

# crb network news

winter 2018

newsletter of the citizen review board



## Months-long evaluation of CRB reviews and outcomes highlight program strengths, offers ways to improve

In April 2017, CRB began working with Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE), an independent Portland-based evaluator, to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of our program.

The evaluation was recommended by the National Center for State Courts in a 2016 workload study of Oregon's juvenile courts. The NCSC found that judges whose courts used CRB most frequently felt their local CRB was essential to their work, and that an evaluation of the quality of CRB reviews and their impact on outcomes for children would help "guide courts in how best to utilize

and work with its local CRB."

From July through September, PRE and a team of 18 volunteer board members and 17 CRB staff observed and collected data on a day of CRB reviews in 24 of Oregon's 36 counties. Additionally, with input from CRB staff and the CRB Advisory Committee, PRE developed a series of online surveys for volunteer board members, child welfare workers, judges, and other stakeholders. PRE also interviewed 11 judges by phone to gather qualitative data to support and inform the quantitative

## New faces!

The Citizen Review Board has hired two new field managers.

Anna Abraham has accepted a position as field manager for Linn, Benton, and Polk counties.

Abraham was previously a supervisor for the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in Multnomah, Washington, and Clatsop counties. She's also worked for a Portland women's recovery program, where she coordinated events and activities for residents and trained volunteers.

Tricia Swallow will be the new field manager for Douglas County.

Swallow was employed for many years by the Department of Human Services in Douglas County, where she was a permanency and protective services worker. She was also protective services supervisor.

Abraham and Swallow officially begin their CRB duties in March.

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# Decrease decision-making based on implicit preferences

Some of us are old enough to remember the 1967 Peter, Paul and Mary song "I'm in Love with a Big Blue Frog." (See illustration, lyrics.)

A silly song, right? Not in 1967! In reality, the metaphor in the song still speaks today of society's explicit and implicit biases and how bias can affect how we see and respond to one another as human beings.

As human beings, we see the world from our own subjective perspectives which stem from our background experiences, upbringing, and belief systems. One issue that has gained a lot of attention lately in the media and social science research is that of *implicit preference*. Each of us has preferences of which we are aware, that influence our daily decision-making and judgments. What we are not so aware of however, are implicit preferences that operate at the unconscious level, which means they aren't readily available to our conscious thought processing yet still have the ability to impact our decision-making. We have the potential to become self-aware so to avoid decisions based on our implicit preferences.

Our role as CRB members is to make findings on topics containing highly emotional content. While we may be quite aware of explicit views and judgment preferences that we hold in daily life, psychological research has demonstrated that we also hold implicit views that we may not be aware of that could influence how we make findings in our reviews.

The CRB Cultural Responsiveness Committee is asking all CRB staff and volunteer board members to examine the influence of unconscious preferences and associations as they relate to the review process. This assignment has three components:

**Select and complete a minimum of two Implicit Association Tests by clicking [HERE](#).**

IATs were developed by researchers from Harvard, the University of Virginia, and the University of Washington. The IAT seeks to measure our implicit associations between various concepts (e.g., race, skin color, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) and evaluative judgments (e.g., positive/negative). The IATs have been taken by more than 4 million people. While demographic information is gathered on test takers, the results are confidential. **You do not need to report your results to the CRB.** Our goal for having people take the IAT is to encourage self-awareness and critical thinking about these issues.

**Listen to the 38 minute podcast "The Hidden Brain - In the Air We Breathe" by clicking [HERE](#).**

Discuss your experience taking the IATs and listening to the podcast with your fellow board members and field managers. Can you identify ways to improve the Review process by limiting the possible negative influence of personal preferences?



Illustration: Donkey Hotey

I'm in love with a big blue frog,  
A big blue frog loves me...  
Well I'm not worried about our kids,  
I know they'll turn out neat.  
They'll be great looking 'cause they'll have  
my face,  
Great swimmers cause they'll have his feet!  
~ Peter, Paul and Mary

**Please complete the three tasks above by June 1.**

Talk to your Field Manager about opportunities to listen to the podcast together as a board. Board Members can receive cultural responsiveness continuing education credits for these activities.

As part of the CRB 5-Year Strategic Plan, a goal related to Access states: "Volunteer board members provide an impartial, culturally responsive legal review ensuring each participant has a voice that is heard." One of the strategies to meet this goal is to recognize and mitigate the effects of bias. As part of this strategy the CRB reconvened the Cultural Responsiveness Committee to develop detailed plans to further this strategy and to provide diversity training for all staff and board members. One of the first efforts of the committee was to develop this training on implicit associations. These activities are also being incorporated into the orientation training for new volunteer board members.

**BY JOHN NICHOLS and LEOLA MCKENZIE, CRB**

# Evaluation: CRB a 'check and balance' to foster care system

Continued from p. 1

Final results show many strengths, as well as some areas for improvement.

## STRENGTHS

- For the most part, CRB reviews are being conducted consistently across the state and board members are making inquiries into appropriate areas.
- There is good representation of both professionals and nonprofessionals at CRB reviews, and boards are engaging these individuals in reviews.
- Judges overwhelmingly value the CRB as a check and balance to the foster care system and believe CRB findings and recommendations help them conduct more thorough hearings.
- And CRB is enhancing transparency of and public engagement in the foster-care and juvenile-court systems with 97% of CRB volunteers reporting they learned more about the child welfare system by being a board member, and 37% indicating they had inspired another person to either volunteer for an organization serving children or families, or to become a foster parent.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- More in-depth inquiry into child safety and action agreements/letters of expectation.
- More up-to-date case plans provided for CRB reviews and more complete case material overall.
- Better tracking of, and follow-up, on DHS implementation of CRB recommendations.
- Implementing trauma-informed techniques to make CRB reviews less traumatic for caseworkers in addition to youth and parents.
- Developing performance measures for better tracking of long-term outcomes.

For questions or to review the evaluation, please contact Christina Jagernauth, CRB Assistant Director, at [christina.jagernauth@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:christina.jagernauth@ojd.state.or.us) or (503) 986-5941.

# Save the Date!



## Every Day Counts...

## In the Life of a Child in Foster Care

## CRB Annual Conference

## May 4 & 5, 2018

The annual *Every Day Counts...* conference will be held at the Hilton, in Eugene, Oregon.

Registration information will be available in February 2018.

# in the news...

## the northwest

◆ A shortage of foster parents in Central Oregon is uprooting children from their schools, friends, and communities, according to a recent story reported by **KTVZ News** in Bend.

Cherie Ferguson from the Department of Human Services is responsible for finding and retaining foster parents in the tri-county (Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson) area. Jefferson County is being hit particularly hard, she said.

There are currently only four general applicant homes – the kinds of homes that can take any child. But there are 49 children in the Jefferson County system, she said. Because of this, only 21 of the youth are able to stay within the county.

“They have to be placed with a family that’s new to them,” Ferguson said. “And then if they don’t have a family

that’s in their hometown, then they have to go to a new school.

“Their natural support system is really just taken away from them,” she continued.

Ferguson said Crook County is also seeing a significant lack of adequate foster homes, with 27 of the county’s 37 foster children placed in another county. This is a relatively new problem, she continued, noting factors range from the disappearance of partner organizations to DHS’ focus on keeping children with family members.

To read the entire story, click [HERE](#).

◆ A nonprofit organization that offers a lending hand to families in Oregon’s foster care system has branched into Linn and Benton counties, according to a story in the **Corvallis Gazette Times** newspaper.

[Every Child](#) connects volunteers who wish to support the foster care

system with opportunities such as babysitting for foster families, renovating Department of Human Services visitation rooms, and donating to foster children who’ve aged out of the system.

The organization is a community based-volunteer initiative that works in a private/public partnership with DHS.

Every Child began in the Portland area in 2012 and expanded into other parts of the state last year.

Approximately 373 children spent time in foster care in Linn and Benton counties in 2017, with 66.1% of that population spending time in more than one home, according to Every Child.

Every Child Linn-Benton officially launched this month. To read the whole story, click [HERE](#).

## National Report: foster care numbers up, group home totals down

The number of children in the foster care system in the United States fell dramatically between 2005 and 2014 (by nearly 19 percent), according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. But by the end of 2014, there were 415,000 children in foster care across the nation, a 3% increase from the previous year.

And an estimated 260,000 children entered foster care in 2014, while 238,000 exited. Among individual states, the foster care entry rate ranged from 1.5 children per 1,000 to 9.8 children per 1,000, HHS reported.

These are among the findings in the national **Child Welfare Outcomes 2010 to 2014 Report to Congress**, released last year. As part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, the HHS Children’s Bureau publishes annual reports assessing state performance in operating children protection and welfare programs.

The analysis highlights national and individual state performances in seven outcome categories, including increasing permanency for children in foster care, reducing time in foster care to adoption, placement stability,

and recurrence of abuse. Data comes from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. State and local child welfare researchers and organizations also contributed to the federal study.

### According to the report:

State performance “varied considerably” with regard to the percentage of child victims experiencing a recurrence of child maltreatment within a 6-month-period, ranging from .7% to 13.9% (Oregon’s percentage of recurrence was nearly 4%).

In 2014, states were “fairly successful” in achieving a permanent home for all children exiting foster care, at a median of about 89%. However, states were less successful in achieving permanent homes for children exiting foster care who entered care when they were older than 12 – a median of 63.9%.

Regarding placements of young children in group homes or institutions, of children entering foster care at under 12 years, 4% See “Report,” p. 6

# Information Security

Information security breaches are so common that almost every American will be affected at some point. It is because of this that the Oregon Judicial Department has a policy requiring **every** employee and volunteer to complete an annual information security training.

What are the odds of . . .



(Global average 28%)

<https://securityintelligence.com/know-the-odds-the-cost-of-a-data-breach-in-2017/>

As volunteer board members, you receive extremely confidential and sensitive information about families in your community. Before being appointed to a citizen review board, each board member swears an oath before the court to keep

**In September 2017**, the American public learned that Equifax, a consumer credit reporting agency, experienced a massive online security breach that compromised the personal information of as many as 143 million Americans.

confidential all information reviewed by the board, as well as the actions and recommendations in individual cases. Board members take their oath of confidentiality seriously and in the history of the CRB, we have not had a board member knowingly divulge confidential case information. **Violation of the duty of confidentiality is a Class A violation subject to a fine of up to \$2,000.**

CRB

created an [information security training](#) for all board members. Please watch the eModule training and then take a short quiz to affirm you have completed the training **no later than June 1**. All prospective board members will complete the training as part of orientation. Some field staff may use time during a board review day to watch the e-module and complete the quiz as a board, which will satisfy the requirement for the board members in attendance on that day. You will receive **.25 continuing-education credits** for completing this task.

Thank you for all that you do for Oregon's children and families, and for ensuring that the CRB upholds our duty of confidentiality!

**In September 2016**, Yahoo announced that data associated with at least 500 million accounts had been stolen; three months later it admitted that a second data breach affected more than one billion accounts.

# Report: US “fairly successful” achieving permanent homes for all youth

Continued from p. 4

or less were placed in group homes or institutions in about half of all states in 2014. And there were only two states – Arkansas and South Carolina – where the percentage of young children in group homes exceeded 10%.

There are outcome areas where Oregon still lags. The national median for percentage of children adopted who were in care less than 12 months is 4.1%; Oregon’s measure was .4 percent in 2014, down from 1% in 2010. (It should be noted that per HHS’ approach to analyses, a percent change of 5% or more in either direction is the general indicator for a meaningful change, according to HHS.)

Oregon fared better in the measure involving achieving

stable and appropriate placement settings. Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in care for less than 12 months, 87.8 percent of youth in Oregon had no more than two placement settings in 2014; The national median was 85.5%.

To view the full HHS’ **Child Welfare Outcomes 2010-2014: Report to Congress**, including contextual data, performance on original, and state comments, and outcome measures, click [HERE](#).

You can find more information at the Children’s Bureau website at [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)

