

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Children, Adults and Families Division (CAF)

Child Welfare Update

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Child Welfare Programs: The Polarities of Practice

GOALS FOR TODAY:

- o “Deep Dive” Into Major Child Welfare Practice Improvement Efforts – Specifically, New/Emerging Strategies to Safely and Equitably Reduce Foster Care Entry and Exit
- o Dialogue About “Polarities” Underlying Decision-Making Required by Practice Improvement Strategies

2
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Goal: Safe and Equitable Reduction of Children in Foster Care

- Increase number of children who remain safely at home after a founded report of abuse or neglect.
- Increase placements and connections with family, siblings, relatives and other individuals children know.
- Increase number of children leaving foster care – either to reunite with parents or to be adopted/have permanent guardianship arrangements – and decreasing the length of time children spend in foster care.
- Safely = Maintaining or Improving the Re-Abuse rate
- Equitably: Eliminate disparate treatment and over-representation of children of color/Native American children in foster care.

3
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Goal: Children in Foster Care are Safe and Healthy

- Timely and appropriately meeting the medical and behavioral health needs of children in foster care.
- Providing services that support placement stability and that are culturally and linguistically specific to the child and their family.
- Eliminating abuse in foster care.

4
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Reducing Safely the Number of Children who Enter Foster Care

- o Redesigned the contracts that support in home services to allow for earlier and more individualized use
- o Increased engagement training for field workers
- o Increased the training and support for supervisors of line field workers

5
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Increasing the Number of Children Who Can Safely Exit Foster Care and Not Re-Enter

- o Greater use of relatives and relative identified supports
- o Implement Wraparound
- o Use of redesigned contracts to focus on better supports for families as children exit care
- o Revised Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) rules to clarify permanent foster care
- o Implemented the Fostering Success changes to the use of Subsidized Guardianship

6
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

New Relative Rules:

- o Provides a preference for placement for relatives over others when there is an appropriate relative ready and available for placement
- o Annual search for additional relatives or prior unavailable relatives who might now be available
- o Revised the definition of relative to be more inclusive
- o Current caretaker status acquired after 12 months of care
- o Notice within 30 days of placement to all known relatives to offer information about options.

7
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

New APPLA Rules:

- o Least permanent and preferred permanent plan, includes permanent foster care and permanent connections and support
- o Requires a case plan with services to assist in moving the plan to a higher degree of permanency
- o Requires annual review of efforts to identify and contact relatives for potential placement and connections.

8
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Wraparound Initiative:

- o Individualizes services
- o Family inclusion at all levels
- o Collaboration between agencies and integration of services
- o Preference for serving children in their communities

9
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Permanency Roundtables:

- o Structured consultation designed to determine what it would take to move the case to a higher level of permanency
- o Piloted in 3 counties in collaboration with Casey Family Programs. Plan to move to additional counties
- o Cases selected were APPLA children who had been longest in care, required an exception to be on an APPLA plan, and children of color.

10
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Child Welfare Strategic Improvement Efforts

Subsidized Guardianship:

- o Fostering Connections authorized use of Title IV-E funds to subsidize guardianships
- o Expanded current program
- o Encourages guardianship for children where adoption is not an option
- o Available for relatives and foster parents

11
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Child Welfare Programs: The Polarities of Practice

Managing the Polarities of Child Welfare Practice: Achieving the Best Interest of a Child and Family

An association of men who will not quarrel with one another is a thing which has never yet existed, from the greatest confederacy of nations down to a town meeting or a vestry. – Thomas Jefferson

12
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Continuum of Values:

Tradition-----Change
 Fate-----Personal Control
 Group Welfare-----Individualism/Privacy

Value Systems Overlay

In any organization/system there is almost more than one value system at work:

- o Value System of the Family
- o Value System of the Agency/DHS
- o Value System of the Community

13
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What Are Polarities?:

Polarities are inter-dependent opposites which function best when both are present to balance each other

Examples of Polarities:

Breath in/Breath out
 Action/Reflection
 Centralized Coordination/Local Initiatives
 Family Stability/Child Safety

14
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Polarity Management:

- o Multiple interests, perspectives, personal biases, and possibilities, make clear-cut decisions difficult
- o Usually a number of possible right answers and multiple avenues for getting there (both/and – not necessarily either/or)

Objectives:

Understanding the upside and downside (the competing forces – the *polarities*) for each key decision that needs to be made and leveraging the best of both

15
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Polarity Maps:

- o Tool to help identify the strengths of each pole (the upside) and identify the limits when either pole gets too much focus (the downside)
- o Greater purpose statement (here, the child welfare practice improvement objective)
- o Deepest fear from lack of balance (what does failure look like)

16
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Early Warning Indicators:

- o How will the system, individual decision-makers know that you are getting to the downside of this pole – what are the measurable indicators?
- o Who will know and be on watch?

Action Steps:

- o How will we gain or maintain the positive effects (the upside) from the focus on this pole and what measurable indicators can we design (what, who and by when measures)?

17
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Child Welfare Practice Improvement Polarities:

- o When possible, parents are always the best caregivers.
 - ∞ Safety vs. Family Preservation
- o If a child can't be with a parent, he/she should be with a relative.
 - ∞ Safety (?clean slate?) v. Genetic Connection
- o Foster Care should be temporary (focus = APPLA).
 - ∞ Placement Stability vs. Legal Permanency

18
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Thank you.

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19
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