

2014-2015 DISTRICT RESPONSES TO LOCAL CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the responses from the Counties to the recommendations of the local Citizen's Review Panels.

DOUGLAS COUNTY

Douglas County is in agreement with the recommendations and have begun the implementation process. As part of that implementation, Child Welfare management is meeting with the dependency team regularly and the court in an attempt to reinvigorate the Douglas County Model Court Team. Douglas County plans to include their neighboring county, Coos County, in the process of shared Roundtable process.

LANE COUNTY

Lane County agrees with the intent of the recommendations and is working to implement that intent. Lane is continuing their discussions with the Panel and had some suggestions for changes on some of the recommendations and a plan for the others. Their plan is to meet with the local CRP coordinator to discuss the Department responses. Below is a list of the areas where Lane County will be engaging the local CRP.

Recommendation 1: DHS will support community efforts to establish a short term BRS facility in Lane County, however, it is inconsistent with the design of the state program for the branch to seek other public and private funding.

Recommendation 2: DHS agrees with this recommendation and believes educating partners and foster parents about existing transportation resources will produce positive results. They will work on educating staff regarding opportunities for older youth and providing them with that information.

Recommendation 3: DHS agrees with this recommendation and will address this through certification and foster parent training.

Recommendation 4: DHS agrees with this recommendation and will address this through certification staff working with the foster homes and incorporating them in matching meetings.

Recommendation 5: DHS agrees to participate in statewide efforts to address the issue of youth who are at risk of, or have been exposed to commercial sexual exploitation. DHS does not agree with the 6 month timeline for implementation. The local branch will insure their efforts are congruent with the statewide implementation.

Recommendation 6: The local office is in agreement with this recommendation. Rather than appoint a separate task force, this effort will be directed to the already existing D5 Advisory Group.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

Multnomah County is in agreement with the recommendations and had the following additional responses.

Recommendation 1: The Department currently has an administrative rule that requires caseworkers to ask children whenever possible about relatives. The district will continue to follow this rule.

Recommendation 2: The District will send out communications to both foster parents and DHS staff to remind them of the support group and mentor resources available to foster parents. The district additionally responded that District 2 has multiple supports groups including:

- 1) General Applicant foster parent group at Midtown that is neighborhood-based and focused on problem solving, facilitated by Midtown certifier.
- 2) Midtown also has a support group for foster parents who have infants and toddlers with medical needs. This group is facilitated by a specialized certifier who also coordinates training for the group.
- 3) Certifiers at Midtown and East coordinate the support group for foster parents who are waiting to adopt.
- 4) Greater Metro Foster Parent Association support group meets monthly and is facilitated by the Gresham certification supervisor who also coordinates training for this group.
- 5) The SB964 contractor who works with teens and foster parents to maintain placement also offers a support group and provides on-site respite.
- 6) East certifier does a support group for families recruited by Embrace.
- 7) LGBTQ Adoption Support Group
 - i. Provided by Adoption Mosaic, currently in transition as the Q Center is being incorporated into NAFY Programs.
- 8) Hispanic Foster and Adoptive Parents Training & Support Group (in Spanish) coordinated by foster parent trainer.
- 9) Talk It Over- support group for families with a child or teen with mental illness, substance abuse or serious behavior problem (sponsored by Providence).
- 10) Grandparents and other relatives raising and parenting children (sponsored by Impact NW).
- 11) Staff going to A Jesus Church to develop a support group for foster parents (May).
- 12) Forming foster support groups at Mt. Olivet and New Song (both in N/NE community).

The Foster Parent Mentor Program in Multnomah County continues to be robust. As of March 2015, there are 24 individuals and couples that are actively mentoring other foster parents.

Recommendation 3: Several District 2 staff participated on the workgroup that developed these relative letters that are used statewide. The workgroup endeavored to make the language of the letters sensitive and engaging to the relatives that would be receiving them. The recommendation from the CRP to make the letters more “welcoming” lacks sufficient specificity for the District to advocate that revisions be made. The District invites the CRP to suggest specific language that would improve the document. With specificity, the District could advocate with the DHS Central Office Child Welfare Policy Council. In additions, the District provided the following clarification regarding relative letters.

Depending on the child’s or young adult’s situation, staff have several options with regard to the letters they send out to relatives:

- 1) Generic Letter (CF 267)
 - a. Asks relatives if they want to be placement resource, connection, & provide additional relative information
- 2) When the Child is Already Placed with Relatives (CF 264)
 - a) One letter will be mailed to the relative caregiver thanking them for taking the child and asking for additional relative info. We are not planning to remove the child but are asking for additional relative info.
 - b) One letter mailed to the other relatives (we know the child is placed with relatives, etc.)

3) Connection Only Letter (CF 266)

- a. NOT looking for placement, but asking for connection, family info, and other relatives
- b. Exception not to mail the generic letter which asks about placement must be approved by the Branch Manager

Recommendation 4: The District agrees that the letter needs to include inquiry regarding ways other than placement to support the child in care. In addition, they offered the following information.

In addition to inquiring as to whether relatives want to be considered as placement resources, The Relative Response Form (CF 448) asks relatives if they would like to support the child by

- Writing letters to the child
- Visiting with the child
- Provide transportation for visits with a parent
- Provide family contact information of other potential relatives
- Provide family history information which may include photos
- Having phone contact with the child
- Having the child visit me
- Provide family medical history

When relatives indicate they want to be considered for contact with children, DHS staff reach out to them to determine the type of involvement they are interested in. There are innumerable ways in which relatives may play roles in children's lives. To list them all in a form may be not be feasible.

The District makes efforts to identify and engage both relatives and non-relatives that may offer support to children and families. Resources for the engagement of supportive people include the grant-funded Family Connections program, the CASA MOU program, and a auxiliary service proposal from County Mental Health to provide "Family Find" services for the children which is currently under Central Office review.

Recommendation 5: The District has inquired with the DHS Data Collection and Reporting Unit about the possibility of capturing data regarding the use of OFDMs. Unfortunately, the DHS electronic data system does not have the capacity to do this at this time. The District will remind staff of the statutory requirement to consider holding OFDMs within 60 days, and that they document the reasons when it is decided that an OFDM should not be held. The District will not be able to track compliance.

The District does have multiple resources available to hold OFDMs and other Family Decision Meetings: Non-case carrying staff (Reunification and Engagement Specialists and Family Support Specialists) are available in every office to facilitate family meetings. District 2 will be participating in the IV-E Waiver program that will bring additional staff to conduct meetings and these meeting will be tracked. The District also contracts with service providers to facilitate Family Group Conferences.

Relative search and engagement is routinely discussed at most, if not all, family decision meetings.