

It is the mission of the Region 2 Oversight Committee to be a presence in the community by reaching out and advocating for the needs of children and families across Region 2.

**Region 2 Children's Administration Oversight Committee
Citizen Review Panel**

2009 CAPTA Report and Work Plan

June 1, 2010

Purpose

The purpose of the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is to evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State plan.

Areas of Focus

The Region 2 Oversight Committee also serves as a Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for Washington State. As in previous years, the Oversight Committee CRP invited local community members to join Committee meetings in discussing the accessibility and effectiveness of CA services, with emphasis on policies, practices and community collaborations that support child safety and well-being. Specific areas of focus in 2009 included: child fatalities, CA Region 2 performance in meeting State and Federal requirements (per current data), support and training opportunities for foster parents and kinship/relative caregivers, emergency child placement resources, racial disproportionality in recipients of CA services, and staff turnover. The committee also continued to follow the agency's progress in implementing recommendations from prior years.

Process

The Region 2 Oversight Committee CRP met seven times during 2009. The Committee met every month until March; due to budget concerns related to travel expenses, the decision was made to meet every other month. The meetings were conducted in various communities, in each of the seven counties which comprise Region 2. Meetings were held in a variety of locations, including smaller communities. Meetings were held as follows:

January 6	Pasco	(Catholic Family & Child Service)
February 3	Yakima	(Central WA Comprehensive Mental Health)
March 3	Sunnyside	(DCFS Office)
May 5	Bickleton	(Bickleton Presbyterian Church)
July 7	Burbank	(Burbank Fire Station)
September 1	Ellensburg	(DCFs Office)
November 3	Toppenish	(Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic)

At each meeting, comments were heard from invited local community representatives who are knowledgeable about child and family service needs and service gaps. The CA Regional Administrator, Area Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrator and regional program consultants regularly attend the Oversight CRP meetings. The CA Assistant Secretary attended part of one meeting. Regular attendees and guests who participated in 2009 meetings included:

- Education personnel representing 4 area districts (Selah, Sunnyside, Bickleton, Columbia-Burbank)
- Family to Family partners; Chair of local Family to Family Advisory Committee
- Law Enforcement officers representing 4 jurisdictions (Yakima, Klickitat, Benton-Franklin, Walla Walla)
- New Visitation contractor in Kittitas County (Mercy Miles)
- NW Community Action Council Education services representative
- Judge Maryrose Gonzalez from Yakama Nation Children's Court
- Private child-placing and mental health agency staff representing 5 agencies (Catholic Family & Child Service, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic Behavioral Health, 3 Rivers Wraparound, 2 Rivers Landing inpatient program, Central WA Comprehensive Mental Health FACES Program)
- Local Community Safety Network group volunteers (Toppenish)
- Member of State Advisory Committee (presented action updates at each meeting)
- Member of State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee (presented action updates at each meeting)
- Local CA office Supervisors, Social Workers and regional Foster/Kinship Care Consultant (Terry Lockett) and Regional ILS/Voluntary Services/Education Consultant (Sandy Bradley), and Regional CPS Consultant (Robert Rodriguez)
- Solution-Based Casework Practice Model Coach assigned to Reg. 2 (June West)

Findings

1. **Community collaboration is essential to child protection and well-being; family and community strengths, current and projected service needs, and gaps in services are common themes for committee discussions.**
 - Stakeholders in various localities have continued to highlight the importance of engaging with community partners to assure that reports of abuse/neglect are made, to strengthen the effectiveness of CPS interventions, and to reduce gaps in the service array. Mental health service needs remain high priority for resource-development. The new 2-Rivers Landing adolescent inpatient treatment program in Yakima, operated by CWCMH, is serving youth from around the region, and from other areas in the state. The 16-bed facility includes a detoxification bed, provides short-term crisis care utilizing and evidence-based trauma-informed treatment model. 3-Rivers Wraparound Program, operating in Benton/Franklin Counties since 2003, recently expanded service capacity to 40 families. This unique program follows the National Wraparound Initiative model values and practices, receives consultation from U. of WA and other nationally-recognized wraparound experts. Program components include parent and youth groups, which are facilitated by the program's Parent and

Youth Partners. Data is gathered monthly; numbers show reductions in child psychiatric hospitalizations, juvenile justice involvement, school suspensions, and increases in family utilization of community resources and natural supports.

- A Children's Advocacy Center (one of several centers in WA State, part of the National Children's Alliance) has been developed in Kittitas County. Community members responded to a needs survey, attended a 2-day conference facilitated by the Co. Prosecutor to create protocols. The center's purpose is fighting child abuse through community trainings and special events.
- CA Region 2 has entered into a partnership with Sunnyside School District, to improve educational outcomes for abused and/or neglected children. Sunnyside school staff receive training and information about CA/CPS policies/practices; constant communication/information-exchange is a key component of this partnership.
- Parents, church and civic leaders of rural communities in the Toppenish/Wapato/White Swan areas (mid-Yakima County, Yakama Nation Reservation) formed a Community Safety Network Group. Network members will gather residents' advice on service needs and gaps, with emphasis on youth involvement. Primary goal is prevention of youth violence and criminal activity, which result in youth being sent to other states. Mentoring to develop youth self-confidence, after-school activities are key components.
- Meetings held in the smallest rural communities in Region 2 focused on strategies for serving youth locally with very limited resources. School districts, churches, and civic organizations play a critical role in preventing child abuse/neglect by providing direct assistance to challenged families.
- Each member of the Oversight CRP has agreed to serve on teams to help review child fatalities as needed.
- Education Forums were held in 5 locations in 2009 (Yakima, Granger, White Salmon, Tri-Cities, Walla Walla). Focused on improving educational outcomes for children/youth in foster/kinship care, the forums featured foster youth and alumni, caregivers, staff from local school districts, colleges, and ESDs, community agencies and businesses. The primary goal for these events was to create ongoing connections among these individuals and groups, thus increasing support and resources for students in foster/kinship care. At the July 7 meeting, Columbia Burbank School Supt. Lou Gates requested a Resource Guide for community services that are linked to CA offices (Richland/Walla Walla), and for office staff contact lists (these were provided within the month). Dr. Gates expressed strong interest in holding regular meetings between school counselors and CA staff to discuss individual student needs and strategies to maximize services.
- Two CA Social Workers from the Yakima office are out-stationed in 3 schools in Yakima and one school in Selah. This arrangement allows for immediate assistance for students and school staff, maintains communication, and builds school/community relationships.

2. Appropriate crisis placement resources and a sufficiency of suitable foster families (for children of various ethnic and language origins) are needed region-wide.

- On July 7, the Committee met with law enforcement representatives from the Walla Walla Sheriff's Office, Kennewick Police Dept., and Benton Co. sheriff's Office to discuss the pending closure of the Secure CRC located in Kennewick. A major concern is safety for runaway youth, and L.E. liability when parents refuse to take the youth home, or can't be located. CRC resources are available in Yakima, but distance is a barrier; there is one HOPE bed in Walla Walla County for female adolescents. All meeting participants agreed to actively pursue a variety of options involving sharing/increasing crisis resources.
- CA Social Workers from the Yakima and Richland offices are out-stationed at Yakima, Selah, Kennewick, and Richland Police Departments, and at the Yakima and Benton County Sheriffs' offices. Officers and Social Workers work together in assisting with crisis situations where children may be harmed. Two Social Workers in the Walla Walla office are assigned as liaisons to the Dayton and Walla Walla Police Depts. These arrangements increase overall communication and build inter-agency relationships.
- Efforts to expand emergency placement resources (see above) resulted in development of "Options" beds (2 in Walla Walla/Columbia Counties) which are available to any youth in need of placement. Funding these resources, especially in rural areas, is complex, requiring collaborative efforts among Oversight CRP members, law enforcement, private child-placing agencies, county Human Services Depts., and CA. The Options beds are co-funded by Walla Walla Co. Juvenile Justice Dept., and CA Region 2. There continues to be a shortage of crisis placement resources in the lower Yakima Valley.
- A chronic, region-wide shortage of licensed foster homes has been somewhat alleviated by legislation that allows for children to be placed with "suitable" persons, and by the increases in placements with relatives. The region-wide FTDM process, while very labor-intensive, has had a significant impact in maintaining stability and reducing trauma for children who can be cared for by family members. However, there is still a need for well-trained, licensed foster parents, particularly foster parents who can provide culturally-appropriate care for children of various ethnic origins.
- Significant delays in processing licensing background checks (per the Adam Walsh legislation requirements) contribute to the resource shortages noted above. The Committee will continue to focus on this issue in 2010.

- 3. Remediation of racial disproportionality in child welfare services will require in-depth study and broad community involvement.**
 - The Oversight CRP members have committed to challenging ourselves and all parties involved in child welfare in our home communities to assure that all children and families have access to quality services.
 - One member of the Oversight CRP also serves on the legislatively-mandated CA Disproportionality Review Committee. The study of incidence of racial disproportionality, released in late 2008, provides the focus for ongoing review of practice and policies that may be related to this issue. The representative from Region 2 CRP provides updates at each meeting.
 - In Region 2, the most significant disproportionality of children placed in out-of-home care is among Native American children. The Oversight CRP undertook to increase members' awareness and ability to lead change by devoting one meeting to education on Tribal-State relations and the legal framework for Indian Child Welfare, presented by Yakama Nation Children's Court Judge Maryrose Gonzalez. Key learning points included differences in State and Tribal Dependency actions (Tribal Court does not terminate parents' rights), Tribal CASA services, family involvement and confidentiality. Judge Gonzalez will share a training power point with the Toppenish CA Area Administrator; recommended training Social Workers, parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers together about Children's Tribal Court.
 - Judge Gonzalez was invited to attend all Region 2 Oversight Committee meetings.
- 4. Budget Reductions have impacted CA service providers and county agencies, both in dollars, staff and services. Strategies for sharing resources are necessary; examples include cost-sharing plans and cross-agency trainings.**
- 5. FamLink, the new CA data information system went live on 02/02/2009. This system meets Federal requirements for State Child Welfare documentation/tracking/information systems. Assistance to staff by FamLink implementation team members has been critical to the transition process.**
- 6. In order to best implement Solution-Based Casework region-wide, a Practice Model Coach was assigned to work with Region 2 staff. June West, a long-time Region 2 Social Worker, Family Group Conference facilitator, and SBC trainer/coach, is providing regular training and assisting CA staff with specific case consultation. Child safety remains top priority, while family strengths and goals determine the course of service.**
- 7. Foster parent HUBS have been established in the Walla Walla, Tri-Cities, and Yakima areas. The HUBS (SPOKES in Tri-Cities) foster parents share expertise and experience in supporting children with special needs, in providing respite care, and particularly in training opportunities. These groups are modeled after the Mockingbird HUBS in western WA.**

Issues and Challenges (for ongoing discussion, 2010)

1. The FTDM process seems to duplicate the 3-Rivers Child/Family Team meetings for families involved in that program (Tri-Cities area); process may need to be streamlined.
2. Funding reductions have caused uncertainty regarding the future of contracted services; mental health funds are available for treatment, but limited for prevention services; CA and private agency staff reductions strain service-delivery/quality.
3. Recruiting/licensing therapeutic foster homes is an ongoing challenge (see # 2).
4. Accessing mental health treatment/support for Dependent children/youth is sometimes hampered by systems problems, rather than acuity of child's needs.
5. Reducing systems barriers needs to be an ongoing focus.
6. The need to educate parents/caregivers and Social Workers together about Children's Tribal Court may be accomplished through Foster Parent HUB groups.
7. Several Braam settlement requirements present compliance challenges that may be solved through creative partnerships and increased community involvement.

Committee Workplan for 2010

1. Committee members will continue their involvement in Child Fatality Reviews and in resource-development regarding fatality prevention.
2. Foster youth and alumni will be invited to Committee meetings to share their experiences, make recommendations for improving practice.
3. Committee members will hold pre-meetings prior to beginning main meeting agendas, in order to informally share information/updates.
4. Committee will continue to meet every other month, rather than monthly.
5. Committee members will communicate by e-mail, in order to share current/critical information, receive special event news, and share training opportunities.
6. Committee will recruit additional members from under-represented areas, including a Tribal member, reps from Klickitat and Benton/Franklin Counties, an alumnus of foster care, former service recipient(s). New member(s) may be alumni of foster care and service recipients from those areas. Committee may consider starting a list of potential members.

7. Committee will consider holding some meetings at local CA offices in order to meet with Social Workers and Supervisors (this has occurred in past years).
8. The issues and challenges listed in the previous section will continue to be addressed in 2010.

Recommendations to the Agency

1. **The agency should place priority on the expansion of emergency placement resources for children and youth in crisis. These resources should be available within reasonable proximity of larger and rural communities.**
2. **In order to support existing resources and develop resources to fill gaps, community collaborations and partnerships must be pursued and fostered regardless of budget constraints.**
3. **The CRP should continue to hold meetings in small communities in order to increase outreach and establish a presence for CA in its efforts to eliminate child abuse/neglect.**
4. **The agency at all levels should continue to support the Disproportionality Advisory Committee and commit itself to the remediation plan. A member of Region 2 Oversight CRP should participate on this Committee.**

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