



**Washington State Supreme Court
Commission on Children in Foster Care
December 10, 2018
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Judge Kitty-Ann van Doorninck, Superior Court Judges' Association
Ms. Jody Becker, DCYF, Commission Co-Chair
Ms. Raven Arroway-Healing, NW Intertribal Council
Mr. Jim Bamberger, Office of Civil Legal Aid
Mr. Mike Canfield, Co-Chair of Foster Parents Association of Washington State
Ms. Jeannie Kee, Foster Youth Alumni Representative
Ms. Jill Malat, Office of Civil Legal Aid (designee for Jim Bamberger)
Ms. Tonia McClanahan, Parent Advocate Representative
Mr. Martin Mueller, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (designee for Chris Reykdal)
Mr. Ryan Murrey, Executive Director, Washington State CASA
Ms. Carrie Wayno, Attorney General's Office (designee for Bob Ferguson)

Members Not Present

Justice Bobbe Bridge (ret.), Washington State Supreme Court, Commission Co-Chair
Rep. Ruth Kagi, Washington State House of Representatives
Ms. Joanne Moore, Washington State Office of Public Defense
Senator Steve O'Ban, Washington State Senate

Guests

Ms. Cindy Bricker, Sr. Court Program Analyst, AOC
Ms. Lorrie Thompson, Sr. Communications Officer, AOC
Ms. Sophia Byrd McSherry, Deputy Director, Washington State Office of Public Defense
Ms. Lauren Frederick, Public Policy and Advocacy Manager, Mockingbird Society
Ms. Jolie Bwiza, Tacoma Chapter Leader, Mockingbird Youth Network
Mr. Nick Dominique, MSW Intern, Mockingbird Society
Mr. Trey Rabun, Family Outreach Specialist, Amara
Ms. Peggy Carlson, Program Supervisor Foster Care Education, OSPI
Ms. Gina Cumbo, Project Director, Center for Children and Youth Justice
Mr. Patrick Dowd, Office of Family and Children's Ombuds
Mr. David Del Villar Fox, DCYF

Staff Present

Ms. Akanksha Jayanthi, CCFC Staff Intern, Center for Children & Youth Justice
Ms. Mary Lou Boles, AOC

Call to Order

Judge Kitty-Ann van Doorninck called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm. She noted she was filling in for Justice Bridge who was at a meeting in Washington, D.C. for the National Advisory Committee of Sex Trafficking of Children in the United States. Judge van Doorninck welcomed all Commission members and guests and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Judge van Doorninck invited a motion to approve the March 2018 and May 2018 minutes, with a few edits for typos. Mr. Mike Canfield moved to approve both sets of meeting minutes. Ms. Carrie Wayno seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Announcements

Judge van Doorninck formally announced the Commission meeting dates for 2019, which will be held on Monday March 18, Monday May 13, and Monday December 9. She also reminded members that Commission members attend the Foster Youth Alumni Summit, the dates of which are forthcoming.

DCYF Reorganization and Leadership Updates

Ms. Jody Becker provided the Commission with updates from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

DCYF officially became an agency July 1. In her role as Deputy Secretary for Programs of DCYF, Ms. Becker oversees the child welfare system and early learning system. Next July, the juvenile justice system will also fall under her purview. Additionally, part of the transition included dividing the state into six regions rather than three regions as it was previously.

Ms. Becker announced her leadership team. Ms. Connie Lambert-Eckel is the Assistant Secretary of Child Welfare Field Operations, where she manages the six regions. This work includes trying to equalize capacities and resources across the state. Steven Grilli is Director of Child Welfare Programs, which was formerly known as the Program and Policy Office. Mr. Grilli began in this role at the end of July. Judy King is Director of Family Support Programs, which encompasses home visiting work and the agency's work on child abuse and prevention and early services for infants and toddlers. Kelli Bohanan is Director of Early Learning Programs, which includes the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). Greg Williamson is the Director of the Office of Youth Engagement, a new office implemented July 1. One of the reasons for creating the office is to find new ways to incorporate youth voice in how the department develops and designs services to meet their needs. Tom Pennella is a director of MENTOR Washington, a public-private partnership with Costco. Mr. Pennella works across the state with mentoring programs and with system agencies. Marybeth Queral will begin a position as assistant secretary of the juvenile justice system on July 1, 2019. Andi May is Ms. Becker's executive assistant.

Ms. Becker also mentioned Heather Moss is Deputy Secretary of Operations and Infrastructure, which encompasses IT, human resources, and all administrative functions of the department. She said the department has done a lot of work in the operations and infrastructure space, particularly as they had very few HR staff at the onset of the transition. Marcos Rodriguez was named Director of Human Resources and is helping build the HR infrastructure.

DCYF has launched efforts in partnership with the courts around the Family First Prevention Services Act, in addition to work with Child and Family Services Review.

Ms. Becker noted the department is hiring a faculty services administrator to do project management, coordination, facilitation, and cross-systems work. Previously, this work was done internally by existing staff. The position closes December 26.

DCYF submitted decision packages to the Office of Financial Management focused on successfully implementing Family First and other prevention work, as well as helping the department deal with resource and capacity issues in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

The agency has contracted with Deloitte Consulting for change management and leadership training and development. This work will continue through the beginning of the transition next year when the juvenile justice system and the Child Care Subsidy Program become part of DCYF (they currently are in the Department of Social and Health Services).

The Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability is leading work on performance-based contracting and innovative services. The office is mapping out the existing landscape and services between the former Department of Early Learning, Children's Administration, and the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration to better understand what is offered in terms of early intervention and prevention for young children up to young adults. Pending the results of this effort, there may be additional organizational alignment to streamline DCYF's capacity to offer a full array of services for children, youth, and families in the state.

Ms. Becker said she and the DCYF staff are all learning what it is like to be part of a department with a new mission, vision, and core set of values. The agency is working to anchor its culture in the following five values: integrity, inclusion, compassion, respect, and transparency. She said they intentionally left these words undefined as the agency is engaging in conversations internally and externally to figure out how to be the agency the state wants and needs.

Ms. Raven Arroway-Healing asked who in the agency is in charge of tribal relations. Ms. Becker said Tleena Ives is the Director of Tribal Relations. Previously, tribal liaisons in the field reported through their regional administrators, but with the reorganization and new DCYF, tribal liaisons will report centrally through Ms. Ives. The hope is this structure will lead to a more coordinated and consistent method to work with tribal nations. Ms. Ives will report directly to Secretary Ross Hunter, but is an integral part of Ms. Becker's team.

Ms. Lorrie Thompson asked who DCYF's communication contact is. Ms. Becker said Debra Johnson was named Director of Communications. Ms. Johnson has hired some team members and has a communications plan focused on branding and finding ways to improve the website and communicate the agency's mission and vision. Additionally, the agency hopes to have a logo instead of just using the state seal.

DCYF Budgetary and Legislative Priorities

Judge van Doorninck asked Ms. Becker about the agency's budget priorities in the decision package submitted to the OFM. Ms. Becker first mentioned Rep. Ruth Kagi's efforts to right-size caseloads on the front end of the child welfare system, as well as provider rates, particularly in the Behavior Rehabilitation Services realm. The agency has held meetings with providers over the last few months to help figure out provider rates, and it hired Public Consulting Group, Inc. to conduct a study on such rates. Ms. Becker also noted efforts to assess capacity needs in the

state for youth placed out-of-state and how to serve youth placed out of state as they come back home to Washington.

The agency is also exploring how to work with the home visiting and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program expansion to bring more educational and prevention services through home visiting in the state.

Ms. Becker said DCYF also introduced a package regarding staffing in the juvenile justice system, as well as making sure the state is fully adhering to the Prison Rape Elimination Act. These concerns are particularly salient given the state's recent move expanding the jurisdiction of the juvenile court up to 25-year-olds in some cases, Ms. Becker said.

Overall, DCYF is focused on service array expansion and addressing workloads and caseloads, Ms. Becker said. Much of this work requires innovative thinking to address remaining challenges. She said the agency is exploring how to build up the system to also respond to new opportunities.

Ms. Jill Malat mentioned that funding for the Every Student Succeeds Act Title IV Part A (4A) which provides flexible block grants for states to allocate to school districts will be available for prevention as well as for people already in dependency proceedings.

Ms. Becker said DCYF has been hosting community forums around the state focused on Family First and some of the prevention measures and efforts regarding this legislation. She said all are welcome to join those meetings to learn about Family First, but more importantly to offer the agency feedback and ideas on what they should be thinking about in terms of prevention.

DCYF has also applied for a preschool development grant from the federal government, which the agency intends to use to study the intersection between early learning and childhood and the risk of being involved in the child welfare system.

Family Reunification Day Recap

Judge van Doorninck asked Ms. Lorrie Thompson to provide updates and a recap of Family Reunification Day.

Ms. Thompson said the launch of Family Reunification Day overall went very well. She said National Adoption Day has received a lot of press and attention over the years, so the Commission was interested in elevating Family Reunification Day to that same level. While Ms. Thompson said this year's Family Reunification Day is considered a soft launch because of all the work in assembling a steering committee and figuring out logistics and messaging, she ultimately sees it as a long term effort.

The committee focused on courts who were having their own Family Reunification Day celebrations to build connections and eventually create a statewide event. This year, Ms. Thompson said much of the work was tracking down courts in various counties just to see who was celebrating. She acknowledged the role the Office of Public Defense played in finding that information, as well as parent representatives, including Ms. Tonia McClanahan and her work in Mason County. Ms. Thompson mentioned San Juan County held a Family Reunification Day event after hearing AOC was engaged in this effort.

Washington Courts launched a Family Reunification Month webpage providing links to events in various counties, as well as a link to the proclamation the Commission previously made declaring June as Family Reunification Month.

Ms. Thompson also discussed Family Reunification Day's overarching goal of changing the narrative around families in dependency proceedings. So often the narrative focuses on negative events and headlines, but she urged shifting the story to one of hope and redemption. Such a framework can help garner community support and show families involved in dependency court that they can be successful like others in similar situations.

Ms. Sophia Byrd McSherry said from the perspective of the Office of Public Defense, attorneys and their clients were also appreciative of the Family Reunification Day Events that showcased their work and successes.

Ms. Thompson also mentioned that National Adoption Day was successful, with 25 counties celebrating, which was more than in previous years.

Ms. Malat asked how many kids and parents were reunified, saying those numbers could be useful in connecting with parents and providing indicators of successes with other families in similar situations. Ms. Becker added such indicators can also be helpful for social workers to see the positive effects of their work.

Ms. McClanahan said she encouraged local law enforcement officers in Thurston and Mason Counties to attend the celebrations, as they play a significant role in the process, particularly regarding removals. She said it was powerful for the officers to see kids reunified because after they remove kids, they typically don't see how the process ends.

Mockingbird Society Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit Recap, 2019 Policy Agenda

Ms. Lauren Frederick and Ms. Jolie Bwiza from Mockingbird Society reviewed this summer's Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit Recap. First, Ms. Bwiza introduced herself as a new member of Mockingbird's Tacoma Chapter in the organization's youth network. Ms. Frederick mentioned Ms. Bwiza is interested in the Youth in Care Representative seat on the Commission.

Ms. Frederick gave a recap of the Leadership Summit, noting it spanned three days on the University of Washington campus with 55 youth and young adults from around the state and more than 50 policymakers. Youth developed eight proposals during the summit, which Mockingbird will continue to work on up to the legislative session. New this year, the summit allocated time for young people to explore the city, which helped make the summit a time of play and exploration as well as learning.

Ms. Frederick then outlined Mockingbird Society's legislative priorities for the upcoming year. She first mentioned ending detention for status offenses, which has been a priority for a couple of years. Mockingbird has been working with juvenile court administrators to remove truancy from the court process. The organization is also exploring ways the system can be more trauma-responsive to young people and incorporate youth voice in figuring out how to do that, particularly youth who have run away and are state-dependent.

Mockingbird is also advocating for more young people to be represented on the DCYF Oversight Committee and the Office of Homeless Youth Advisory Committee.

Ms. Bwiza then outlined Mockingbird's budget priorities. First is investing \$5.2 million per biennium for transition planning for youth in foster care starting at age 14 by facilitating support planning and coordinating with independent services. Second is improving foster parent recruitment and retention, particularly in areas like Kent, where 82% of children in foster care in Kent are not placed in Kent.

Ms. Frederick outlined Mockingbird's support priorities, a main one being supporting Columbia Legal Services' work on supporting foster youth with developmental disabilities. Stakeholders are also working on a package of educational equity for young people in foster care.

Ms. Bwiza mentioned the upcoming Youth Advocacy Day is scheduled for February 8, 2019.

Judge van Doorninck thanked Mockingbird for working with the juvenile court administrators and mentioned that proposal in discussion is still evolving. She said a key frustration among judicial officers is having certain tools being taken away, mentioning detention in particular. She said while the courts have made improvements regarding detention for status offenses, ultimately taking away detention as an option will undermine the court process, and many courts may not participate. Judge van Doorninck said courts and stakeholders are still figuring out alternatives.

Mr. Bamberger asked aside from youth who have no other safe location and may require detention as an option, under what circumstance is detention appropriate from the perspective of the court?

Judge van Doorninck responded that while detention is not necessarily appropriate, the courts do not have an alternative, like a preferable crisis residential center. Further, she said when the same youth displays contempt of court many times over, detention – even a short sentence – can help deal with that bad behavior and maintain the decorum of the court room.

Normalcy Workgroup's Recommendations on Sex Education for Youth in Foster Care

Ms. Jeannie Kee reported on the Normalcy Workgroup's recommendations for sexual education for youth in care. Ms. Kee outlined several barriers youth in care face regarding sexual education, including multiple placements, changing schools, or missing the one time sexual education is taught in school. Further, sexual health education is optional in Washington State. The Normalcy Workgroup recommends the state considers mandating sexual health education for all middle and high school youth in a manner that removes the barriers youth in care face in receiving this education.

The Normalcy Workgroup recommends comprehensive sexual health education for middle and high school students should be age appropriate, medically accurate, LGBTQ+ inclusive, teach about healthy relationships, teach about consent, teach about healthy boundaries, teach about sexual assault and harassment, and teach about disease prevention.

The Normalcy Workgroup also recommends DCYF includes sexual health education into the education plan of youth in care, as well as creating a navigator within Coordinated Care to help families teach youth this information (i.e. a "sex ed expert"); support foster parents and caregivers

and clarify their rights and the prudent parent standard; educate all stakeholders that Medicaid covers reproductive health benefits for young people up to age 26; require Coordinated Care to share its sexual health education training curriculum with the Normalcy Workgroup so the workgroup can provide some oversight; and consider an online option for caregivers and social workers.

Ms. Kee said the workgroup also recommends stakeholders teach youth about their sexual rights, which includes the right to access reproductive and sexual health care in their communities, as well as a way to access such care and assistance identifying and removing barriers. This effort also requires training in sexual health education for adults – social workers, caregivers, judges, attorneys, CASA volunteers, and other community partners – to be both informed on youth sexual health rights and equipped to support youth.

Ms. Kee outlined a list of best practices for sexual health education, which includes being trauma informed, not separating youth by gender, and awareness that sexual education tends to be taught in a heteronormative manner. The best practices also include incorporating life skills into sexual education, like family communication, avoiding coercion, and consent. The workgroup suggests using the FLASH curriculum throughout the state, a comprehensive sexual health education curriculum developed by Public Health Seattle-King County nurses, and partnering with community stakeholders like Planned Parenthood, GLSEN (formerly the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), and WCSAP (Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs). The workgroup also encourages school nurses to teach or support teachers when teaching sexual education, as many students have voiced wanting to learn about sexual education from someone who is not embarrassed to discuss these topics. Along similar lines, the workgroup suggests each school has a school-based health center to support students where staff are trauma-informed and can connect them with community resources.

Particularly for youth in care, Ms. Kee said the workgroup would like to implement an annual review of youth cases to verify the individual has received comprehensive sexual health education that meets the requirements of the WA Healthy Youth Act. If youth in care have not met this requirement, they should require a plan to receive such education prior to exiting care.

Lastly, Ms. Kee said Erin’s Law – signed in March by Gov. Inslee which requires public schools provide students a sexual abuse prevention program -- will complement the sexual health education youth receive after it is implemented statewide.

Mr. Martin Mueller asked if the FLASH curriculum meets the eight key points of the Healthy Youth Act. Ms. Kee said while she believes the curriculum meets most of the Healthy Youth Act requirements, some places are picking the curriculum apart, which leads to youth not receiving full information. She said this pattern perpetuates “justice by geography,” meaning youth will receive different levels and quality of information depending on where they live. The Normalcy Workgroup urges all kids should receive the same information, have the same access to resources, and can make healthy and safe choices.

Judge van Doorninck asked Ms. Kee if the Normalcy Workgroup has a specific ask of the Commission. Ms. Kee said the next step would be to talk to Justice Bridge to determine next steps, such as who or how to partner with organizations if the recommendation requires a legislative move.

Judge van Doorninck asked if other legislative groups are proposing legislation or working with the legislature. Ms. Kee said she believes WCSAP and the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence are.

Mr. Ryan Murrey noted the Normalcy Workgroup's recommendations are heavily driven by youth who have been adamant about wanting to know what good relationships look like, as many of the relationships they know tend to be unhealthy.

Ms. Becker asked if curricula and trainings exist that specifically target youth and young adults in care. Ms. Kee said the Normalcy Workgroup is asking for a state mandate because their goal is to achieve normalcy for youth in care, so they want all children to have access to the same information instead of separating information specific for foster care youth.

Ms. Peggy Carlson said there are specific trauma-informed curriculums, and Ms. Becker said those materials might offer some logical touchpoints when thinking about Family First initiatives.

Ms. Kee said there is so much information in communities, which is why the workgroup is trying to be broad and at the very least provide all youth in schools with the same foundation. She noted LGBTQ youth are particularly concerned with having inclusive curriculum and access to information, as this specific population faces additional barriers to adequate and appropriate sexual health education. Mr. Trey Rabun mentioned the Northwest Network in Seattle, a group for the LGBTQ community who also face domestic violence, which might have a sexual education model that could help guide the workgroup's recommendations.

Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care Workshop Presentation from Amara

Mr. Rabun then discussed a workshop Amara created for foster families to support LGBTQ+ youth in foster care. He began by providing an overview of Amara, a local nonprofit now focused on foster care families, and one of the first agencies in the country to work with same-sex couples and single parent families who want to foster or adopt. Amara also works with transgender parents and families.

Last year, Amara placed about 115 foster children. In the last few years, Amara has focused on supporting birth parents and the reunification process, which includes educating foster families to support reunification and acknowledge that even if a family wants to adopt a child they are fostering, they have other pathways to adopt children. Amara has two sanctuaries, one in Seattle and one in Tacoma, which are places to stay for kids who have just been removed from foster care while the state determines the best long-term plan. Mr. Rabun also outlined Amara's post-adoption program, which provides robust services for families who have adopted kids from foster care, and the STAR Adoptee Mentorship Program, which partners adopted youth with adults who were adopted to create connections.

Mr. Rabun then outlined the workshop Amara created to ensure foster parents and homes are open and affirming to LGBTQ+ identities. A statewide survey in 2008 indicated 9% of youth in care identify as LGBTQ, which Mr. Rabun said is definitely underrepresented, as many youth in care are questioning their identities. Further, he said just 25% of youth in care are placed in a home that is fully supportive of their identities and is involved in the ally community. He noted a

difference between a family being open (i.e. “I accept you.”) and a family being affirming (i.e. “I’m going to help you find resources to support you.”). Mr. Rabun cited numbers from the Family Acceptance Project that found youth in a “high rejection” home are 9.5 times more likely to attempt suicide than youth in “low rejection” homes. Further, 92% of youth placed in “extremely accepting” families believe they can be a happy LGBTQ adult.

Mr. Rabun said Amara’s goal in creating a training was to ensure foster parents in the state have the tools to be open and affirming, and they want to spread the training wider and promote it to all foster families. Mr. Rabun said Amara in and of itself is limited in its reach across the state, so the idea is to create a “train the trainer” model, where Amara can teach other stakeholders to carry this training and curriculum throughout the state.

The training is four hours, which includes many activities and some lectures. There is also an hour long Mockingbird Society youth panel where youth talk about what they wish their foster parents knew about them. The youth panel is not possible with the Train the Trainer model, which Mr. Rabun said is the most valuable part, but Amara is setting up three training dates for the upcoming year.

Ms. Sophia Byrd McSherry asked if the training is targeted to families providing relative care as well as stranger foster care. Mr. Rabun responded that Amara looks at the general foster care population. He added they ideally want this training to become mandatory, as even when a family is adopting a toddler, the child may not have outward sexual expression, but once that child enters adolescence, the family will need these tools.

Commission Member Legislative Priorities

DCYF

Mr. David Del Villar Fox outlined three DCYF legislation requests. He said the agency will send out a third version of what previously was called the Technical Fix Bill. The new version has a different title and includes language for the ability for financial recovery that permits DSHS the authority to collect overpayments for DCYF. He said the agency also proposes to slightly modify state requirements related to implementation of the Family First Act. Third, the agency introduced a technical fix to the Higher Education and Workforce Development Bill (SB 6274) to ensure confidential information is not re-disclosed.

After some confusion on what re-disclosure of confidential information meant, Ms. Carrie Wayno clarified that in the absence of a prohibition of redisclosure of information, public agencies have to provide said information if requested. This technical fix just inserts language prohibiting the re-disclosure so any information that should be confidential remains confidential.

Washington State CASA

Next, Mr. Murrey provided updates on Washington State CASA priorities, starting with a \$3.8 million budgetary request for program expansion. Mr. Murrey said Washington State CASA’s budget is around \$10 million to \$11 million, with the state paying \$3 million (the majority comes from county sources), so the request is a general expansion. The goal is to serve 10,000 kids per year, an increase from the 6,000 currently served.

Mr. Murrey also outlined a proposed regional attorney program model for Washington State CASA where eight attorneys are spread throughout the state’s regions, one would be a specialist

to help with tribes, and one is at the state office who can assist with appellate matters and oversee the other nine. CASA is also asking for \$250,000 to support training and recruitment efforts.

In the policy realm, Washington State CASA is developing a 30-day status check and a checklist of best practices to help move cases forward and on a good trajectory within the first month, including items like visitation, establishing paternity, relative searches, etc. The proposal gathers all these procedures into one statute, so all stakeholders can convene and determine progress in a timely manner and have the 30-day deadline for shelter care review be meaningful.

Mr. Murrey said they are also working with the governor's office to get a CASA appointment to the DCYF oversight board.

Office of Civil Legal Aid

Ms. Jill Malat said there is a two-year study in Grant and Lewis Counties assessing the effect of appointing all youth counsel in foster care that began September 1. They have asked the study to be extended for a year because two years is not adequate time to reach a significant number of permanency instances. They did not use the full appropriation because they did not account for time at the early stages to get the study off the ground, so they asked to re-appropriate the unused portion. Ms. Malat also said they have asked for additional funding to fulfill statutory obligations for youth who have been legally free for 6 months.

Mr. Bamberger said they asked for a supplement of \$175,000 for this current fiscal year due to the caseload of legally free children, and then for the next biennium they asked for \$200,000 for the following biennium per year due to the caseload.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mr. Mueller said OSPI has proposals to increase staffing for counselors, nurses, and family engagement workers. Currently they are targeting middle school counselors to raise that staffing capacity to meet the national recommended ratio of one counselor per 250 students. Scaling that up statewide is a \$20 million ask, he said. OSPI is also asking for funding to have family engagement workers in elementary schools, with a goal of having one engagement worker at every elementary school by 2025. They also want to meet the national ratio for school nurses in schools statewide by 2025, for which the department is considering a partner program where educational service districts hire a full-time nurse who can go to smaller schools to maximize capacity.

Foster Parent Association of Washington State

Mr. Mike Canfield said FPAWS is developing a plan to scale up outreach. They have created a decision package for each region. The organization is gathering foster parent allies and their three offices to work together on all issues that come up in foster families. A lot of focus is on the changing narrative and culture to recognize foster families and their role in getting kids reunified. Mr. Canfield said they want to keep pushing the culture in that direction so foster parents know what their job is.

The decision packet also requests money to increase the number of conferences FPAWS holds. They want to invite parents and social workers and gather full teams to celebrate the work they do.

Office of Public Defense

Ms. Sophia Byrd McSherry said the Office of Public Defense will request a \$5.5 million increase in the next year or so for contracted attorneys around the state who have started to take other, better paid opportunities. This compensation increase would be the first meaningful increase in 10 years, as the current salary is about \$30,000 less than other public defenders. She said the turnover rates in the last fiscal year has reached a crisis mode (40% turnover in Yakima, 27% in both Snohomish and Spokane Counties), and it prevents the office from keeping cases on track.

Administrative Office of the Courts

Ms. Cindy Bricker said the AOC has asked for additional funding to increase the salaries of coordinators for the Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP); previously the 10 participating counties paid for the increases in those salaries, as the funding from the legislature has been the same for the past 10 years. The AOC also wants to expand these programs to three more counties. Additionally, the AOC has asked for funding to conduct a thorough evaluation of the FJCIP to ultimately develop a plan to implement the program statewide.

Ms. Bricker said the AOC also changed the name of an established project related to paternity from Establishing Biological Paternity Early Project to Finding Fathers. The project provides low-cost DNA testing – Pierce County conducted tests right at the courthouse – to help expedite case processing. Ms. Bricker said some FJCIP counties want to implement this program, so AOC is seeking funding to do so, and eventually take the program statewide.

Ms. Bricker also announced employees working with the Court Improvement Training Academy are now working within the AOC instead of the University of Washington Law School as of October 1. They are doing the same work, but are now employed by AOC instead of the university.

Other Legislative Items

Judge van Doorninck mentioned she had a meeting scheduled with Sen. Jamie Pedersen to discuss a proposal for a uniform guardianship act dealing with guardianship of minors. Judge van Doorninck said the proposal doesn't undo the non-parental custody statute, which will overlap with and affect children in foster care.

Mr. Canfield noted other foster parent groups are working on proposals they would like to see in legislation, such as permanency planning and getting adoption time down earlier. He also mentioned another group that sought feedback from him on legislation that would essentially replace the foster care system with another system that would require foster parents to receive training and work with biological parents. Mr. Canfield said the feedback they gave was that system might look good as a standalone model where some foster parents can do that and make it work, but a lot of other foster parents said they would just quit doing foster care if forced to do all those things. Ultimately, FPAWS is not supporting that legislation, he said.

Final Comments and Questions

Ms. Carrie Wayno asked for clarification on how Justice Bridge's retirement from CCYJ would affect who is co-chairing and staffing the commission. Ms. Gina Cumbo said Justice Bridge is planning on stay on the Commission until June and Ms. Akanksha Jayanthi will staff the Commission through June as well. She also mentioned CCYJ's new CEO Rachel Sottile Logvin

officially started the week prior, and she and Justice Bridge will have a few weeks of overlap in the office until Justice Bridge officially retires at the end of December.

Adjourned at 3:05 pm by Judge van Doorninck.
