

Last Meeting Review/Updates:

1. At the last meeting the Vancouver Office shared an idea to put together Baby Bags with the essential supplies for infants. The Regional Administrator Myra Casey was in support of this idea and approved Regional funds to purchase 500 baby bags and essential supplies. At this point many of the items have been purchased though several major orders are still in process.
2. At the last meeting the Tumwater Office shared information on a project they had implemented called the "Green Book." The notebook is designed to follow a child throughout their time in Foster Care providing them and the Foster Parent a place to store and track important information. Information maintained in the Green Book includes court documents, business cards, education records, medical, bio-family, visitation schedules, photos, interests/hobbies, daily schedule, keepsakes, and other important information. Since Foster Parents voiced a desire to have this resource in all areas the Region Office has purchased the materials to make 1,300 Green Books that will be compiled and distributed to the offices throughout the Region for implementation on new placements.
3. Due to the multiple concerns raised regarding methamphetamines and fear of contamination, Myra Casey spoke with the Regional Medical Consultant Dr. Kelvie Johnson and had her put together an information flyer that was distributed to All Staff, attendees at the meeting, and sent to those who put together the Foster Parent Newsletters.
4. Currently Head Quarters is looking for Foster Parents to share their stories and their pictures to be a part of the new Recruitment Campaign. They are currently putting together brochures, flyers, posters and they need your help. They want to depict real Foster Parents from all over the State. If you are interested and willing to participate please contact: Amanda Meyer (360) 725-6774 or meam300@dshs.wa.gov
5. Update: After the last Statewide 1624 meeting Cheryl Stephanie worked with a group of employees and Foster Parents to draft a memo regarding returning phone calls, keeping voicemails up to date, and using out-of-office replies in outlook when needed. This memo was sent out to all staff Statewide.

The meeting was held in the Tumwater DCFS Office with the Shelton, Kelso, South Bend, Centralia, Aberdeen, Vancouver, Stevenson, and Port Angeles offices present by phone. We asked each office to share their list of issues/concerns in their area that they made during their local office meeting prior to the conference call. Below is the complete list of the topics brought up in each office. From this list we then chose the two main topics to be brought before the Statewide meeting.

Topics:

1. Community Mental Health:

- Shelton shared that they are dealing with inconsistencies in providers, they will have a good provider for a while but then they leave and they get someone who does not provide the same level of service.
 - South Bend shared that their Mental Health care is inadequate. Providers cancel appointments and they feel that Foster Children are put at a lower priority.
2. Respite Care:
 - Concern that not enough homes are available
 - Concern that the level of payment is too low
 - Foster Parents from several offices stated that they do not want Respite Payments to be taxed.
 - Kelso reported that they have been able to correct their issue with timeliness of providing respite for their Foster Parents.
 3. DLR Investigations:
 - Concern over the manner in which investigations are conducted was shared by the Kelso Office.
 - Foster Parent reported feeling threatened by DLR.
 4. Use of Bio-mother's breast milk:
 - There was a concern raised over the safety of breast milk given from a bio-mother to a Foster Parent for an infant in care.
 5. Training:
 - One Foster Parent had sent in a comment that after being a Foster Parent for 35 years they do not feel that it is appropriate to mandate ongoing training hours.
 - Centralia requested training in relation to the new medical cards and famlink.
 - A request was made from several offices for more advanced trainings.
 - There was a concern noted over the recording of trainings and ability to check on completed trainings. It was stated that Foster Parents should keep copies of all training certificates to insure that they receive appropriate credit and will not need to repeat the training.
 - Foster Parents also stated some confusion as to many hours to log for different trainings and videos. The trainer should have the hours on the certificate and the videos used in the foster-flicks program has the hours listed. DLR representative stated that they are willing to work with Foster Parents on determining the hours when there is a question.
 6. Transportation:
 - Centralia shared that funding for the transportation of children in care has become more of an issue.
 7. Foster Homes:
 - Aberdeen voiced a need for more Foster Homes.
 8. Foster Parent Preparation and Support:
 - Port Angeles shared an incident where a Foster Parent received a drug affected infant and felt they were not prepared. The Foster Parent had received a one hour training at the office and went to PICC for more instruction prior to the infant entering the home. The main concern was ongoing support from the Social Worker and Department.

- Other Foster Parents stressed the need to use support groups and networking with other Foster Parents.
 - Another suggestion was to attend more trainings, read newsletters and other information provided.
 - Foster Parents and Placement Coordinators in attendance stated that the Foster Parents need to speak up about their needs and abilities before and during placements.
9. Cost of Living Increases:
- For Foster Care Rates, Respite, and transportation.
10. In-home Childcare:
- Foster Parents stated that the rate of payment for an in-home childcare provider is far too low. In Vancouver they stated that the rate is \$2.10 for the first child and \$1.03 for the second.
 - Foster Parents stated that they often have to pay for a babysitter out of their own pocket.
 - Foster Parents voiced a concern that many of the children in their care can not attend a childcare center and need to bring someone into their home to watch the children when they need to be away from the home.
 - Foster Parents stated that this impacts their ability to attend trainings and also impacts retention.
11. Paperwork:
- A Foster Parent stated that they receive far too much paperwork in the mail and is concerned about the waste of costs associated.
 - One example given was that payments are sent separately for each child in the home.
 - Another example given was that information is sent out in duplicate. One family receives four copies of each mailing as one is sent in the mother's name, one in the father's name, one with both names, and one with the mother's maiden name.
12. Budget:
- Foster Parents would like to be consulted in relation to budget allotments.
 - One example given was in 2006 when the Department provided clothing vouchers to all children. Some Foster Parents stated that in Summer they were unable to purchase school clothes and that the money could have been designated towards something more useful and needed.

The Foster Parent Representatives are able to bring two topics to discuss at the Statewide Meeting. In order to choose which two topics, we took a vote of all Foster Parents and Relative Caregivers in attendance; each office took a vote locally and then reported on their two topics. The Foster Parent Representatives will also provide a complete copy of the minutes from this meeting to everyone at the Statewide Meeting on July 15th, 2008.

Shelton: Respite and Community Mental Health
 Kelso: DLR Investigations and Use of Breast Milk
 South Bend: Community Mental Health and Respite
 Centralia: Cost of Living adjustments (Respite, Transportation, in-home childcare) and more Advanced Trainings

Tumwater: Respite and In-home Childcare
Aberdeen: Respite and Advanced Trainings
Vancouver: Respite and In-home Childcare
Stevenson: Respite and In-home Childcare
Port Angeles: Community Mental Health and In-home Childcare

Two Topics Chosen:

1. Respite
2. In-home Childcare

Brainstorming/Solutions: Foster Parents chose topics to work on during the meeting. Below are the suggestions and requests made by the Foster Parents present at the meeting regarding these topics.

In-home Childcare:

- Foster Parents suggested sharing time to watch each others kids.
- Discussed where the rate for in-home care came from and what can be done about it. Department of Early Learning sets the rate for childcare. Contact information will be gathered to begin a conversation about the rate.
- A Foster Parent stated that as they recall the rate has not been changed in 10 years.
- Foster Parents voiced a need to advocate with the legislature.
- Discussed if the Department can set its own rate.
 - Talked about developing a new coding that would adjust for the level of care needed in babysitting Foster Youth.
 - Foster Parent asked if the Department is able to Bank leftover money at the end of the Fiscal Year. The answer is no.
 - Foster Parents would like a bigger voice in spending, use of overages, and asked about how the budget works.
 - Head Quarters now manages a large portion of the budget. As for the Regional budget AA's receive monthly budget reports on spending but the accuracy is impacted by whether or not all bills are received in a timely manner.
 - The Department and the Region is committed to wiser spending.

Respite:

- Foster Parents present stated that respite payments should not be taxed.
- Julie in Port Angeles suggested that if you have a really good in-home care provider that they should be asked about providing respite.
- Discussed the two types of respite: Regular Respite includes an allotment of two days a month which can be banked and Child Specific Respite can be more than two days based on the needs of the child.
- There are rules around the use of respite. One rule is that a child can not be in respite more than 14 days in a month as that would then be considered a separate placement. It was voiced that the rules and laws regarding respite do not always match the individual needs of a family. It was felt that these meetings allow those involved an opportunity to share real life needs and to paint that picture to aid in making changes.

- A Foster Parent felt In-home respite is important to have verses sending youth to stay somewhere else. Discussed having professional respite care providers that would come stay in the home while the Foster Parents are away.
- The Mockingbird Model was discussed as something that will help with respite needs. The model promotes support, networking, and consistency in respite care. To learn more about Mockingbird go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org
- For some children Case Aids are used for in-home babysitting/day respite. The Children's Advocacy Center in Aberdeen and in some other areas have Case Aids that provide day respite, in-home monitoring, and home support. Foster Parents asked if Case Aids could be used for in-home care of the children while the Foster Parent needs to be out. Currently the Case Aid contract is very specific for high level youth.
- In Thurston County they have been promoting the use of Big Brothers Big Sisters for the children in Foster Care. While youth are out with their Big Brother or Big Sister Foster Parents are able to run errands, get to appointments, and do other activities.
- Another Foster Parent suggested the Department run its own Childcare Center which would have extended hours, parenting instruction, and other services available onsite. They discussed having one location for childcare, medical appointment, well child checks, etc.
 - Family to Family is a model of practice currently being implemented throughout Washington State. Offices throughout Region 6 are at different stages of implementation. In Family to Family the vision of service is community based through partnerships with those serving children and families. The idea of centrally located services is a goal of Family to Family. It is not about the State owning and operating all the services but a partnership with others and agreements to work together to serve children and families in their own community. To learn more about Family to Family go to www.aecf.org , contact your local office, or contact Amanda Meyer (360) 725-6774 / meam300@dshs.wa.gov who is the Regional Family to Family Coordinator.

Next Meeting:

- The Statewide meeting will be held on July 15th from 1:00 to 4:00 in Spokane at 1313 N. Atlantic, Suite 2000 in the SW Conference Room.
- The next meeting for Region VI is on October 8th, 2008 in the Vancouver DCFS Office. The Regional Meeting will begin at 10:00 and conclude at 12:00. Local Office meetings will have a pre-meet beginning at 9:00.

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