

crb network news

january 2016

newsletter of the citizen review board



CRB pilot project utilizes “Youth Thrive” concept to help Marion County teens achieve success

In 2015, the Marion County Citizen Review Board started a pilot board designed to review cases of youth ages 15 and older. This specialized board was created in response to increasing observation that youth aging out of foster care often lack the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to flourish and prosper as independent young adults.

In reviewing these cases, board members have put more emphasis on DHS efforts to help youth achieve independence as opposed to DHS efforts to ensure a child’s safety.

While highlighting the protective and promotive factors, known as

[Youth Thrive Factors](#), the specialized board members are adeptly able to shift the narrative of the CRB review from a child safety model to the independent living model.

Board members who understand the Youth Thrive factors may find it easier to conduct reviews of teenagers, and easier to engage teenagers in reviews when they are present because it provides a framework in which to appropriately address our findings and recommendations. Put simply, the Youth Thrive factors are domains that mitigate risk and enhance healthy development and well-being for
See “Youth Thrive,” p. 4

A message from the director

The recent high-profile cases of abuse in foster care have made clear that we need to better protect these children. First and foremost, children must be protected from abuse and neglect, and we cannot accept a child protection system unable to do this for the children in its own care.

Child welfare, courts, attorneys, advocates and other system partners across the state are examining how this could happen on their watch, and making changes to prevent it from happening again. CRB must do the same.

This past October, I sat in a room for two days with all CRB staff and 20 volunteer board members from 17 different counties to identify priorities for the program over the next five years. It was inspiring to spend time with so many people whose passion for child advocacy matched my own, and I am proud of the 5-year strategic plan for CRB that resulted from our efforts. In that plan, CRB will develop performance measures and a system of continuous quality improvement to track how well the program is operating as well as its impact on larger system goals. It will ensure boards are

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Collaboration a critical component for child welfare outcomes

As field manager for Eastern Oregon, I am excited to be part of a wonderful team of staff and volunteers looking out for the well-being of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens – its children. I offer a few simple thoughts on something I think is critical to healthy reviews: **collaboration**.

I remember as a kid arguing with my sister about how to do the dishes. We had chores to do, and often, we had to do them together. We hated it! I had to have it my way, she had to have it hers. I frequently asked, "Do we have to work together?!" When we tattled to mom, she would say: "work it out." Finally, my sister and I would get it done.

Our mother's simple solution was to teach us to collaborate together! She did not tell us how to do it. We

had to come up with our own solution. (I hated this parenting style at the time, but now I am grateful for her wisdom!) And, you know what? We always got it figured out eventually!

Collaboration has a simple definition. The word itself is self-defining: "Co" means "with" and "labor" means "work." As defined by Merriam-Webster, it's "*a willingness to work together with another person or group in order to achieve or do something.*"

Research on the topic of collaboration reveals that it is used in many institutions and fields, from nations and communities to medicine and social work. It is being used because there is a higher probability of "buy-in" by each party when they're part of the "team" and each person's contributions are welcomed.

The Child Welfare system has many opportunities for collaboration, such as Family Decision Meetings, Community Resource Teams, and Permanency Roundtables. Juvenile courts have JCIP (Juvenile Court Improvement Program) model court teams in local counties. Treatment providers have collaborative teams that help to ensure the best services are being provided to their clients. There are IEPs (Individualized Educational Plan), ISPs, (Individual Support Plan), etc.



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Nichols**
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Field Manager

All of these require collaboration to be successful.

DHS is implementing [Differential Response](#) across the State of Oregon. An essential component to Differential Response is the [Family Engagement Model](#). This model is built on the principle "Child Safety is what we do, family engagement is how we do it!" One of the essential components of the Family Engagement Model is collaboration. Again, to quote the Differential Response Family Engagement Team: "Family engagement under Oregon's Differential Response recognizes that families are experts on their own families, and therefore need to be included in all aspects of decision making. Families are treated with respect and genuineness through the collaborative and partnering processes of engagement. The goal is to assist families in keeping their children safe and thriving in their identified communities."

The CRB will be most effective when each Board seeks to be collaborative as they do their reviews and engage each person that attends as essential to effective outcomes.

Collaboration is not automatic. It is a proactive choice of a group to be collaborative. Here are four ideas that can help develop a sense of collaboration.

1) *Separate People from the Problem.* This insight comes from the book "Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In," by Roger Fisher, William L. Ury and Bruce Patton. In this ground-breaking work, the starting point in "negotiating agreement" is how you view the people involved. It is easy to act as if the person IS the problem. When this happens, it creates defensiveness or even aggression. Effective collaboration must withhold judgment and focus on the problem, not the person.

In CRB reviews, collaboration keeps the focus on identifying and resolving problems rather than criticizing the person. When your CRB Board makes findings, stay focused on the problems (addiction, mental health issues, neglect, placement needs, etc.) that need resolution. How are DHS and the parents and other parties seeking to resolve the problems?

2) *Endeavor to respect and listen to everyone.* Two of the core principles of the Family Engagement Model are: "everyone desires respect, and everyone needs to be heard and understood." When a person feels respected and heard, it helps to create a safe environment. This can de-escalate anger and/or other intense

See "Collaboration," p. 5

Backpack project boosts children's spirits in Umatilla County

A Citizen Review Board volunteer in Umatilla County is trying to make the process of placement into a foster home for children in Eastern Oregon a little less traumatic.

For the past several months, Wenda Skinner has been collecting backpacks in her community to distribute to youth for use when they enter foster care. Skinner said she was inspired to do this after attending the CRB "Every Day Counts" Conference last spring and viewing a [short film](#) about domestic violence and foster care.

The footage that moved her included a scene where the belongings of children being moved from their home were packed away in garbage bags, she said.

"That really doesn't happen, does it?" Skinner said she recalled herself asking child welfare workers after viewing the film. "They told me it does."

Skinner said 53 children were placed in foster care in Umatilla County last year, while Morrow County saw 17 placements. She contacted the Umatilla County Department of Human Services about providing backpacks for children, made informational posters and cards, and networked with community residents to buy and donate new bags.

Some Hermiston-based businesses got involved, as well. Harley Swain Subaru, for example, now serves as a backpack drop-off point. 60 Minute Photo, meanwhile, photographed the 51 backpacks Skinner has collected to date (see picture) and assisted with informational materials.



Skinner said she'll give 15 bags to the DHS office in Pendleton to start and that "I plan to do this annually."

Those interested in contributing to the PACK (Promote Always Child Kindness) Drive can contact Wenda Skinner at 541-571-6200 or via email at wjaskin@yahoo.com.



Youth Thrive: Reviewing teen cases involves flexible, creative thinking

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youth.

The first factor, **Knowledge of Adolescent Development**, helps youth and adults accurately assess a teenager's cognitive, emotional, and physical standing. Knowledge of Adolescent Development also reminds adults to consider the impacts of trauma on the developing brain.

Remember, teenagers are not 'mini-adults,' and often have not had the life experience and guidance needed to tackle complex and serious situations alone. Information regarding negative outcomes — pregnancy, substance abuse, or dropping out of school — must be shared in a

way that takes into account the youth's developmental stage.

The second factor, **Cognitive and Social**

-Emotional Competence, concerns a youth's ability to appropriately interact with others, solve problems, and self-regulate.

This domain is used to assess whether youth have the critical thinking skills needed to restrain negative impulsivity and engage in positive risk-taking, have the ability to create realistic goals, and have the ability to understand and articulate his/her own needs.

The third factor, **Youth Resilience**, contains the adaptive traits that have arisen from a youth's life experiences. These are the character traits that help foster children rise from the ashes of negative environments. Youth that are self-advocates and have a sense of personal responsibility, and positive identity are often seen as intrinsically capable.

It appears that resilient youth succeed despite all obstacles. However, it is critically important to remember that *any* youth can develop resilience. It is not given at birth.

The fourth factor, **Social Connections**, is one of the most important indicators of a youth's ability to successfully exit the foster care system. All youth need healthy, supportive, caring relationships on the path

towards independence. Youth *outside* of the foster care system develop these relationships in natural ways. Parents, teachers, and coaches all help guide youth to adulthood. Foster children have less opportunity to develop these relationships. Placement moves, school changes, and the transitory nature of adults working in the child welfare system make it difficult for foster youth to sustain these relationships.

The fifth factor, **Concrete Support in Times of Need**, is the safety net for foster youth. When teenagers make mistakes, they need assurance that there is existing support to help them recover.

They also need support for major life events, such as sudden unemployment, mental health crises, or housing issues. It is foolish to think that '18' or '21' are magic numbers — ages at which youth are suddenly transformed into successful, healthy, law-abiding citizens.

Many foster youth need immediate access to help that is traditionally provided by the family unit.

During reviews of teenagers, consider the following questions:

- * Has DHS offered the youth services that are appropriate for the youth's development and life experiences?
- * Am I, as a board member, asking questions in a developmentally-appropriate manner?
- * Is the youth's plan for post-foster care positive, realistic, and attainable?
- * What opportunities has DHS provided to increase the youth's resilience?
- * Who are the important and consistent people in the youth's life?
- * How is DHS helping youth cultivate social connections that will last beyond the youth's time in foster care?
- * Who has the youth identified as available in times of crisis?

Reframing the approach to reviewing cases of teenagers requires flexible and creative thinking. The rigidity of child welfare laws, regulations, and policy do not always allow that flexibility.

Board members can re-write the inflexible narrative of teenage foster children by becoming familiar with the Youth Thrive factors.



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Collaboration: each party has a role, stays focused on goal

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emotions. It allows a person to step out of a “trauma response” and into a sense of partnership. **“Emotional safety** means feeling accepted; it is the sense that one is safe from emotional attack or harm.” CRB boards need to make the review process as emotionally safe as possible: Use warm greetings, address parties by name, make non-judgmental comments, stay calm, and use active listening skills. Briefly stated, active listening is a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying, but, more importantly, to understand the complete message being sent.

3) Every party has their role and their unique perspective to contribute. Good collaborative work wants every perspective to be put on the table, even though there may not be unanimity of opinion: Attorneys have a unique contribution to make on the legal issues of the case; the parents can share their perspective of what is needed; caseworkers share the case plan and the services that can or should be provided; CASA can speak about the best interests of the children; children (depending upon age and appropri-

ateness) can speak about what they want; and relatives and foster providers have much to offer. It’s important to recognize that each person has something to offer. The board’s findings and recommendations will be much more meaningful and significant when the board has sought to hear all appropriate input.

4) Stay focused on the goal. This is essential to good outcomes. The CRB Vision Statement states: “To ensure that every child lives in a safe, secure, healthy, and permanent home, preserving families whenever possible.” The board’s findings and recommendations should have this goal in mind. Each party may not agree on how that is achieved; that is inevitable.

But, when the board keeps the CRB’s Vision Statement in mind, it can help move the review in a direction of hope and positive outcomes.

A quote attributed to Henry Ford says:

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

Save the Date!

Every Day Counts...
In the Life of a Child
in Foster Care



May 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

The annual *Every Day Counts...* conference will be held May 6-7, 2016, at the Hilton Hotel & Convention Center, in Eugene, Oregon.

Registration information will be available in February 2016.

New law means changes to some permanency plans, CRB findings

During the 2015 Oregon Legislature, the House of Representatives passed a bill that affects child welfare and the work that we do as the Citizen Review Board: House Bill 2908.

House Bill 2908: Implements the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014

In September 2014, President Obama signed the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014. As the name implies, the act has a dual purpose: reducing the number of children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and improving outcomes for children in foster care.

The first part of the act,

preventing sex trafficking, is being addressed by Department of Human Services (DHS) policy changes and workgroups in several counties that are focused on identifying victims of sex trafficking and providing services.

The second part of the act, strengthening families, limits the permanency plan of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) to **children who are age 16 or older ONLY**. All other children in foster care will need to have one of the other permanency plans: Reunification, Adoption, Guardianship, or Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative. At the next permanency hearing, all children under the age of 16 with a plan of APPLA will need to have their plan changed to one of the other four permanency plans.

For young children who are in a Developmental Disabilities (DD) home, DHS has adjusted its policy for relatives to include long-term foster parents, thus allowing those children to remain in their long-term foster homes under a plan of Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative.

The act also requires that the court and CRB make a



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new finding. This new finding, Finding 3B, applies **only** to children over age 16 with a permanency plan of APPLA. For those children, the board will need to make the following finding:

3B: Has DHS taken appropriate steps to ensure that 1) the substitute care provider is following the reasonable and prudent parent standard, and 2) the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate activities?

This finding applies to DHS, not to the foster parents. The board is not finding whether or not the foster parent is following the reasonable and prudent parent standard, but whether DHS has ensured that the foster parent is following the reasonable and prudent parent standard.

The intent behind this new finding is to ensure that these older children in foster care have: the same opportunities as teens not in foster care; a foster parent who can make “reasonable and prudent” parental decisions; and the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities.

CRB boards started making Finding 3B on Oct. 1; already several questions have arisen. Most often, it centers on the issue of funding: who is to pay for these extracurricular activities, the foster parent or DHS?

Generally speaking, the expectation from DHS is that the foster care payment should be used to cover extracurricular activity fees and costs.

Another question is how to make Finding 3B when the teen no longer lives with a foster parent — for example, the teen lives in a college dorm or independently in an apartment. In these cases, the first part of Finding 3B doesn’t apply, and boards should make the finding based on the second part of Finding 3B.

A new finding brings new challenges for CRB board members, but hopefully through Finding 3B, we will be able to better ensure the health and well-being of older children in permanent foster care.

For more information on the commercial exploitation of children, and details on House Bill 2908, click [HERE](#).

In the news

THE NORTHWEST

◆ Marion County Child Welfare Office in Salem has one of the highest volumes of remote video visits for children in foster care in Oregon. The program hit the 170th visit mark in late October, according to the [*prweb news center*](#).

Children and incarcerated family members are connected via a video visitation system provided by San Francisco-based Telmate. Youth are able to access a computer at the office, where they can communicate with family members accessing video kiosks from their facility of placement. The program helps children avoid long and expensive trips, and the harsh environment of correctional institutions.

The state began working with Telmate as a 90-day pilot program in June 2014. Since then, Marion Coun-

ty has averaged about 10 remote visits a week. Other Department of Human Services districts in Oregon are also now utilizing the technology throughout all of Oregon's 14 correctional facilities.

"Using video in many cases eases the need for travel while still allowing children to see, hear, and interact with their loved ones, reinforcing family bonds that can decrease trauma during separation," said Tamara Miller of Marion County Child Welfare. For more information, click [HERE](#).

◆ Many girls in the United States are moving from the child welfare system into the juvenile justice system – including Oregon, where the rate surpasses the national average, according to an article published in *The Oregonian* newspaper.

More than 60% of girls who've committed juvenile offenses and are un-

der the supervision of the Oregon Youth Authority have ties to the state's child welfare system. The figure for that scenario is 40% of girls nationwide and 34% of boys in Oregon.

"That's a big number and it points to the need for greater prevention and community-based services on the front end," said Francine T. Sherman, an attorney and clinical associate professor at Boston College Law School who co-authored a report this year called "[Gender Injustice](#)." Her work urges reforms in the juvenile justice system for girls.

While juvenile arrests are dropping nationally, the proportion of girls in the juvenile justice system has increased. Sherman said girls are more likely to run away from chaotic households or foster care placements, and then end up in juvenile court. For more information, click [HERE](#).

THE NATION

◆ It's uncertain how many young people are homeless in the United States, according to a story in *GOVERNING* magazine. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) last year pegged the number of unaccompanied homeless youth at 45,000; the Department of Education puts the figure at 90,000, based on the number of students who self-identified as homeless during the 2013-14 school year.

The lack of data is a huge problem, said Bryan Samuels, who was commissioner of Children, Youth and Families under the Obama Administration. "We weren't in a position to judge whether the federal government programs (on youth homelessness) were working."

Why the difficulty? For one thing, HUD's estimate depends heavily on the number of people using emergency shelters during winter months. That makes sense for adults, but younger people are more likely to steer clear of shelters.

Many youths become homeless because they're trying to avoid the police or the foster care system; they may not want to raise a red flag by self-identifying as homeless. For more information, click [HERE](#).

THE WORLD

◆ The Manitoba government wants more traditional methods of care put in place for indigenous foster children, according to *CBC-Radio Canada*.

Proposed changes to Canada's Child and Family Services (CFS) Act would also see the province give more responsibility to indigenous communities, allowing children to be placed with relatives or families in the same community.

The legislation would underscore the importance of indigenous communities determining and carrying out care of local children, per traditional customs. Working with CFS agencies, the individual communities would be directly involved in developing care plans, supports, and services. Parents would also maintain guardianship of their children in a customary care arrangement. The plan is in response to the high number of aboriginal children in foster care.

"We have heard from indigenous leadership that children are the collective responsibility of the community and look forward to working with them to develop customary care models that reflect these values," said Family Services Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross. For more information, click [HERE](#).

Director's message: improvements, but still work to be done

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coordinated with their local juvenile court and that every child in foster care receives at least one CRB review annually. **The entire plan will be posted to the CRB website later this month and I encourage all to read it.**

As I look forward to the work we will do in the coming years, I want to also acknowledge the accomplishments of this past year. We implemented a series of online training modules that allow volunteers to complete 4 of the 16 hours of required orientation training in the comfort of their own home. We conducted a statewide assessment of visitation between children in foster care and their parents, implemented a new finding to be made during CRB reviews that addresses the well-being of older children who will likely remain in the system until they age out, and created specialized boards in some counties to review these children.

We coordinated the activities of Oregon's three Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act panels in assessing local child welfare practices and making recommendations for systemic improvements, hosted two conferences, and finally, configured the com-

puter system that will replace our aging one. It was a busy year!

2015 also marked CRB's 30th anniversary and I feel a deep sense of pride when I reflect on our program's contributions. Since its inception, CRB has conducted more than 200,000 reviews of children in foster care and educated thousands of citizens on the inner-workings of the child welfare system. It has been involved in the development of almost every state child welfare policy created and legislation passed since 1985, and continues to provide citizens a platform from which to improve how their community serves its most vulnerable children and families.

I thank all of the people who have been part of this journey these last three decades. There have been profound improvements in how our state serves its families in crisis, but of course, there is still work to be done. I am grateful for the committed people I will be joining in this important work.

Leola McKenzie,

Director of Juvenile and Family Court Programs Division

New CRB Volunteers!

BENTON COUNTY

Jessica Henson

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

Vicki Nebel

Annette Ziari

COOS COUNTY

Dianne Harrison

DESCHUTES COUNTY

Amber Ruedi

Judi Tolboe

HARNEY COUNTY

Joy Stevens

JOSEPHINE COUNTY

Marc Holder

Kasie Michel

KLAMATH COUNTY

Chrystal Jokinen

Rhonda Keffer

LANE COUNTY

Mary Allison

Kiza Brunner

David Davini

Eric DeFreest

Mariah Nelson

LINCOLN COUNTY

Donna Morris

MARION COUNTY

Tiffany MacCormack

POLK COUNTY

Linda Fenske

Elaine Ferguson

Hollis Ferguson

TILLAMOOK COUNTY

Gina Seufert

WASHINGTON COUNTY

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