposed that we put tribal affiliation in quote marks to make it clear that we want to view it broadly, but also recognize we need to know who's registered. Courtney and Berres will craft this language. The committee agreed.

Courtney went over the Well-Being section and wanted to make sure he captured the committee's concerns. Hassett proposed text be added that puts the outcomes into contract expectations, in clear language. Julie Dunnington added that David Marshall hopes to put together a draft of benchmarks to measure outcomes. Mark Courtney will add a sentence recognizing "obstacles to well-being" to put into contracts.

Gwendolyn Townsend wanted to recognize the work Courtney put into the document. On the fourth page, last bullet, she proposed deleting the word "some" in the part reading "There is some interest in considering ... culturally competent service provision..." because she thinks there's more than just "some" interest. Courtney said that Marian Harris' document on disproportionality addresses this concern. A concern was brought up on the third page, well-being outcomes, where it addresses placement but not recruitment. The law is around recruitment. Courtney was trying to come up with an outcome, not a process, and recruitment is a process.

Townsend also requested to delete the word "fictive" for the term "fictive kin". Hassett concurred because it's not the language in the law. Debra Ellsworth pointed out that "suitable other" is commonly used. Hassett explained there are 3 categories of placement: licensed, relative, and suitable other. For example, a godparent is a "kinship" placement. A far-removed relative is a kinship placement. The legal definition of relative has been broadened – it goes out as far as second cousin. Suitable others can include kin but also others. Courtney will remove "fictive" and replace with "kin/suitable other person".

Onalee Stewart asked to reword the paragraph regarding placement with a culturally compatible family. She pointed out that sometimes culturally compatible is not in the best interest of the child. Mark Courtney had to add that language because of the law and because outcomes are being compiled on the aggregate level. The outcome Stewart is talking about is on the individual level and is good practice. Courtney appreciated her comment, but for our purposes it might not be feasible.

The advisory committee was curious whether outcomes should focus on the recruitment of the foster home rather than the placement of children. Mark Courtney said that placement is a better measure but that the state needs to keep track of both.

Maureen McGrath had an issue with regard to performance-based contracts and placement. She said there could be a perception that the onus is on the private agency. Hassett concurred and added that there's room for MEPA violations. He asked, with aggregate measures, how do you apply it to private contractors. Courtney said that we have to look at this as a system and we have to decide this as an issue. McGrath asked that the committee highlight this as something to be addressed.

Courtney said that, at this point, we're not clear about the scope of the contracts. When the CA comes up with the plan, we can provide the feedback. Nichols recognized the comments.

Townsend asked if we know who is charged with recruitment, the CA or the master contractor. The committee doesn't know this yet, but if they can find this out, then they'll know more about any potential MEPA problems.

Third Agenda Item: Review of Marian Harris' Document Describing Issues Pertaining to Racial Disproportionality.

Tom Crofoot, Marian Harris' alternate, presented the information. McGrath asked what was seen regarding disparity in services. From an anecdotal viewpoint, what did he see was that social workers didn't want to see black families and tended to disparage culturally diverse service providers. Also, children didn't see anything at mental health agencies that reflect them. Roy Hogan said that this is extremely bothersome to him and is very troubled by this anecdotal viewpoint.

Hassett asked a general question regarding children from poor families and the rate of referral. He asked if there was anecdotal evidence – if you look at it on an income-based level – how does the rate of referral for poor white families compare with poor African-American families. Crofoot said that race is still a factor. That's the problem with disproportionality, somebody is not getting services, then the resources get bent and the people with greatest need don't get the resources.

Hassett asked if a tribal child is counted in the study if she or he is taken care of within the tribal system. Crofoot said a lot of children are out-of-state tribal children, in which case, things can get confusing. Dufraine said there were a couple of issues: Washington State recognizes that, even if the tribe has legal care, they still access services from the state system. There's a concern when we move to performance-based contracts: will the children in the tribal court system have access to the state resources? How will the contracts be able to communicate that these children have access to state services? This is particularly important because Washington State tribal children may constitute 30 to 50 percent of children in care - many of whom are out-of-state tribal members. A Washington state tribe also has to follow federal laws and does not have jurisdiction on out-of-state tribe members. We have to provide services no matter where child is domiciled.

Public Comment

Nichols opened up the floor to public comment. Scott Hanauer of Community Youth Services had a question regarding double-standards and requested that the advisory committee contemplate outcomes for master contractors that are *achievable*. He is also concerned where the committee is in developing outcomes for Phase I, given the upcoming deadline, and wonders where the funding is coming from. Nichols acknowledged that it's a huge challenge and they'd do their best.

For the next meeting, the committee will discuss Harris' document in more detail. Hassett suggested making someone from Braam a committee member.

BREAK – JOINT MEETING WITH LEGAL AND PRACTICE ISSUES COMMITTEE

After the break, Courtney presented the Outcomes document to the larger group. This document contains measurable indicators in the domains of Safety, Permanency and Stability, and Well Being. He described some of the other components of the Outcomes Document including the sections outlining the processes that will be used to address differences in

outcomes by age or by race/ethnicity. He also elaborated on some of the difficulties in producing information on well being. He said that the committee had made the distinction between the outcomes indicators and the process and quality of care indicators, which is why there are no indicators that pertain to the standards of care. After speaking more broadly about the document, he read each individual outcome indicator to garner feedback from the larger group.

When reading through the Outcomes Document, the committee raised concerns about many of the indicators. For the Safety domain, the indicators will roughly approximate a picture of how the system is performing in preventing child abuse and neglect. There were only a couple minor edits made to this section. On the fifth bullet of the Safety Indicators section, Nancy Foll commented that the “other” category among the types of perpetrators is likely to be too broad. She suggested that the indicator also measure abuse perpetrated by other, unrelated adults that may be living in the home. There was a suggestion to create an indicator to measure self-harm among foster youth. Committee members weren’t sure whether to add that indicator to the Safety or the Well Being domain. Courtney added that there is a measure contained within the National Youth in Transition Database that tracks risky behaviors that could potentially answer this question.

In the Permanency and Stability domain, committee members were curious why the seventh bullet, the indicator measuring out-of-home placement instability, used six months as the length of time to be measuring multiple placements instead of twelve months, per se. Courtney responded by saying that there is a categorical difference in the types of moves that occur in the first six months of care than in the second six months.

In the ninth bullet that measures compliance with ICWA laws, committee members also wanted to include compliance with “tribal-state agreements.” Hassett suggested that the committee also add a component the bullet that would measure *timely* compliance with these laws.

For the Well Being domain, there were a few suggestions for revision. The first revision changed the term “fictive kin” to “relatives as defined by law.” For the next change, like the revision made to the indicator measuring ICWA compliance in the Permanency and Stability section, the committee added “tribal-state” compliance. In the very last section of the document, there are three bullets that state the continuing hopes for measuring aspects of child and family well being. In the last of those bullets, there is a statement that says that there is “some interest in considering some measure(s) of culturally competent service provision.” The committee suggested that the word “some” be omitted to reflect the fact that there is substantial committee interest in this issue.

There was a discussion whether bullets can be included in multiple sections, with particular reference to the bullet measuring ICWA and tribal-state agreement compliance. Townsend asked why some bullets could be included in multiple sections, but others, like a indicator measuring self-harm, cannot. Some committee members responded by saying that the bullet pertaining to ICWA should be in both categories because there are components of ICWA that have statutory requirements that pertain to well being and some that pertain to permanency and stability.

The conversation switched over to the issue of self-harm. Hassett and Courtney said that this issue shouldn’t be ignored, but that it is likely to be beyond the capacity of the current data collection system to reliably measure the incidence of self-harm. Courtney reiterated that the inclusion of any outcome indicator should be predicated on the existence and availability of reliable data. Other committee members were concerned about unintended consequences

whereby this could inadvertently create another label, much like the Sexually Aggressive Youth, that would follow children as they grow older.

There was also a discussion whether the outcomes measures should look at the individual practices and models of contractors. Some committee members as well as members of the public were concerned how it would be possible to measure the success of the individual contractors' models. Hassett said that it is probably too early to be able measure some of these differences.

Public Comment

Alexia Everett of the College Success Foundation hopes that at the end of the evaluation, the state will be able to determine to the effectiveness of services for children. She also was curious whether we would be examining the effectiveness of the programs, or just how well services are rendered.

Makeba Greene of the Children's Home Society of Washington asked how the state would be able to produce data on the services rendered. Committee members agreed that this will be an issue that has to be addressed. Jann Hopper did say that the case management activities would be entered into FamLink by private agencies.

After finishing this presentation, the Advisory Committee on Outcomes and Evaluation Issues adjourned for the day.