



2015-2016 CAPTA Citizen Review Panels Recommendations and DHS Response

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels Recommendations

For 2015-2016, the three CAPTA panels were in Multnomah, Lane, and Douglas counties. The three panels independently chose to evaluate the same issue- how DHS can better recruit, support, and retain foster parents. After evaluating the issue and seeking input from foster parents and other stakeholders, the panels made the following recommendations to DHS:

Lane County

- DHS will compile and maintain a list of background-checked respite providers and provide this list to foster families.
- DHS will secure funding to continue a foster parent retention and support position, modeled after the position currently funded through the GRACE Initiative.
- DHS will provide foster parents access to an after-hours phone support line with an operator knowledgeable about DHS policy and procedure.
- DHS will develop and implement closure procedures for caseworkers to carry out with foster parents when a child leaves their care.
- DHS will provide caseworkers with professional development training on the impact transitions have on a foster family. The goal of this training should be to give caseworkers the tools to implement mindful transitions that are individualized, compassionate, and thoughtful. DHS will train caseworkers on resources that are available to foster parent such as grief counseling and support groups.
- DHS will seek funding opportunities to create and expand a child care subsidy program for children in relative and nonrelative foster care.
- DHS will create a cost benefit analysis on caseworker use of smart phones in order to improve communication.

Douglas County

- DHS add one full-time foster parent support position to the certification unit to enhance foster parent recruiting, training, support, and retention. The position should: increase training options for foster parents, ensure foster families feel respected and an important member of the team, create and maintain a foster parent support group/association, maintain a current registry of respite care providers, and implement an exit interview process for foster parents leaving the foster care system.

Multnomah County

- DHS update the foster parent trainings to include more population and issue specific trainings that are responsive to the concerns foster parents have.
- DHS seek funding to increase the foster parent reimbursement base rate payment.

DHS Response to the Recommendations

After review of the finding and recommendations of the three local Citizen's Review Panels, and in relationship to Oregon's current strategies around the Increase in Safe Substitute Care Capacity, it seems appropriate to respond from a statewide perspective rather than by individual Review Panels this year. The recommendations from the Review Panels can be categorized as falling into areas of Reimbursement and Support and will be addressed below.

As it relates to Support, the Department recognizes and supports the recommendations related to end of placement support around grief and loss, increase communication with foster parents, allocating staff to be responsible for supporting foster parents, and improved training from the Review Panels. In fact, Oregon has already begun to work on the areas of improved training through the Department's training redesign efforts. The Department has also recently engaged "211" in a contract to provide a 24/7 support line for Foster Parents. Through this contract, the foster parent will have the ability to contact the on-call staff from each District if necessary to meet the needs of the foster parent at that time. In addition, the strategic effort to Increase Safe Substitute Care Capacity will result in local offices having a formal recruitment and retention plan including strategies to address the need to increase the communication, engagement, and support of foster parents in their local areas.

In relationship to the recommendations regarding reimbursements to adequately address the needs of children in the foster care system, the Department has two primary strategies to address this issue underway. The first is that the Department has submitted a Policy Option Package for the Governor's consideration in her 2017-2019 budget for an increase in the Foster Care reimbursement rates. The second is a modification to our Enhanced Supervision program to include child care reimbursements to qualified foster parents. The Policy Option Package is obviously heavily dependent on the Governor and the Legislature. The modification of our Enhanced Supervision program is within the Department's control and Oregon is actively working to have this operationalized by 2017.

As a Department child welfare recognizes the interdependence with Foster Care Providers. They are the most valuable partner in keeping children safe when the Department is unable to manage in a child's home. And as a result, the recommendations provided by the three Citizen Review Panels either have been, or will be, incorporated into the work the Department is doing at the statewide and local levels to continue to work to better support foster parents.