

**SITE SELECTION AND TRANSITION ISSUES ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO
THE CHILD WELFARE TRANSFORMATION DESIGN COMMITTEE**

MINUTES FROM THE November 12, 2009 Committee Meeting

Advisory Committee Members Present: Jeanine Livingston, co-chair; Nancy Sutton, co-chair; Mark Courtney; Trudy Marcellay for Jerry Meninick; Joe Mienko; Brenda Lopez, Mary Jeanne Smith, Tommy Williams (by phone) and John Seals

Staff Present: Julie Dunnington, Partners for Our Children (POC); Jennifer Strus, Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee

Others Present: Roxanne Lieb, Washington Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP); Marna Miller, WSIPP; Ben Berres, POC, Fred Wulczyn (by phone), Patrick Dowd, Office of Public Defense

The co-chairs began the meeting by having Fred Wulczyn discuss some models for evaluation. He began by indicating that the intent of the legislation is that by using services organizations somewhat differently outcomes for families and children will be improved. The question is how to create a way to evaluate the demo sites that shows a clear and unvarnished comparison against business as usual.

Mark Courtney said the legislation requires a comparison of supervising agencies with Children's Administration (CA) in the demo sites. The question is what is a "site"? How does one compare outcomes given geographical area differences. There followed a discussion of assigning cases to both the public and private agencies in the demo sites on a lottery basis and the fact that a comparison of outcomes in this situation is a lot easier.

Jeanine Livingston indicated that if a change in the business model is contemplated then she would like an apples to apples comparison if both the state and the private agencies adopted the same business model.

Mark indicated that the legislation contemplates that the primary change which is the case management function, will be handed over to private agencies in the demo sites. What is the best way to answer the question of who does it better? Also there is a question of service delivery. From an evaluation standpoint, the lottery assignment method is hands down better than the geographic method of doing it. What are the advantages of lottery v. non-lottery? As the cases are being transferred, and part of the caseload is being transferred, it is easier to implement with the lottery system because if the evaluation indicates that the private agencies do not do a good job, then still have the CA infrastructure.

Fred indicated that the operational question is whether you can reliably run two equal systems in the same geographical area because it's an artificial child welfare system because when you go to scale will be operating themselves and whether that has impact on the success.

If you do random assignment of cases then will always have an historical comparison of data. Operationally how do you set up the system when the two systems operate in the same context and what influence will that have on the experiment. A lottery is good to test clinical intervention.

Mark indicated that there should be more than one private agency operating in the sites.

Fred indicated that another way to evaluate is to use an historical comparison. In this method, one compares the site against itself over time. For all the outcomes one is looking at, one looks to see if the overall performance of the system improved. Need to look at before and after data. The problem with this method is if the children receiving services in the historical period are different than the children receiving services in the project year one would need to control for this by statistical adjustment. If economic times are different than during the historical period for example, this contextual variable needs to be taken into account when looking at outcomes.

Nancy Sutton asked whether changing the paradigm (policy changes, Famlink) so would historical comparison really work?

Mark indicated the historical context is generally a weak way to look at this. Fred agreed - it's a balancing act. It is hard to control for everything we would have to control for. The lottery assignment is a better way to go but it is not without its own flaws.

Joe Mienko pointed out that the lottery system does not prevent us from doing a before and after comparison anyway.

Fred indicated that in a historical model evaluation, we would use a risk adjusting caseload and this would create an apples to apples comparison by statistical control.

Mark indicated that we may not have comparable data to risk adjust because of Famlink v. CAMIS data. There could be a differential effect as a result of the demonstration site.

Fred indicated that one could do an historical model that compares out state against another state rather than against itself. Random assignment must work as a true random assignment. If we use this method must do so because it has certain virtues. Random assignment is hard to pull off and need to assess if can pull it off. If willing to do the work necessary to do random assignment then should do it. Will take work to manage the randomness of the assignment.

Marna Miller indicated that she ran some numbers, and the caseload size to achieve statistical significance is fairly large. She would need 824 children in each demo site and an equal number of children in the comparison group to meet the statistical requirements in the bill. She would need an equal number of children in the second demo site. Marna indicated that she would want a

demo site on the western side of the state and one on the eastern side. Within the demo site she would have the public agency and several private agencies and would compare then with each other.

Jeanine asked what recommendation does this committee need to make for TDC to request legislative changes? Her question is is one demo site enough because with Marna's numbers needed for both sites, half the caseload in out of home care is being moved to the private sector.

Marna stated that WSIPP could probably live with one sample and divide them in half with 400 in a rural area and 400 in an urban area. You do run the risk of saying that not sure if the program would operate better in one area and not in another.

Joe stated that the demo site should be in one legal system (jurisdiction) because courts handle cases so differently. The problem is that only King and Pierce have large enough children in out of home care to keep the demo site in the same legal jurisdiction.

Marna went through her handout entitled, "Estimated Sample Size for Sites - 2106."

Dana Phelps discussed Phase I of the implementation of the bill which is CA's conversion of its contracts to performance-based contracts. Although she received additional direction since the last committee meeting, it is still an iterative process. The term "lead agency" for PBC's is misleading. A lead agency is an agency that does case management and for Phase I is CA. Who the service agency will be is the question - improve access and get a better match to the child/family needs for services.

Service processes - looking at 4 groups: 1. kids receiving voluntary services who do not come into care; 2. children in care who can be safely reunified as quickly as possible; 3. BRS/high needs children in out of home care; 4. Foster children aging out of foster care. CA would like to measure change that PBCs could cause in these four areas although these areas are subject to change.

CA needs to figure out a plan to communicate with its staff and the community and providers about Phase I. It is important to understand there are 2 phases to the implementation of 2106 and Phase 2 is the implementation of the demonstration sites. Dana indicated that CA needs to move toward more comprehensive contracts with its service partners. The vision of how this will work is the service agency will work with the CA social worker to assist in picking the appropriate service for the family. The service agency would have responsibility for building a network of services and this model puts the burden for access to services on another's shoulders not the social workers. Another benefit of bundling services is the opportunity for efficiencies.

Joe suggested that CA send out a survey to the social workers to see how they would feel about this model. One of the long standing issues has been that 50% of the services needed by families is not on the list of services for which CA contracts. While the idea of one stop shopping for social workers is

a good idea, how would this be assured, especially when two of the main services in demand – mental health and substance abuse treatment – are not even paid for by CA.

Dana indicated that CA wants to move more towards a case rate system rather than fee for service. CA needs to have several focus groups with social workers, supervisors, families, children, tribes, providers so that these groups can have an authentic voice in the process.

There was a discussion about the number of cases needed in each site and the impact that could have on families, particularly when ongoing cases are transferred.

Joe suggested that we put numbers of children in out of home care on a map so the committee could better gauge where sites might be. Look by office but also by county as well.

Part of the PBC goal is to fill in service gaps that currently exist – according to Denise Revels-Robinson as communicated to the co-chairs via conference call.

Joe moved and Mary Jeanne seconded that the Site Selection and Transition Issues Advisory Committee recommend to the TDC that CA and supervising agencies would both be assigned cases in the same site on a randomly selected basis. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Patrick Dowd from the Office of Public Defense commented that in selecting the demo sites the existence of the parent representation program in the site areas should be considered. The program is in 25 counties and OPD is uniquely situated to work with parents' attorneys to facilitate changes.

For the next meeting, a map of Washington (including county boundaries) will be provided to include the following information:

- The number of children in out of home care for more than 7 days by office;
- OPD site operations by county;
- Location of Tribes;
- DSHS regional boundaries; and
- Removal statistics (by location).

Also at the next meeting, the Site Selection Advisory Committee will decide on what recommendations regarding legislative change to make to the TDC. Also, the advisory committee will discuss the question of recruitment of foster homes, both private and public, under the definition of “site” adopted by the committee at this meeting.