

Statewide Foster Parent Consultation Meeting
HB 1624 Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2009

1:00 Welcome

The meeting began at 1:07 p.m.

Dinah said there were a lot of changes to the agenda this morning. Beth had wanted to discuss the co-facilitator position first so the agenda was revised. We no longer have a contracted facilitator so we need to choose a foster parent to co-facilitate with Bernice, who will be the facilitator from CA beginning in January 2010. Currently Dinah Martin is the facilitator.

The roles between the Facilitator and Co-facilitator needed to be defined. Dinah said that Ginger had volunteered to co-facilitate and asked for any discussion. She said if there was no other discussion or comments, she said could we vote? Ginger said "No wait a minute, Marci was nominated too." Marci then said "No, I didn't want to do it someone else nominated me."

The representatives agreed they would like Ginger to be Co-facilitator. Ginger asked for a discussion of what the role would look like. The following was discussed;

1. Having this meeting go directly into minutes...the representatives like the ability to project notes up on the screen. The representatives liked the information collected and feedback available right then.

However, in the beginning Ginger isn't comfortable with that because she makes a lot of errors and needs to edit her notes before people see them.

2. . Some of the representatives felt that there should be two representatives independent of the foster parent that was co-facilitator. Some didn't think that was important. Some thought that a foster parent might be able to do both. Ginger didn't think that they could.
3. There was concern that the foster parent representatives may not be able to speak and move off the topic. It was decided that for now the co-facilitator, Ginger, would not be a representative and that the future co-facilitator should probably be someone that had been a representative but could do both if they and the group felt they could do it.
4. Dinah suggested that one of the tasks is that the co-chair be the timekeeper. Effective time management at this meeting is important.
5. The co-facilitator would help with the behind the scenes arrangements. CA staff would make the room arrangements etc and together the facilitator and co-facilitator would work on the agenda building.
6. The foster parent wouldn't be fully responsible for the notes. In order to be of any assistance to the Facilitator, the co-facilitator needs to have a back up taking note

There was some discussion about the notes Ginger takes being secret. The representatives said that they were given to anyone that wanted them. Our foster parents want the transparency that these notes provide. Some CA staff may not like that their names were in them. Some didn't like that the notes were posted on the internet. We discussed that anyone could Google themselves and find any one of our names. If anyone is uncomfortable with their names being in the notes, we will remove their name or not put it in, in the first place.

Dinah asked if she heard correctly that we wanted the kind of detail the way Ginger does the notes. The consensus among the foster parents was yes. There will be a grid that Dinah does that will be posted on the internet.

Nancy S. suggested that some committees have a video of the meeting and then have a pared down version for the web. But we weren't sure of the cost etc. so this was not discussed any further. We have all had the discussion to have the notes; so both the notes and the grid will be posted.

Old Business

- Respite toward camp

Nothing will be changed for 2009. The bottom line is that respite dollars cannot be used for camp. We cannot predict what will happen in 2010...this issue will be on the RA's radar for scholarships. Hopefully we will hear something at the April 2010 HB 1624 meeting. The funds have to be used the way the funds come to us. Mary Jeanne asked if the 2106 committee could look at it. I didn't hear a response.

Someone asked if respite is still in the budget? The answer was yes.

- Cps/DIR Investigations

When management was consulted they were supportive of visits at least as an option. Social Workers will be encouraged to do check into the feasibility of visits ...it would probably be dependant on whether the plan is to send the child home or not.

Beth said we are asking a little more around that...she said that DLR is making decisions based on assumptions. The issue needs to be revisited. Tammy, who has replaced Chris Robinson, was trying to think of times when the child would be removed and when those kinds of situations would apply. Foster Parents should have the same kind of right as a bio parent when there are allegations. DLR is assuming by removing a child it is unsafe in the foster home. That is the barrier. Foster parents are considered guilty before proven innocent.

Bio parents have abused their children and the next day they have a visit...we want the same kind of rights that they have. What is best for the child...to have the attachment broken...we believe it will help with transitioning...we asked Tammy “do you need more information to take it back to management? “ Darcey asked...this group wants the visits to be mandated? The answer among the representatives was...yes.

If there is a problem whether it is true or false...the children need the continuity with their foster parents. There is a fundamental difference; and that it is the states mandate to attempt to reunify the child with the parents...foster parents want them back in the home if it is safe...didn't we just pass a law that the former placement would be the best move if it was asked? .And the question was answered...yes... Upon removing the child you already have decided that the abuse has occurred.

The leadership team is saying that if there is an allegation with one parent but not the other, there may be visits...representatives said that a decision may be made based on a social workers like or dislike of you as a person...so that part needs to be addressed.

Dinah said we will take this issue back to CA (or DLR) for more discussion. Beth said before we do I don't want to come back in three months and say we talked about it...now what...and then come back again in three more months. We are still without a solution. So it goes nowhere. Marci suggested foster parents be a part of those CA meetings to give input and offer suggestions; we are having these conversations; we want to have an answer before we come back again.

If teens do not want to see foster parents anymore...do we force them...do we force them to see bio parents...yes...sometimes there are things that go wrong, Tess said.

Talya said we need to create criteria that are not just about foster parents but the foster kids.

Debra added time is well spent discussing it, but we need to have something in foster parent's hands.

Michael Titus said he supports what Tammy is saying. We are not in anyway saying, lets come up with an answer that is not an answer. Let's blow these people off. We need to come up with something that helps kids and foster parents. Sometimes on a case by case basis you ask ya what they are saying. We care about those bonds. If it comes back as a case by case basis please don't take it as ...a no or not an answer.

Mike Canfield said FPAWS has been working in the last several years to help foster parents control their anger. So they will learn to communicate without the anger.

None of you know the players...sometimes the outcome would be different; the further up the chain of command you go often the better the outcome for the foster parents.

Transportation reimbursement:

Dinah said:" we did a list of reimbursement ideas for respite via email and it did well."

*We will do an email regarding visitation with foster kids removed from homes...current policy will be sent by Dinah.

Marci has a big and specific voice. (Lots of laughter!) There was a planned conference call and the only FP Rep that was able to call in was Marci. She was able to give a thorough list of concerns/suggestions. The one about if you had to transport more than 5 miles was one that would have to be looked at. AND the one suggestion about having the mileage reimbursed for respite only if the mileage was over 5 miles was a suggestion only and was not intended to give the impression that foster parents want this idea to be recommended to the policy writers.

There has been some additional discussion. Tammy Cordova has replaced Chris Robinson...temporarily. Policy pieces rest with her to take things to the leadership committee...there is a delay because of the budget.

There is an additional 1 billion revenue deficit and some of the recommendations the representatives have made would impact the budget. CA is having a dilemma trying to figure out what we can pay for.

Fiscal office was not able to work with Practices and Procedures in regards to reimbursement for mileage. What CA *will* commit to is if there is a change in policy we can go back to July 2009, for reimbursement of mileage, it will be retroactive. We don't even have a policy now. Independent decisions are being made...the unfairness is what started this conversation. Randy Hart gave us a policy, there were two policies and the one he gave us trumped that. Representatives are concerned about what fields get fuzzy around social workers. We need a statewide understanding that goes out to social workers and foster parents. We need to know what the statewide policy is now. There has been a lot of negativity going on because of it. Part of what makes it unfair is because foster parents take kids from different regions and each child will have a different plan. Marci said that we could understand it if no one got respite, *not that we want that*, but we could understand it.

Michael said CA is trying to protect the right of each office to make decisions that are different than others, but the important things are consistent.

Beth, we don't want this to be on the agenda next time, how challenging is it going to be for you to find out what the policy is for transportation. A foster parent cannot go on a website to look for the policy that asks what do I get paid for.

Michael said "We will get something that says this is how it is statewide. You don't get to decide how to do it. It will go in the newsletter and there will be clarity and consistency..."

Most issues look simple but when I dive into them they are not....I want to go look into it and see what the complexity that is not clarity is.”

Rate Assessors:

Stephanie ...resolution to the Region 4 rate assessor...there is not resolution...it would put all FTE on the line. Because of budget cuts they have not hired someone...

(Stephanie in an email asked that “I just wanted to make sure that my comments about the rate assessors were accurately reflected in the minutes. I spoke only towards my office (King East) in Region 4 not having a rate assessor due to my need to put all social workers on line to carry cases and that each of the other offices in Region 4 were making efforts to have rate assessors.)

Amy and Marci from Region 6... were able to take the reduction in Amy’s child’s assessment to Peggy Devoy, the Region 6 Rate Assessor's supervisor. She said that once the rate assessment is done with input from the assessor and the FP, the social worker gets it. The question was asked “then are we wasting money having a Rate Assessor?” Amy worked on the rate assessments for medically fragile infants because the former assessment did not address their needs and they *are* going to be at a higher rate. The committee created a rate assessment specific to medically fragile infants. If there is a disagreement, the SW's supervisor will decide the rate. This has caused frustration among FPs. . Amy's understanding is that this assessment should be very close to being used across the state. Those new rates are in place in Region 5 at this time.

It is policy that the Rate Assessor will make the rate assessment but it does not become stone until a social worker approves it. This then becomes inconsistent. When John Traylor did this in Region 1, it stood alone. In Region 4, rate assessors are trained; they have had the conversation with the foster parent; and then they will work up the chain if they want to do something different. Someone asked “are decisions after Level 3 based on budget...?” No it is what the need of the child is. Several CA staff in the audience objected to the idea that the assessment is based on the budget. They said CA has an obligation that kids’ needs are met. They are not assessing level one or two they are assessing the child.

We are hearing from foster parents, that the rate was one amount and the supervisor changed it. It is disrespectful to the assessor that the rate is changed, many felt.

*Can we get some data to find out what is happening in Regions statewide?

Is there a protocol if the foster parent gets denied the Level 3 and 4? Yes there is, you have the right to dispute resolution. The foster parent representative can be involved. When the assessor calls us, at the end of the conversation, can we have the phone number to the dispute resolution person?

In Region 3, a foster parent got an email as to reasons that the rate was lowered; they are resolving it via email. Foster parents shut down when they are told the rate is lower.

*Michael, consistency and inconsistency is again an issue.

He heard an escalation in the representative's voices and yet only one region reported a problem. What is our level of inconsistency? What is the level of the appeals process? We need to find out what the barriers are.

We discussed CA staff that was from other regions being able to come to these very important meetings. We asked "Could you schedule your RA meetings for the mornings of our HB 1624 meeting so they could attend these meetings?" We were told that Michael will take that back to management so he can say how much we want them here.

NEW BUSINESS

Regional Issues

- Adoption Support ---Region 5

Parents that have adopted children in the past are fearful to (adopt again) come back feeling threatened that they will receive less adoption support.

When you adopt a child you sign a contract and the RCW says when we offer you an amount that you will not get anything less...unless you have a clause in your contract that you agree to reduce it to a lesser amount. There is a five year review, if there is a change in circumstances, we would like to have the contract renegotiated. Statewide adoption management...we are hearing that foster parents are being told that the most you can get is 400.00 a month. Federal rules say that we negotiate on what the rate would be if they were in a foster care home. Reassessment is being done and foster parents are being told that they will move the child if they don't agree to the contract.

Once we get the application, the social worker and parent have a conversation and decide together what the agreement will be.

What is to happen down the road, when this bankrupts the parents? Yes the foster parent is aware of the rate, and they are being told that the child will be sent to another home if they don't take the child at the rate offered.

The adoption support program manager does not do the assessment. 86% of the children are being supported by state and federal funds and about 50% of that is state funds.

Some people are being offered 100.00 and being told that there is no adoption support money to give you. Every adoption support program manager has a supervisor...use the chain of command. The chain of command system doesn't change...there are just different people.

If you are at a stalemate with negotiations, other people are brought in to help. Foster parent should first go back to their social worker, discuss what the issues are. Prospective adoptive parents are being told that the child **will** be moved...But that is not

within the adoption workers power to do.

Adoption support becomes like going to the used car lot or flea market, it should be a lot more comfortable.

When budget problems came down we heard that adoption support was going to be cut. Some people would like to ask for a little extra adoption support to pay for better counseling, the state will not do that.

In searching, the state is not able to find the funds to help pay more. If you were able to find a therapist with evidence based practice it would save the state money. Ask yourself "Is there any progress happening with your child?" If you had a counselor that actually made a difference in their life it would save everyone time and money. Yes that is why people would like to get a little extra adoption support to get a better counselor,

The main question is we are hearing there are cuts, you are saying there are not cuts, and so we need to address this with CA.

Mary Jeanne said we are adopting, you still have a responsibility to help, as like a divorced parent and their child.

Negotiation is the least favorite thing to do for the workers. Federal government asks what the average rate per child is and they often pay back at the average rate.

Michael said the reality of adoption support does not equal the amount it takes to help a child. We are an under funded system...rate comes out as, this is what we can pay, stuckness I understand...but I do **not** get the comment that if you do not take the 400.00 we will move the child..

Foster parents feel that if you take my child away, you take my life away, I will sign.

Mike Canfield told Michael "With 2106 we know that you have to look better than the private agencies so we are here to help you. "

Some of this information needs to get back to the foster parents that this is a rumor that is not true. It was not from her that mental health counseling will be cut...we are welcome to always call her. **NAME**

Mary Jeanne because dependency guardianships are going away, long term foster care is now the solution.

Pam Kramer is the lead on the guardianships, practice issues, and designing the relative guardianship assistance program. Federal guidelines focus on relative placements and supporting them.

With relatives we have not supported them, now if they get licensed they would be able to get subsidy as adoption support does. It is negotiated. Strictly for licensed relatives...feds have not given a definition of a relative yet. Foster care does not continue. This happens through juvenile court...relatives that are defined in 7415.020 sub sections 2A. All guardianships that are in place as of Oct 31,

2009 will be grandfathered in. If it needs to be reauthorized, they will go to a supervisory approval. Authorized guardianship payments will still be made...true guardianship as in adoption we should not be providing other services. Level 2 and above should not be in a guardianship...above Level 2 they need an ongoing rate assessment from an RA and ongoing assessment every 6 months.

Guardianships can continue but they have to go to a CSO ...CA is changing guardianship practice and strengthening the permanency planning process...CA is going to refocus and make our focus of the best interest of the child...someone asked what was it before?

Beth Canfield said the old business list is pretty short for the old business ...this list was actually created by the foster parents in this room...We would like to get some resolution on disrespect. We would like to get a list of all the unresolved issues...that this group has brought up so we can get them resolved.

We have asked that other regions have the ability to be represented. We would like the conference calls to be reinstated.

We want to revisit and resolve the issue that Beth brought in last time...about kids that are aging out...we need some plans on how to resolve these issues. When kids turn 18, and age out, they are placed in a VPA, services go away...now the VPA will go away. Someone from CA said there is Policy that says children in care that turn 18 can stay in care if they are in school. There is a different form for the youth to sign themselves back in. The policy is that they must follow the house rules to stay in care.....when they do, they get level 1. Some foster homes can no longer keep them for that rate.

RECCOMENDATION

All of the reps will work together with Michael, and any others, and we will do some work before the next three months; for instance, identify some proposals to work on the list.

The things we got done today were;

*ASSIGNED A Co-CHAIR

- Dinah agreed to get an email together to come up with a list of when visitation would be appropriate when there is a DLR allegation
- We will find out what the transportation reimbursement policy is

- RA staff from across the state will be invited to these meetings
- Distributed the What is Respect document
- *Ginger and Amy agreed to work together to
- **Type up a list of issues we have asked for in the past**

We spend so much time saying what we don't want. And what we need to say is what we do want. If we only talk about what the problem is and not the solution we will always be stuck on the problem.

One last issue, Michael said that seeing kids on a regular basis (once or more a month) was not happening enough yet. Right now it is about 69%, but it needs to be better than that.

Michael said he is sending out a form, to all supervisors. The supervisor will sit with the social worker to ask what day do you plan to see these children. Mid month the supervisor will ask the social worker if they saw the children. Supervisor then goes to the computer to see if there is a documented visit. In the next week these will be given to the social workers. The majority of the visits will be in the home.

First HB 1624 meeting was that respect was staying connected to child and caregiver. The question was asked what if the social worker doesn't see the child but says they did.

Michael said it would depend on the level of conduct...lying about seeing a child, is different than failing to see a child and owning up to it.

Someone suggested the social workers have the foster parents sign a paper when they have visited the children. Michael said "We don't want the social workers to sign every time they see a child. "

Beth Canfield said "Ha we were just told we had to sign a paper every time we had to give a child a pill." Darcey said that was because if anything happened to the child it was to protect us all.

For the January meeting Michael is going to try to get RA's here at the same time.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

