

**Region 4 Consultation Session
Foster Parents, Relative Caregivers, Children's Administration
November 15, 2007 Beacon Hill Library**

Introductions were made around the room, including Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers, Children's Administration (CA) Staff.

Minutes of the Quarterly consultation Sessions will be posted on the Statewide website.

Goals of Meeting:

Tess Thomas, foster parent, discussed the goals of these quarterly meetings. She referred to Bill 1624 and stated it was a good opportunity for foster parents and caregivers to give input regarding foster care, and also to get word out to other foster parents about these quarterly meetings. Tess stated that foster parents had joined with the social worker union and that this was a show of coming together to implement change to improve services to children. She stated that Bill 1624 was written for retention of foster parents, recruitment of foster parents and for them to be a part of the solution.

Adell Richardson (CA) stated that these sessions are to be foster parent driven. HB 1624 came as a result of CA and foster parent partnership to increase foster involvement in recruitment, retention and services to children.

Bill 1624:

Michael Luque, CA Kinship and Foster Care Program Manager reviewed information regarding Bill 1624. He explained that last summer foster parents, CA staff and FPAWS representatives met and laid out the framework of how these quarterly meetings would work. He stated there will be 2 elected foster parent representatives per region, who would then attend the statewide meetings. These representatives will take region issues to the statewide meetings.

Michael stated the bill called for 4 quarterly meetings in each region, and 4 quarterly meeting statewide. The first statewide meeting was held 11/6/07 in Thurston County, and he stated the next statewide meeting will be held 1/14/08 in Region 5. He stated information regarding the meetings will be on the website. He also stated that statewide meetings were open meetings, however, region representatives at the statewide meetings will represent their region. There will be a 1-800 – telephone number posted on the website for foster parents to call, and be able to connect to statewide meetings and listen in to the meeting. Michael (CA) stated foster parents/caregivers would get reimbursed for statewide meetings. Adell (CA) also stated that all licensed and unlicensed care givers who attend the regional meetings will be reimbursed for mileage and \$25.00. and only the foster parent voted to represent the region will be equally reimbursed for attend the state wide meetings.

Michael stated the focus of the quarterly and statewide meetings was recruitment and retention of foster parents; training of foster parents; and strengthening services protecting children. He stated there was an issue already identified in the area of

termination of parental rights/best interests of the children, and that foster parents want respect and want to be heard as a team member in these cases as it is such an important issue.

If you have questions for Michale Luque, his telephone number is 360-902-7986 and his email is lumi300@dshs.wa.gov.

Resource for Foster Parents/Relative Caretakers

Stephanie Allison-Noone (CA) stated that Michael Luque had requested information regarding what each region is doing to support foster parents/ relative caregivers in crisis. Stephanie pointed out that each region was to set up their own contract with an agency providing crisis support to foster parents/relative caregivers. Stephanie referred to a flyer at this meeting, from Friends of Youth. The flyer states a number to call for crisis support. Stephanie stated to date, only 2 calls have been made and services requested, and this indicates it is not being used. Stephanie wanted to be sure that foster parents/relative caregivers were aware it was in place and also inquired about why it might not be utilized? A couple of foster parents stated they did not know it existed and recently could have used the services and were glad to know about them now. Adell stated that the flyer has been in at least 4 mailings to foster parent/caregivers and will continue to be mailed out with other mailings. Stephanie inquired if the issue was how the services were set up or not, and she stated she welcomed feedback from foster parent/caregivers regarding this service.

Stephanie also stated that some Area Administrators and Supervisors were making calls to foster parents/relative caregivers regarding placements, and are asking what can be done to support them, and that this is a way the department is reaching out to foster parents/caregivers. CA Headquarters continues to state these call will continue to be made.

Foster parent/caregiver inquiry: asked if a 2nd call can be made after initial placement, as some foster parents early on in placement still are not sure what kind of support services they might need, as they are still getting to know the child and their needs.

Response: Stephanie Allison-Noone agreed that a 2nd call would be beneficial.

Foster parent/caregiver inquiry: asked if social worker staff were aware of the Friends of Youth contract for crisis situations.

Response: Stephanie stated that social workers received email with the flyer attached, and that the region 4 placement desk also has the flyer with information.

Division of Licensed Resources (DLR)

Paula Bentz, DLR Area Administrator, stated that there are foster home licensors in the Seattle office and the Kent office. She stated Stephanie Long (CA) was one of the supervisors. Paula stated there were 3 special recruiters working with Latino families in trying to find Spanish speaking foster families; working with Native American families in “active efforts” to recruit more Native families; and working to recruit African American foster families. She stated that all 3 recruiters were also licensors, who are working with

Ruth Graham and Fostering Together, in recruiting foster families of all ethnicities. Since these recruiters are also licensors, they can work with families from beginning to end of the licensing process. Paula also stated there was a number for people to leave questions, and a licensor will call back within 24 hours to answers the questions. Foster parents and prospective foster parents can call the number and leave questions and return phone number. Telephone number for foster parents/prospective foster parents is 206-923-4942.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver requested business cards or brochures for when a current foster parent meets a potential foster parent, and the foster parent can connect them to the licensor or someone who can provide information.

Response: Stephanie Long (DLR) stated that business cards had been ordered and they will be able to give to foster parents in order to connect people to the Division of Licensed Resources. Ruth Graham also stated that her organization, Fostering Together (FT), will have booths and activities in the community in order for potential interested foster parents to get information. Ruth stated that her organization helped foster parents get licensed, and included support for resources for foster parents. She stated she had a team of 5 foster parent recruiters in region 4, and that there were 12 support groups for foster parents, that were location and subject based.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver stated there were difficulties with the Seattle Public School system. The foster parent/caregiver stated a variety of issues including: Seattle Public Schools viewing children in foster care as “less”, racism was identified; there was a need for afterschool services from 3:00pm-6:00pm and into the evenings as some foster parents worked all day. She also stated that foster parents had nowhere to go to get help requesting any support services from Seattle Public Schools.

Response: Ruth Graham (FT) stated her organization can assist foster parents with an advocate in the public schools, and will work as an intermediary between the department and foster parents. Adell Richardson (CA) stated that the Department has a Memorandum of Understanding with Seattle Public Schools. Part of the MOU is the increase communication between CA and SPS regarding children in foster care. She stated the Department will continue to work with Seattle Public Schools regarding children in foster care. Cora Phillips (CA) stated that Treehouse has an educational program that could be accessed for foster parents. Treehouse can be reached at 206-767-7000, and the website is www.treehouseforkids.org.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver inquired if tonight’s meeting was considered a training? Robbie Downs, CA HQ Foster Care Licensing Program Manager, stated that headquarters was gathering information and sorting out if these meetings will be considered training or not. She stated training for foster parents was an issue between foster parent and licensors. She stated traditional training versus community meetings, like tonight meeting, was at issue.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver stated that they deal mostly with infant placements and that most trainings are geared towards long term foster care. She asked how she was supposed to meeting the requirement of 36 hours when the available trainings are not regarding her types of placements.

Response: Cora Phillips (CA) will address this inquiry.

Adell noted that there was conversation with Comcast, about putting some of the foster parent training on “On Demand”.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver spoke about respite for foster parents. The foster parent received conflicting information in regards to if he qualified for respite or not, and felt it was an essential support to continued placement of children in his home. He is a relative caretaker who is licensed and the number of children with no respite adds stress in the family. He would like to see change as foster parents often struggle to prioritize when under pressure while wanting to meet the needs of the child(ren) too. He stated that with lack of money, and lack of sleep, respite was needed so he could continue to put the children’s needs first and also be healthy. Adell shared a little about the Mockingbird Family Model and it response to respite. And how many foster parent report not using respite because they don’t know the foster parents. Encourage foster parents to participate in support groups.

A foster parent//relative caregiver asked how to find respite providers, how to get paid and general information regarding respite providers.

Response: Ruth Graham (Fostering Together) has a list of respite providers for the region and can be called for respite names. The Region 4 placement desk can also be called for respite providers.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver raised the concern regarding children brought to the home for placement and no information was known about the child.

Response: Stephanie Allison-Noone (CA) stated the foster parents/relative caregivers should be getting a child information sheet about the child. She stated it is a good idea to get social worker telephone number for further contact. Adell Richardson (CA) stated that maybe a phone list could be put together for foster parents in case they receive no information regarding child. An example was, a checklist of social worker name and telephone number, with the supervisor’s name and telephone number.

Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Inquiry:

A foster parent/relative caregiver asked if private agencies were notified of these meetings and foster parent information.

Response: Stephanie Allison-Noone (CA) stated the Department does send notice of these meetings out to the private agencies, and she stated she will contact private agencies again regarding these meetings.

There were 3 breakout groups that discussed strengths, concerns and possible solutions regarding foster parents/relative caregivers. Adell stated that I was in fact sent to all Private Agencies but it is up to them to share it with their families.

Group #1 Strengths:

- 1) Treehouse
- 2) Union
- 3) First
- 4) Support Groups
- 5) Ombudsman
- 6) More support options in the rural areas
- 7) Foster parent liaison
- 8) Felt taken good care of (except for communication)
- 9) Lots of thank you gifts

Concerns:

- 1) DLR response time during licensing process, and lack of information regarding regulations, respite and adoptions.
- 2) Retaliation against foster parents / relative caregivers for speaking up.
- 3) Foster parent problems with dual roles of DLR.
- 4) Communication about support, foster parents last to know.
- 5) Access to forms electronically rather than through social worker, regarding respite, damages, etc.

Possible Solutions:

- 1) Child placing agency involvement in the licensing process.
- 2) Child placing agency as a gatekeeper for information.
- 3) Communications: foster parents document everything
- 4) Utilizing email and electronic forms more.
- 5) Emergency telephone number for general communication, something similar to the 911 / 411 concept, an easy to remember number for foster parents.

Group #2 Strengths

- 1) Commitment
- 2) Informational
- 3) Treehouse.

Concerns:

- 1) Respite.
- 2) Underpaid.
- 3) Adversarial Climate
- 4) School Issues regarding support with minority youth, IEP students, and gay/lesbian acceptance.
- 5) Racism.
- 6) Legal issues around the best interests of the child.
- 7) Communications with agency, ie. social workers.
- 8) Cultural relevance in service delivery.
- 9) Allegations.
- 10) Preventative Measures.

11) Lack of support groups.

Possible Solutions:

- 1) Respite.
- 2) Balance training reality.
- 3) Lobbying to meet national standard.
- 4) Respect as valid team member, embrace foster parent opinions.

Group #3 Strengths:

- 1) Good foster parent groups.
- 2) Lots of information.
- 3) Great classes offered.
- 4) Treehouse – Little Wishes, Wearhouse, Tutoring.
- 5) Reimbursement turnaround.
- 6) Resources.
- 7) Open to feedback.

Concerns:

- 1) Reimbursement turnaround.
- 2) Poor social worker follow-up regarding lack of visit in 10 months.
- 3) Trainings offered at night and Saturdays.
- 4) Lack of resource knowledge.
- 5) Mentors.
- 6) Social worker treatment of foster parents.
- 7) Not removing children when promises are made, lack of information at time of placement, honest disclosure.
- 8) False demands by social worker.
- 9) Lack of respite, access, availability and how to utilize respite.
- 10) Clothing vouchers usage varies from office to office.
- 11) Support resources not able to contact foster parents.
- 12) Not being considered part of the team.
- 13) Lack of medical information at time of placement.
- 14) Racial tension/sensitivity/diversity/minority/majority both ways.

Possible Solutions:

- 1) Social workers mentored by good social workers.
- 2) Supervisor name and telephone number and contact information.
- 3) Social workers attend meetings with foster parents, including collaboration: HB1624.
- 4) List of placements coordinators.
- 5) Foster parent resource guide updated every 6 months and published, simplify information.
- 6) Follow through on plans, process and accountability.
- 7) Forms explained.
- 8) Personal incidentals.
- 9) Quarterly social events.
- 10) Childcare at RFTI trainings.
- 11) “How-to” trainings by experienced foster parents.

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The next Region 4 Consultation Meeting will be held on February 21, 2007, location to be announced.