

Region 4 HB 1624 Consultation
July 22, 2008 Bellevue Boys & Girls Club

Introductions, and agenda was distributed. Ruth Graham & Tess Thomas have been the R4 foster parents representatives on the statewide HB 1624.

Ruth Graham explained HB 1624 - goal is to meet and communicate to Region 4 Administration; be able to address the needs of foster parents; shows the state is truly committed to addressing the needs and concerns of foster parents; want to be solution based; and keep foster parents informed.

Treehouse – Theresa W. provided information about “Speak-Up”, and Supplemental Educational Planning, for children living in licensed homes, 14-18yrs, with the goal to get foster children to graduate from high school, and transition them into some sort of secondary education. Goal timeframe is March 2008 to March 2009 in serving 50 children in this program. While it was initially organized out of King South office, it is now going to foster parents everywhere, to educate them about the program and now reaching out, foster parents should let other foster parents know if they are interested. While only funded for 1 year, Treehouse is trying to incorporate this program into their existing services. Treehouse has other programs that can serve families that are kinship and/or unlicensed. Question raised by Paula (CA)- regarding children no longer in care, Theresa stated that children in the College Mentoring Program sometimes can still be connected to their Treehouse worker.

Friends of Youth – CARE program. Annie provided information about Counseling Assistance Relief and Education. CARE is contracted through state, for licensed caregivers, to decrease instance of threatening behavior that affects placement. Telephone number is a pager system, provider will call back, and a home visit will occur within 72 hours, and will set up a safety plan. 2-3 months intervention, talking with caregiver, support structure, possible mental health referrals for children, and identify training for the caregiver to support them. Is it confidential? Yes, a report is completed and sent to social worker. Can only provide services to state licensed foster parents and unlicensed caregivers. Cannot provide services to private agency foster parents. Private agency foster parents can call with questions or general information, but no home visit can be made. Is this only crisis related? Idea is to prevent placement disruption. Can be contacted when behaviors begin to appear.

Ruth Graham– in previous meeting, caregivers communicated concerns, workgroups were created, and have been working on Region 4 issues.

Teamwork group update- Tess stated that Region 4 wants to have good foster parent groups, identify good foster parent support groups, that foster parents have good information to share. Some of the concerns in the last meeting were regarding reimbursement turnaround, social worker follow-up regarding cases, trainings offered at

night and Saturdays, maybe needed other times, sometimes lack of resource knowledge, not enough mentors, social worker treatment of foster parents, lack of information at time of placement, lack of respite, lack of resources, lack of medical information, racial tension. Some solutions – social workers being mentored by good social workers, social worker and supervisor contact information be available, social workers attend HB 1624 meetings would be positive, foster parent resource guide to be created and updated every 6 months, changes explained to foster parents, have maybe quarterly social events to bring social workers and foster parents to cultivate relationships and each can be aware of each other's roles and responsibilities, foster parents mentor new foster parents.

Training workgroup update – Talya spoke about social workers having the same problems as foster parents. Some foster parents did not like to be contacted about working with the department, some tired of working, 33 classes are required for foster parents and some way of sending class information to foster parents is needed/she stated there needs to be some way to distribute information, via email. For example: African America hair care was requested by 4 foster parents, however, this training has been provided for the last 5 years. For example, some requested training for foster parents and their biological children - to learn how to work with foster children coming into the home and might have been raised differently. She stated there should be a CPS allegations/compliance agreement before a meeting, which gives foster parents an opportunity to review information before meeting.

Paula Bentz, CA, in the recent management meeting with Dr. Odimba and Region 4 management, had discussion of when these HB 1624 meetings are held in different areas of King County, then the local office staff will be invited to attend.

Updates on training:

ICW training next week

Car seat training in near future

Court training – in contact with courts, though will not be scheduled at this time

Tool box info- being worked on

Training flyers available

Resource workgroup update– Celeste discussed the following: 1) Resource guide handout, with contact information at bottom of page; 2) Working on placement packets – identified information needed for a placement packet and to get best and most information to foster parent at time of placement. Draft of placement packet will be ready for next quarterly meeting; 3) Looking at respite care guide, with development of some sort of IT system to look for respite providers.

Paula stated she received a telephone call from a foster parent wanting to know chain of command, and who to call; Paula suggests sending out chain of command phone numbers to everyone. Ideas discussed around how foster parents keep up with who current worker is, for example: workers changing voicemails if possible, or letters should be sent to

foster homes informing of new social worker assignment. Foster parents can call social worker, and if get voicemail, press "0" and ask for worker of the day for that unit, or supervisor of the day.

Respite challenges – respite providers have to go through licensing process, or hassle of having to provide care in the foster parents home.

Celeste has a community partners mailing list – she emails about trainings.

Region 4 HB 1624 session has not heard from foster parents in the past 6 months while we have met and workgroups have been trying to address issues and ideas that were previously identified.

Were there any new concerns or ideas to contribute:

- 1) Respite providers
- 2) Foster Care Retention – appreciative to have it, worked with someone outside the department, continue to have Fostering Together or a neutral party to continue to support foster parent while working with the department; Look at a different way to license respite providers
- 3) Reputation of DSHS in community-not always positive
- 4) Respect – both ways
- 5) Collaborations breeds better understanding
- 6) Partnerships - same DCFS staff at these meetings, more DCFS staff need to attend these meetings
- 7) Acknowledge partnerships, presence of authority, feeling respected
- 8) Move permanency along
- 9) Confidentiality - Foster parent knows social workers are speaking in lunchroom and discussing cases and felt this was breaking confidentiality. Confidentiality is big concern.

Concern: One foster parent dealt for 2 ½ years to get paperwork for a special needs child, accepted placements only based on who social worker is. Received a letter from Ombudsman office stating her case was biased, and the people who worked on this on the case, were promoted.

Stephanie (CA) did state this was a concerning issue, and that Joel Odimba (CA), who is usually at these meetings though is at a conference this week, is just as concerned, and that Stephanie (CA) acknowledges confidentiality is important. In the future, she wants to know the names of her office staff and issues, because she feels the more she is aware, the more she can address issues early on. Further, she communicates with other Area Administrators about payment concerns.

Concern: A foster parent stated she realized that DSHS is not so far above foster parents. She has been trying to get licensed since October 2007, and yet today there was a statement that there is a dire need for foster parents.

Concern: Question about foster parent feedback being included in social worker evaluations. As an example, Stephanie (CA) stated she looks into concerns, listens to foster parents, social workers, and will deal with employee issues if needed.

Concern: Foster parent asked if there is a process in place to deal with a social worker problem. She currently has a stop-placement, and wants to know how she can resolve this, she feels social worker did the damage, and she wants to review all of the information. Another foster parent stated constituent relations is only out to protect the department. Celeste (CA) stated this was not true. Stephanie (CA) stated that when she is contacted by constituent relations, she looks into situation, and has to respond in writing.

Ruth stated that the chain of command is social worker, then to supervisor, then to Area Administrator, and then also contact liaison. Liaisons also know what information will be disclosed to foster parent.

Stephanie (CA) stated it is a good idea to bring someone with foster parent in meeting, someone to also listen helps, in case foster parent needs to review information.

Celeste (CA) stated that foster parents can put what you heard in writing, and send to person met with, to document information. Follow up with note of what was agreed on, and continue to follow-up, go up chain of command.

10) Process should not be biased, difficult / assistance

11) Licensing

12) Grievance Procedure

11) When foster parent is disrespected, who do they report it to.

Cora (CA) stated that basic information in pre-service training and guides

Stephanie (CA) stated the department may be able to send out main phone numbers in office, possibly quarterly.

12) More cross-over between the regions, when placements are from different regions, especially around visitation; and why region resources cannot crossover; and respite when children are from other regions. More attention to children placed in different regions and vice versa.

13) As a crisis occurs, information should be given to foster parents in writing, a website, and a mentor to contact – people learn different ways and process differently, so all of these ideas would be helpful.

Tonight's concerns will be put in meeting minutes, these concerns and questions will be brought to table and added to current 3 workgroups; and also if needed, new workgroups can be created to address issues.

Foster parents encouraged to attend these workgroup meetings. Foster parents can email Ruth Graham, Tess Thomas, or Celeste Carey with any further concerns and they will keep issues confidential.

Next meeting in October, to be announced.