



**Washington State Supreme Court
Commission on Children in Foster Care
May 18, 2015
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Assistant Secretary, Children's Administration, Jennifer Strus, Commission Co-Chair
Judge Kitty-Ann van Doorninck, Superior Court Judges' Association
Ms. Jill Malat, Office of Civil Legal Aid
Mr. Mike Canfield, Co-Chair of Foster Parents Association of Washington
Dr. Ken Emmil, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Mr. Patrick Dowd, Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds
Mr. Ryan Murrey, Executive Director of Washington State CASA
Ms. Tonia Morrison, Parent Advocate Representative
Ms. Joanne Moore, Director, Office of Public Defense
Ms. Carrie Wayno, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Christina Parker, NW Intertribal Council

Members Not Present

Justice Bobbe Bridge (ret.), Washington State Supreme Court, Commission Co-Chair;
Ms. Beth Canfield; Mr. Ryan Cummings, Youth in Foster Care Representative; Representative
Ruth Kagi; Ms. Jeannie Kee, Foster Youth Alumni Representative;

Guests

Ms. Cindy Bricker, Sr. Court Program Analyst, AOC; Mr. Matt Orme, Washington State Center
for Court Research; Ms. Megan Walton, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Amara; Ms. Laurie
Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Ms. Hillary Madsen, Columbia Legal Services,
Ms. Julie Caruso, Counsel I, Washington State House Republican Caucus; Mr.
Peter Dolan, Staff Counsel

Staff Present

Ms. Molly Donahue, CCFC Intern, Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ)
Ms. Paula Malleck-Odegaard, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)

Call to Order

Mr. Jim Bamburger, on behalf of Ass't Secretary Strus, called the meeting to order at 1:10pm.
He welcomed all Commission members and guests to the meeting.

March Commission Minutes

Ms. Molly Donahue apologized for the delay in distributing the March Commission meeting
minutes. She will email them out next week to the Commission members.

Dependency Children in Washington: Case Timeliness and Outcomes

Mr. Matt Orme and Ms. Cindy Bricker distributed the 2014 Annual Report.

Mr. Orme commented that this year the report is much easier to read than last year's technical version. If Commission members are hoping to read more statistical data, the technical report will be available later this year. Mr. Orme directed the members' attention to his PowerPoint presentation, which highlighted key aspects of the report.

Mr. Orme encouraged members to read through the report and to contact him with any specific questions. Ass't Secretary Strus thanked Mr. Orme for bringing this report to the meeting and sharing with the group.

DSHS/Children's Administration Updates

Ass't Secretary Strus announced that CA is suspending the implementation and expansion of Family Assessment Response (FAR) program. It will be in 29 offices by the end of June, but there is no money left in any budget for further implementation. Preliminary data that shows that, of the initial savings in the foster care system, potentially 10% can be attributed to the work of FAR. The next six months will be spent enhancing what is already in place.

In response to a question from Judge van Doorninck, Ass't Secretary Strus stated that the current turnover rates for social workers at CA is 14%. This high turnover rate results in a steep learning curve for new social workers – with constant turnover being extremely disruptive to services. However, the issue of high turnover rates are a nationwide trend and not contained to only CA and Washington State.

Quality Improvement Center (QIC) Update

Ms. Donahue reported on behalf of Ms. Gina Cumbo, Project Manager at the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ).

Data collection is now complete. Washington State attorneys consistently participated in the study at rates of approximately 90%, providing rich data for our QIC partners at Chapin Hall to analyze. The final results of the study will be reported this fall. Preliminary findings are anticipated no later than September 2015.

With data collection complete, the project now shifts into sustainability mode. During the next six-months, the University of Washington Court Improvement Training Academy (CITA) will continue to provide statewide trainings in the core elements of the QIC model and support to attorneys representing children and youth in dependency hearings. These training and practice supports are now available to all attorneys in Washington State representing children in dependency proceedings! CITA is working to cultivate leadership within the Communities of Practice so that they will be self-sustaining after the end of the QIC grant.

A half-day celebration is planned for November 6, 2015, in Seattle, WA. The purpose of this event is to celebrate the hard work of study participants, explore study results, and plan for collaborative next steps. Commission members are encouraged to attend

Date: Friday, November 6, 2015
Time: 10:00am – 3:00pm, with a reception from 3:00pm-5:00pm
Location: Washington Athletic Club, Seattle, WA

Ms. Donahue asked that any questions on the project be directed to Ms. Cumbo.

Amara Family Court Project

Ms. Megan Walton, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Amara, provided an update on the Family Court project.

Children’s Representation Workgroup

Mr. Patrick Dowd provided an update. Chaired by Lisa Kelly, the group also includes members from DSHS, AGO, Columbia Legal Services, OCFO, CASA, OCLA, Washington Defense Association, Foster Parents Association, OPD, CCYJ, and counsel for the Lummi Tribe. The purpose of the workgroup is to review barriers for children in dependency and termination hearings who are requesting counsel, as well as barriers to individuals who make referrals for the those children.

The charge specifically asks for recommendations on the following:

1. Informing Children and Youth of their Right to Request Counsel
2. Facilitating the Representation of Children for Purposes of Moving for Appointment of Counsel at Public Expense
3. Facilitating the Requests for Appointment of Counsel
4. Facilitating the Attorney-Client Relationship for Represented Children Bringing Motions
5. Discovery
6. Positions with Respect to Motions for Appointment of Counsel
7. Communication between Limited Appointment Attorneys for Children and Caregivers
8. The Rights of Children with Disabilities and Very Young Children

The workgroup met March 6 and May 8. They reviewed the relevant statutes to the charge and broke into three subcommittees – Children’s and Parent’s, Department/AGO, and CASA – to begin addressing specific recommendation areas.

The May 8th meeting ended with a decision to review and edit of documents online. The next workgroup meeting is set for Monday, June 1st.

New Business

Ms. Hillary Madsen updated the Commission on the passage of the Youth Equality and Reintegration Act (YEAR Act – ESSB 5564). The YEAR Act’s key reforms are primarily founded in Record Sealing, Legal Financial Obligations, and Restitution for Youthful Offenders.

Adjourned at 3:15pm