

crb network news

august 2017

newsletter of the citizen review board



Every Day Counts... In the Life of a Child

Story by Dave Smith
CRB Field Manager

Photo: Terry Svay

Child brain development, safety in foster care key talking points at CRB annual training conference

Almost 200 Citizen Review Board volunteers and child welfare stakeholders gathered in Salem for the CRB's "Every Day Counts" training conference in May.

The 32nd edition of the annual event, held on May 19 and 20 at the Salem Conference Center, provided attendees with new tools and knowledge to assist in dependency case reviews. Guest speakers from different disciplines, meanwhile, presented on crucial topics ranging from bias in decision making to how heroin and opiate addiction has impacted children and parents in the foster care system.

"I really want to thank you all for your service to the state," said Marion County Juvenile Court Judge Cheryl

Pelligrini during her opening address to the audience. "Your engagement in the child welfare system is an indispensable asset to our state, our communities, and our courts."

Dr. Shannon Peake of the University of Oregon and Michael Livingston, CRB volunteer from Marion County, presented information on the impact on brain and socio-emotional development in children who experience frequent and prolonged stress while lacking adult emotional support or protection – an ordeal commonly referred to as "toxic stress."

"The environment of a child is the thing we have to work with," said Peake, a research associate with UO's Stress Neurobiology and Prevention

See "Conference," p. 3

Oregon is best in country for educating homeless students

From *The Oregonian* newspaper: Oregon was named the top state in the nation when it comes to educating homeless students, according to a recently-released national study.

The report by the New York City-based Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH) found that Oregon ranked first when measuring how effectively school districts identify homeless children and enroll them in school, particularly pre-school age youth, according to the article.

Areas measured in the report underscored the high representation of homeless students in Oregon's early childhood programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start.

State officials credited strong collaboration between agencies and training for school homeless liaisons as reasons for success.

Click [HERE](#) to read the *Oregonian* article. The ICPH report can be found [HERE](#).

In this issue

P. 2 Federal Report (CFSSR)

P. 5 Statewide Process & Outcome Evaluation

P. 6 In the News

CRB Network News Editor: Craig Coleman
Craig.D.Coleman@ojd.state.or.us

Federal report examines strengths, needs of state child welfare

The Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), authorized by the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act (SSA), are administered by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goals of the CFSR are to:

- Ensure substantial conformity with Title IV-B and IV-E child welfare requirements;
- Determine what is happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and
- Assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.

There were two rounds of the CFSR in 2015 and 2016. CRB and Juvenile Court Improvement Program Staff Christina Jagernauth, Conor Wall, David Smith, Shary Mason, and John Nichols participated in these reviews alongside numerous staff members.

The CFSR is an in-depth review of individual in-home or foster care cases. These



DHS Child Welfare

John Nichols
CRB
Field Manager

were completed in every county in Oregon. The cases were chosen at random for review. The results are collected and a report is issued about the state of child welfare in Oregon.

The review process included: a) reviewing all online or hard-copy documents for the case under the period under review (one-year period); b) interviewing the caseworker and the CPS worker (if applicable) to get their perspective of the case; c) interviewing the parents (if available), foster parents, CASA, and the children (if available) with open-ended questions about the quality of services they received and their overall experience with DHS; d) information is collated; e) the CFSR instrument is completed and goes through rigorous feedback to ensure accuracy; f) feedback is provided to the local DHS office; and, finally, a report from the federal government is issued to the agency and public.

This instrument reviews safety, permanency, and well-being. There are 18 items that are rated as "Strength" or "Area Needing Improvement." Then, depending on the rating for each item, the outcome will be rated as "Substantially Achieved," "Partially Achieved," or "Not Achieved." Here are the seven outcomes we reviewed in most cases:

- Safety 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

- Safety 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Permanency 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- Well-Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Well-being 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Well-being 3: Children Receive Adequate Services to Meet their Physical and Mental Health Needs

The final report can be found at [CFSR Oregon Final Report](#). The agency is now making changes to address areas needing improvement. DHS is continuing to use the CFSR instrument for ongoing quality assurance purposes.

Here are some "takeaways" that can be applied to some of our CRB review findings:

Finding #1) When reviewing new cases, look for the timeliness of responding to the CPS reports. CPS codes cases as 24 hour or five-day response times, depending on the severity of the allegation. These are noted on the PCR report and/or Assessment Summary the Board receives. If the agency does not make contact with the alleged child victim in the coded response time, the Board should consider a "No" finding. The federal government takes timeliness in making the initial contact with the child very seriously.

Finding #2) Did the agency, during the period under review, make concerted efforts to identify, locate, inform, and evaluate maternal and paternal relatives as potential placements for the child? ***I believe this should be the standard in our CRB reviews for Finding #2.***

Finding #3) In making findings on the caseworker's face-to-face contacts with the child, the federal government only accepts face-to-face contacts that are clearly documented in the case plan. If they are not clearly documented, they did not occur. ***The CRB should operate with the same standard.***

If there were any safety concerns for the child in at least one foster-care placement during the period under review: were the concerns adequately assessed and clearly addressed? If DHS cannot adequately explain how they responded to the safety concerns, then a "No Finding" would be appropriate. Often we hear that CPS is investigating and the permanency worker does not know what is happening. This is unacceptable because communication within the agency needs to occur.

Stability in foster care is significant. If there are placement

Conference: CRB reviews must be more “incisive” on child health

Continued from p. 1

Laboratory. “We don’t get to go back and change their genetics.”

Peake and Livingston then explained how to apply the information learned about brain development to making the CRB Finding 3A, “Has DHS ensured that appropriate services are in place to safeguard the child’s safety, health and well-being?”

In her presentation on child safety in foster care, the Honorable Pamela Abernethy gave a call to action to use increased scrutiny in case reviews.

Through its reviews, the CRB is able to shine a light on the health, safety and well-being of children in foster care, Abernethy said. She referred to findings in the [Child Safety in Substitute Care Independent Review Report](#) completed by the firm Public Knowledge — also known as the PK Report — to highlight the need for CRB reviews to focus more incisively on the health, safety, and well-being of children in foster care.

Friday’s afternoon session of the conference concluded with an issue-focused mock review of the Hart/Stevens case. The Hart/Stevens case material was provided to all

attendees before the conference. Four volunteer board members asked questions of the various parties in the case, before the audience was given the chance to vote on whether the finding would be positive or negative.

The first day of the conference was capped by a volunteer recognition dinner and remarks from Justice David Brewer, and interviews of Brittany Hope, a foster youth advocate, and Lisa McMahon of the Oregon Foster Youth Connection.

Dr. Rita Cameron Wedding kicked off day two with an energetic keynote presentation — which included an impromptu dance party set to the Pharrell Williams tune “Happy.”

The CRB would like to thank the volunteer board members on the CRB Advisory Committee who assisted with planning the workshops and to the volunteers who comprised the mock review board.

A big thanks also to the CRB staff who organized and planned the conference, and to all the field staff who participated in the mock review and the workshops. Additionally, there were numerous representatives from other agencies and community partners who assisted with the workshops.

If you missed the Every Day Counts Conference, materials and video recordings are available [HERE](#) on the [CRB website](#). A highlight of the conference is charitable giving. A raffle of baskets filled with prizes and goodies donated from local boards across the state raised \$3,600 to support [Camp to Belong](#), which reunites siblings living in separate foster care homes in a summer camp setting. THANK YOU to all who gave and attended the conference. See you next year!



CFSR: “the findings should be made on facts, not feelings.”

Continued from p. 3

changes, they should have a clear reason for the change. Acceptable changes in placement are: moving from non-relative to relative, family-foster care placement, moving to a more secure placement due the child’s needs, or stepping down to a lower level of care. Other placement changes are seen as detrimental to the child’s stability. From the beginning of the case, the agency must provide a placement that meets the needs of the child. We should carefully consider this in our findings.

Were concerted efforts made to ensure that visitation (or other forms of contact if visitation was not possible) between the child and his or her mother/father/siblings/grandparents is of sufficient frequency to maintain/promote the continuity of the relationship? In our reviews, we need to ask about the quality of the visit as much as the frequency.

The CFSR assesses whether DHS is adequately assessing the needs of the foster or pre-adoptive providers on an ongoing basis. Are the foster providers’ needs being addressed? The CRB review should always ask the foster parents if their needs are being addressed adequately.

The CFSR evaluates whether concerted efforts are being made to involve parents and children (developmentally/appropriately) in case planning on an ongoing basis. The parents and children need to be active participants in developing the case plan, not just passive recipients. The Board should be asking whether the parents and children are able

to have input into the decisions that are affecting their lives and family.

The CRB is uniquely positioned to do ongoing assessments of the cases we review. We should be scrupulous, but not mean-spirited. We make our findings and let the facts speak. Though we should listen to some of the excuses and frustrations of the caseworker about a case, the findings should be made on facts, not feelings.

An April 20, 2016 article in *The Oregonian* newspaper reported “A new federal study [CFSR] finds Oregon's child welfare system is failing across the board when it comes to keeping thousands of children in state care safe and healthy.”

The story went on to state "Oregon is trending in the wrong direction."

We should not be timid to say “No” when that “No” might be a wakeup call to the agency — as a whole — to make an improvement in the case. A “No” finding might make the difference in the case and future cases! Change needs to occur and that is one of the reasons of the CRB’s existence.

The cases of children we review cannot wait for a periodic federal review to advocate for improvement to the DHS system. We need to take our reviewing role seriously for the sake of the children we review.



CRB Conducting Statewide Process and Outcome Evaluation

By Christina Jagernauth, CRB Assistant Director

In April, CRB initiated a statewide process and outcome evaluation of its program. This evaluation was recommended in a workload study of Oregon’s juvenile courts conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). They found that “[judges] whose courts used their local CRB most frequently felt that the CRB was essential to their work both because their court did not have docket time to review most cases between permanency hearings, and because the CRB’s findings and recommendations provide critical information about the cases.” NCSC encouraged courts that do not fully utilize their CRB to “explore making more use of this resource” and recommended that CRB conduct an outcome evaluation that would “gather information on the quality of CRB reviews, and the impacts they have on outcomes for children” in order to “guide courts in how best to utilize and work with its local CRB.”

CRB contracted with Portland-based Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) to conduct the evaluation. PRE assisted with development of 9 evaluation questions based on CRB’s short- and long-term outcomes. In order to answer these questions, PRE will use six data collection methods:

- Observations of CRB reviews,
- Survey of board members and possible focus groups,
- Survey or focus groups of child welfare workers,
- Survey and interviews of judges,
- Survey of stakeholders, and
- Using results from the October 2016 survey of CRB review participants.

All data collection will occur during the months of July, August, and September 2017. CRB will observe 25 boards across the state during this time. Each observation will be conducted by either two PRE staff persons or a volunteer board member paired with a CRB staff person. During the observations, they will complete two data collection instruments – one for the entire review day and another for each review. We are incredibly grateful to the 24 board members who volunteered to travel to a county other than their own and observe a board.

To build on the data collected from these observations, PRE assisted CRB is developing a short survey for all board members. This survey is designed to collect data on board member perceptions about the quality of reviews; barriers to conducting quality reviews; suggestions for improving the process; and the perceived impact of CRB reviews on safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. The anonymous survey should take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

[Click here to take the survey.](#)

The final report of the process and outcome evaluation will be completed by the end of this year, and shared with all volunteer board members. Thank you all for the time, energy, and emotion you dedicate each month to Oregon’s most vulnerable children and families. And thank you for taking the time to provide us with your thoughts on how we can better support you in this important work.

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.

Optimizing Your Self-Care Based on Your Coping Style

[Headington Institute](#)

You can practice even better self-care if you know what coping style you have. Aid workers respond to stress and critical incidents in different ways. Dr. Rick Williamson describes 3 coping styles that aid workers typically have: the avoidant style, ruminative style, and hypervigilant style. Watch this video for a deeper look into each style and how knowing your style can help you recover and recharge more effectively.

[Click here to watch the YouTube video.](#)

Reminder:
Take care
of
yourself!

In the news

THE NORTHWEST

◆ Supporters of Portland's Timbers and Thorns professional soccer teams have helped create two visitation rooms at the Department of Human Services building in Beaverton for children in foster care, according to a recent story reported by Portland-based KPTV news.

Visitation rooms for the DHS Child Welfare program are where children can spend time with their biological parents for weekly or monthly visits. They also serve as playrooms while caseworkers seek foster placement.

The two new sports dens at the Beaverton office came courtesy of the charitable assists of time and money by the Timbers Army, the story said. The initiative was spearheaded by Keith Palau and the 1071ST – the independent supports trust of the Timbers Army.

“Not every supporters group in MLS does this kind of stuff quite the same way,” Palau said. “So to be able to do it and hopefully, maybe over time, encour-

age some others over the time to do some similar things, is the goal.”

The group has previously furnished rooms for foster children in the Hillsboro DHS building.

“I think of what children's faces are going to look like when they come in this room, and it feels like home,” said Laurie Price, DHS Child Welfare Director.”

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

◆ For a foster child in Oregon, finding a home can be difficult, but it's even more difficult for LGBTQ foster youths, according to a recent story by Portland-based KOIN news.

Many youth find themselves going from home to home because they're not completely accepted for who they are. In fact, about 40% of the homeless population in Portland identifies as LGBTQ, KOIN reported.

Currently in Multnomah County, there are 1,479 youths in foster care.

KOIN 6 News had the chance to talk to a bisexual foster youth, 18-year-old Sage Dupre. She graduated from high school a year early and has been taking courses at Portland Community College.

Sage has identified as bisexual for almost her entire life and said she knows from experience how hard it is to find an understanding family as she's been in 6 different foster homes. She's been in the foster care system for almost 5 years, and said it's been a struggle to be in a home where the parents don't understand her bisexuality.

It's “really hard” to find placements for non-LGBTQ youth, which is why the agency is especially concerned for LGBTQ foster youth, said Meghan Nielson, a social services specialist.

DHS employees said the situation for foster youths is dire, but there are ways to help. On its website, DHS offers [information on the foster parent application process](#).

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

Citizen Review Board ◆ 1163 State Street ◆ Salem, OR 97301

503-986-5861 ◆ www.courts.oregon.gov/CRB