

# Deschutes County Citizen Review Panel Recommendations

Deschutes County accepted all the recommendations made by the Citizen Review Panel. Below is the status of their implementation efforts.

1. DHS provide all foster youth and their foster parents written documentation of the benefits to which older foster youth are entitled. Attorneys and CASAs should also receive this information so they can most effectively advocate for the youth they represent. The court and CRB should inquire at each hearing and review to ensure this information has been provided to all foster youth.

## **Action by DHS**

**A pamphlet was developed to deliver to all age appropriate youth and their foster parents.**

2. The Independent Living Program conduct a yearly, voluntary, in-person seminar for all foster youth outlining all the education and other benefits to which they are entitled.

## **Action by DHS**

**Assisted the Independent Living Program by making referrals to this seminar. DHS will also assist in subsequent years.**

3. DHS explore whether the requirement that housing benefits are eliminated once a youth's case is closed is an Oregon Administrative Rule and whether it can be amended to allow for a former foster youth to access housing assistance until age 21 even if the case has been closed.

## **Action by DHS**

**DHS agrees with the proposal if possible. We will work with our Central Office to look at the cost impact and see if it is viable.**

4. DHS propose amendments to the foster youth tuition legislation to allow the use of funds for housing while attending school.

## **Action by DHS**

**Local office agrees to work with Central Office to see if the agency can support moving forward with an amendment to the current legislation.**

5. DHS and CASA work together to outline, in writing, ways in which the caseworkers and CASAs can coordinate activities.

## **Action by DHS**

**A group of DHS staff and CASA advocates held numerous meetings to come to consensus on areas of practice that could be better coordinated and came to agreement on items whenever both entities thought it would work.**

**6.** New workers receive training, by DHS and CASA staff, about the role of CASAs and ways in which the relationship between the DHS worker and CASA can be most effective.

#### **Action by DHS**

**DHS attends new CASA orientation to provide information about our programs. CASA director and DHS supervisor meets with new staff to discuss the role of CASA and how we can be most effective.**

**7.** DHS and CASA explore the viability of a staffing between DHS and CASA early in the case management process to clearly outline how activities might be coordinated.

#### **Action by DHS**

**DHS and CASA staffs are expected to set this meeting as soon as a CASA is appointed by the court to work out areas that can be coordinated based on the individual case they are working on. Any disagreement goes to the DHS supervisor and CASA director to assist in resolution.**

**8.** DHS and CASA work together to explore allowing CASAs to drive children and youth to appointments and other activities.

#### **Action by DHS**

**DHS agreed that we would support CASA's efforts to move in this direction if it was an area they felt the need to pursue.**

**9.** DHS provide CASA appointment orders to the ILP staff so they can connect with the youth's CASA.

#### **Action by DHS**

**DHS expects that communication with CASA would include all appointments that the child may have in regards to their case plan. DHS also agreed to give the ILP the CASA's name and contact information.**

**Lincoln County accepted all the recommendations of the Citizen Review Panel and began working to implement. Below is the status of the work to date. While they accepted the recommendation regarding a Foster Parent Navigator, they have encountered barriers that have prevented implementation.**

- 1. DHS review its foster parent recruitment materials and ensure that people can see themselves in those materials. Using the “22 Ways to Help Children in Foster Care” document, DHS, CASA, and CRB work together to write and publish regular and ongoing press stories about foster care and ways in which the community can get involved. Recruitment should create ever-present celebrations of the accomplishments of foster parents and community volunteers to excite people to get involved.**

We have been using the 22 ways. Our certifiers have used it in the community. We have had several ads in the newspaper, and we did radio ads, and a radio show and posters in the community. While we did thank you cards for May's Foster Parent Appreciation, we were disappointed to never get an activity to show our support of foster parents this month.

- 2. DHS work through the interfaith board to reach churches in the community and explore ways in which churches might be able to assist in providing space for visitation and volunteers to serve as mentors, drivers, and other opportunities.**

We did place recruitment posters in a few local churches, but haven't had much assistance so far. We believe the local Rotary is going to be helping us with the foster parent picnic.

Lincoln CW does utilize the faith community for the place of visits. North county has access to child-friendly sight at the Lutheran Church. We prioritized this as a need for strengthening families and fostering reunification. We have utilized a portion of our SB964 dollars to develop a community based visitation program with an education/training component for the volunteer visitation supervisors. They are usually extended family members not faith community.

We attempted to carve out business staff responsibilities to assist with developing volunteer resources; however, this has not been sustainable as other responsibilities have pressed. We do believe this remains a need, and could serve the dual role of training/recruiting student interns.

The Nazarene Church in Newport has their own supervised visitation service but they charge \$60.00 an hour.

**3. DHS ensure that all foster parents receive complete background information on the children in their care. Retention may increase if foster parents are clear on the issues children are facing.**

We have adopted a placement worker model, to ensure kids' needs are met during the transition into care. Our placement worker is working closely with our foster parents to at time of placement. This is a brand new position to the branch. One of the key elements of the model is a resource to the foster parents. The branch and the foster parents seem to be pleased with the process. Although this addresses the up-front needs, permanency workers are in the foster homes and engaging with the family about your rights.

**4. DHS explore creating a foster parent navigator paid or volunteer position and ensure that the person in that position is well equipped to guide foster parents in seeking services and supports. The panel recommends that DHS convene a group of stakeholders to define what is needed for the person in the position to succeed.**

We have not developed a foster parent Navigator position. Barriers to this have been time set aside to develop this initiative and the staff resources being made available to participate.

## 2013-2014 CRB CAPTA Recommendations: Visitation

### Lane County

1. DHS and CRB work together to create and deliver interdisciplinary training on DHS visitation policy, including content focused on the importance of visitation and methods to assess current safety threats.

An internal DHS training for all ongoing/permanency workers was done in October 2014. The training included reviewing of the policy, procedure and the forms.

Lisa Romano plans to ask the Juvenile Court Improvement Program for funding and we would plan to work together with the Model Court Team to provide this training. Lisa would plan to review the findings of our visitation survey at the training.

2. DHS expand technology options to increase parent/child/sibling contact including contact with incarcerated parents. Appointment of a single DHS point person with DOC would assist in ensuring development of a viable plan that could be implemented statewide.

We have dedicated a laptop with SKYPE at each office for children to use for visits with parents/relatives who are incarcerated or out of state. Prior to this we only had one laptop that had to travel between sites. SKYPE visits have increased significantly.

3. DHS provide updated visitation plans to the court and CRB for all hearings and reviews.

We did an in house training for all ongoing/permanency workers on Oct 1, 2014 regarding visitation plans and policy. Workers were told to make sure plans were updated and included in all packets to the CRB and Court. Workers were also informed at this training that the CRB and Court would be asking about visitation plans and they needed to be prepared to discuss them.

4. The Juvenile Court and CRB consider visitation when making reasonable efforts findings.

This is an issue for the CRB and Court to decide if they want to implement and proceed. Lane in the last few months has created a model court and we have been meeting monthly. I would foresee this as a future agenda topic for the model court process.

5. CRB and DHS work together to create a 90 day review process to ensure that visitation plans are created and updated in accordance with DHS policy. This review process, whether it is internal or external to DHS would provide opportunity to assess all levels of case progress.

This is something we have not met to discuss any further. Sydney and I are meeting with Lisa Romano of the CRB on June 8 to go over all of these recommendations and discuss where we are at and how to proceed from here. We expect supervisors during conferences and clinical supervision to be discussing visit plans with their workers and ensuring they are updated. Visitation plans are discussed during our transfer staffings as well as other critical junctures in the case. The barrier to implementing is DHS' preference to have case reviews/staffings be an internal process. CRB is already reviewing at the 6 month and we would need more information from Lisa what she would envision this to look like if it were moved to a 90 day process.

6. DHS expand partnerships with local churches and other potential partners, including resources in rural areas in Lane County, to increase opportunities for visitation in churches and other community facilities.

DHS Lane County has a church facility that we currently utilize for family visitations. We have also reached out to schools and have been able to provide family visits using their gym. Through our Casey and Grace grant work we continue to work on developing relationships outside of DHS to support family visits. We have also approached the YMCA and SPLASH regarding the potential for family passes at a reduced fee to increase healthy family activities.

We have increased visitation time by extending the hours and times by adding another SSA to both Florence and Cottage Grove.