

**1624 Statewide Consultation  
Meeting Minutes  
Region 4 Host  
April 23, 2008 at Casey Foundation**

Welcome by Michael Luque

Agenda shift/flow

Foster Parent reimbursement form to be completed at the end of the meeting

George Gonzalez, Casey Foundation, Saturday, Fostering in Empathy & Understanding  
Patricia Martinez-Donor, on relative search etc, from Texas, open to foster parents,  
kinship caregivers, if interested, flyer left on table, and leave name at desk, breakfast and  
lunch provided at training.

Lin Peyton, facilitator of this meeting. She has worked in children's mental health,  
administrator, and former foster parent, works in Pierce County Mental Health, provides  
training assistance, meeting facilitation, and developing plans for cross-system children.

Lin will discuss her assumptions about this meeting, and her view of the process, and  
then discuss what foster parents see/assume what this is about, and what they expect from  
the process.

Lin's assumptions: that everyone here is invested in what is good for children, and will  
stay focused on this; that people generally are doing the best they can with their life  
circumstance, and abilities, in that moment; what you focus on will grow, be solution  
focused, and that giving up things that hang and grow should be let go; while people are  
experiencing things including pain, that everyone is ready to move on; everyone is  
capable of clear communications; that this group has the answers-not just one person has  
the answers but everyone has answers; this is a workgroup, and everyone is working  
towards a better system; her role is to simply help foster parents move the work forward  
to help children and families. Some elements of this meeting: workability and what is not  
working? Figure out why things are not working, objectively, and figure out how to make  
it work, including hearing concerns. We will look at both sides of issues. While  
sometimes people get frustrated with being asked repeatedly-she is looking at what is the  
issue, not minimizing, but is looking for how can we get away from frustration, and move  
forward; defining issues and find out what is liked and not liked, look at alternatives, find  
a plan to move on. "Parking Lot" sheet on the wall, everyone at the table should feel like  
they have a voice, and use post-its etc to jot down anything you want to and it will be  
captured at the end of the meeting.

Introductions included name, where people are from and something they are good at.

Ground rules – Start and end on time - One speaker at a time – Stay solution focused -  
Listen – No side conversations – open to other opinions.

Lin's question to everyone at the table – what are your assumptions of this meeting?

- \* Should be focusing on issues brought up in phone conference – is: foster care rate assessment.
- \* Process should be solution focused.
- \* Caregivers will not be trying to persuade idea that some things are issues, but that CA will accept these as issues and move forward to resolve.
- \* This is a meeting that will show progress from previous identified issues, by region and make sure things are addressed – showing results.
- \* That we are working on foster parent retention.
- \* Everyone is willing to ask questions, willing to wrestle information out so that there is understanding of what is underneath/cause of issues.
- \* Assume that there will be change, not just identifying things.
- \* Validating issues by show of upper management today.
- \* This group is about meeting to improve relationship with social workers.

Lin stated we need grounded point of views, not agree verbally all the time during discussions (takes up valuable time), lets get to issues and work on them. Lin may be cutting people off when they are speaking, to insure that everyone's voice is heard; be concise, ask to give someone a chance, be open to hearing other, not an "us-them" thing, this is an US thing, and we need to work together to address issues.

Lin - clarifying what this group is meeting about today's agenda;

- 1) Michael will be providing follow-up.
- 2) 2 issues from each region
- 3) Foster Care Rate Assessment
- 4) DLR investigations

### **#1 Michael's Update**

*Regarding: Return of phone calls, email response and changing voicemail.*

Foster parents stated to Cheryl Stephani, that what works well is to know if social workers are in the office on any given day/time, and is even better if this is consistent for all social workers; also if a foster parent gets acknowledgement of social worker receiving their message (via email etc). Cheryl stated she wanted to treat staff the same way as foster parents want to be treated, and so she can address this issue respectfully. Cheryl suggested current voicemail information, and "out of office" message on emails from social workers and will look into this. There was discussion of what a letter to CA staff, from Cheryl, might look like – foster parents voiced a couple of different views, one more management in tone, the other stated she preferred a positive letter that will generate more effectiveness rather than making workers feel pushed up against the wall. A good solution from one foster parent was that a child-focused letter will enable foster parents to have a good relationship with their children's social workers, and insure everyone is working towards getting the children the services they need. The consensus is that foster parents at the table agreed this was a good solution. Another foster parent suggested that this issue be revisited in local offices at their sections meetings, and also

through a letter to workers. Foster parents want CA staff to know that foster parents do acknowledge their work. Per Cheryl, a letter to CA staff will go out, most likely a draft, on Monday, and with feedback by Wednesday, and out to workers on Friday of next week.

### *Foster Parent Liaison*

Foster parent liaisons need some training in liaison work. Michael contacted a few dispute resolution agencies, and they are willing to provide some training.

### **#2 Issues from the regions**

Region 1 – foster care rate assessment, and family team plan meetings with foster parents not being asked to participate.

Region 2 – foster care rate assessment, and DLR CPS investigations being inconsistent.

Region 3 – foster care rate assessment, and respite accessibility.

Region 4 – teamwork and resources – all of the above stated.

Region 5 – foster care rate assessment, and DLR CPS investigations being inconsistent and foster parents not feeling support.

Region 6 – foster care rate assessments, and visitation and safety of children during visits with parents using substances.

### **#3 Foster Care Rate Assessments**

*Comments and suggestions from foster parents regarding the current Foster Care Rate Assessment form:*

Foster Parent of 11 years – the foster care rate assessment (FCRA) began about 10 years ago and has not reviewed or revised. In her region, 1 person does all of the Foster Care Rate Assessments.

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The current form that needs to be completed has things that are listed and not needed, while missing some things that should be listed.

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Ditch the assessment and start a new one! Foster parent not sure how foster parents get a new assessment?

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The base rate does not cover the basic costs of raising a child.

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Referencing the Mark report – for example – child the age of 2 years, in WA is 76% less than what is in Mark report. Cheryl responded that regarding the Mark report – every state pays different rates. She acknowledged that the foster care rate assessment in WA is older now, and added that any changes will have to be made through the legislature.

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In some cases, the same child moves to a different foster home, and their rate changes, may go down, might be depending on child issues on the day the assessment is occurring, makes for inconsistent foster care rate assessments.

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Foster parents are concerned about foster parents having to raise issues about a child, get paid a certain level, and then the child is labeled, and maybe child could be labeled with issues when maybe the issues don't actually exist to the extent conveyed in a foster care rate assessment, due to foster parent trying to get paid properly for time spent with child that has certain behaviors.

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Cheryl S. is willing to talk with people about rates, and any changes would take awhile, since there are many different parties involved. Cheryl stated this issue has been raised, and it is being looked.

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Lin asked where in the current situation, is there wiggle room? A foster parent responded that when the foster care rate assessment was created, infants were rated the same; infants will not rate higher because of their needs, they need 24 hours care yet it doesn't actually show the level of the care – ie a healthy infant versus an infant who needs sleep apnea monitoring – both rate the same on the current foster care rate assessment.

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A foster parent stated it would work best if social worker listens to foster parents who are stating the care the infant needs

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A foster parent stated the foster care rate assessment is not rating the child – it is rating based on how much foster parent whines.

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A foster parent stated that the foster care rate assessment should not go down in rate when a child is started on medications for behaviors, and assume they are normal again. The child may be on meds, but still has potential for those behaviors.

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Cheryl stated that the foster care rate assessment is based on a variety of things, legislatively, that includes per capita. A new foster care rate assessment would need a structure that positively identifies why per capita is going up, therefore that foster care rates need to go up.

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A foster parent stated she believes foster parents should have documentation that shows child's needs, including medical records, or notes from doctors treating the child.

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A foster parent stated that he hasn't seen a foster care level 1 or level 2 child in the last 5 years. He has a bunch of good foster children in his home, even though they aren't level 1 or level 2. He stated he sees his job as taking a level 4 child, and get them down to a level 1, so that child can enter society and become a solid citizen. But he also stated that the state needs to provide the resources to the foster parent to enable them to be able to help the children get better, and be able to enter society and succeed.

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Lin hears acknowledgement, by CA, of current concerns and inconsistent foster care rate assessments. She is hearing the inconsistency, and is asking if CA can say that this will be looked at, and a plan to address inconsistency from region to region. Cheryl S. stated she will talk to the regional administrators to look at the inconsistencies, maybe looking at Region 1's process as an example (they have 1 staff person who completes the foster care rate assessments in their office), and how do we move from focusing on the negative issues of children, and look at the positives. Children are saying that people are labeling them, and Cheryl stated she hears the issue.

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A foster parent stated that Region 3 has a trained staff to process the foster care rate assessment, and it was helpful that he explained process and lowered foster parent anxiety. He provided information that educated the foster parent and it helped situation.

#### **#4 Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Child Protective Services (CPS) Investigations**

Concerns:

- In Region 4, foster parents feel lack of support felt before, and during investigations.
- In Region 4, there is foster parent confusion of the referral, and not understanding why they got a referral on their home.
- Worried about children, and children are being threatened with a move out of the home, and this makes foster parents anxious.
- In Region 6, children are being pulled out of the home, and foster parents are not being told why, foster parents only notified that children are leaving at a certain time, and foster parents are to have them ready because of a referral.
- In Region 6, children do not arrive home afterschool, and no one tells the foster parents that the children have been picked up by CA.
- Children do not have warning that placement change is occurring.
- In Region 5, communication is not happening.
- Foster parents don't answer correct information, since they do not know what is being asked, and then children are removed and foster parent does not know why.
- Foster parent told about support service when social worker is already in the home and foster parent does not have time to get support.
- In Region 2 because of inconsistencies, there is a fear of losing livelihood, if a foster parent strikes a child which they believe is not against the law, only against licensing rules, and then the foster parent cannot work as a nurse or teacher
- In Region 5, there is a perception that allegations include personal feelings and makes for inconsistent investigations by DLR.
- In Region 5, foster parents thought they were following case plans, if child did not like the plan, and a referral was made, then licensing investigates.
- In Region 6, sometimes foster parents are going to a meeting with DLR and then foster parents have to agree to have less beds, also agree to a corrective plan, and then 2-3 days later, the children are still removed.

Lin asked how DLR investigations are dealt with in foster home, facilities, residential and other CPS investigations (non DLR)?

Cheryl wants to know if we can look at: What would a respectful DLR investigation look like?

Paula Bentz and Pleas Green of DLR responded to concerns listed above. Paula distinguished differences between CPS and Licensing. In 1992, CPS investigators did all types of CPS investigations, including biological families, foster homes and daycares. In 1996, DLR was created so that investigations of foster homes and licensed facilities were conducted by DLR CPS and that CPS workers were not investigating foster home that they may have placed foster children in the home.

Paula stated that DLR insures that children are placed in licensed foster homes. The RCW states that foster care homes are held to a higher standard of care than biological homes. DLR insures the high quality state licensed homes and facilities. DLR also has a responsibility to check on welfare of children placed in licensed care, identify risks of children in licensed care and that respect and equitable treatment of providers are consistent in investigations. She stated the most common licensing complaints include over-capacity, health and sanitation, discipline, and record keeping violations.

Investigative process:

A referral comes into intake, and assessed as an emergent or non-emergent referral. Intake also has to determine if law enforcement is contacted. A DLR CPS supervisor assigns to worker. The DLR CPS investigator makes contact with/or interviews the referent, talks to state licenser, the child's social worker, law enforcement (police may charge or determine if a crime is committed.), talks to legal parent/guardian, talks to alleged child victim, talks with collateral victims, reviews CAMIS history, records and prior records, provided professional consultation, incident reports, review medical records, interview anyone who may have knowledge, and interview allege subject. Before a finding is made, they have pre-findings staffing (with supervisor and maybe others), investigative assessment with outcome, founded or unfounded.

Notification is provided to the legal parent of the alleged victims.

Less than 5% of DLR investigations are founded.

A letter is sent to foster parents and also provides an option for requesting a review of the findings, and that review is conducted by a program manager in Olympia. They notify the foster parent of whether finding is upheld or changed. At that point, a foster parent can request an administrative review hearing, an appeal of the departments decision to uphold and change the findings. Finally, a foster parent can also appeal through the administrative law appeal decision process.

A question posed about when foster parents that are the subject of allegations get written document of an allegation? Paula stated that DLR CPS has time constraints regarding investigations. She also stated that investigators should be sharing

allegations with foster parents. Paula stated the investigator's supervisor should be notified if allegations were not shared. If contacted regarding a Region 4 DLR CPS investigation, Paula will look into situations and see why allegations were not shared with foster parents. Paula acknowledged the process is scary. In Region 4 none of the licensors wanted to do the investigations and so they have a DLR CPS investigator, thus letting licensors provide supportive to the foster homes and not be involved in the investigations.

Foster parents asked if foster parents can have someone present to support them during an interview/investigations, so that it is not scary? Paula stated DLR CPS are under time constraints, and every situation is different. Paula stated DLR CPS should accommodate foster parents getting support, if reasonable time, if possible.

Paula stated there is no turnover in licensing positions, but that there is a high turnover in the DLR CPS investigations positions. Some common issues are that DLR CPS have new employees, or employees that need training.

Are foster parents told when getting licensed what the process of DLR CPS investigations? The response is that they receive a little information but does not really explain the process.

Foster parents state they feel like they are treated like criminals during a DLR CPS investigation.

Pleas Green stated that a key to the situation is bedside manner, and that when complaints are urgent, DLR CPS has to check on the safety of the children involved. DLR CPS are trying to do their job, hopefully de-escalating the situation, and deal with foster parent anxiety. DLR CPS can work with foster parent if time allows – however, the safety of children comes first, and then they get facts of what has happened.

Cheryl stated that maybe there could be a DLR brochure about DLR CPS investigations, the process, and what you can do, to help normalize the anxiety, explaining the reason that we do this is because children are in state care, and the state has to insure their safety, and this is about keeping children safe, and maybe something like this would lessen anxiety for foster parents.

Repeatedly stated by foster parents that foster parents want to know what the allegations are at the beginning of interviews.

#### *Summary and Resolution of DLR CPS issues*

Conduct training for foster parents and for DLR CPS investigators about DLR CPS investigations and the process. Possibility of training together?

Cheryl stated there could be a sub-group within the DLR administrators meetings, and there is a possibility that foster parents could be invited to that part of a meeting.

In Region 4, Pleas stated that the DLR CPS supervisors conduct training on investigations, and Pleas stated that this can occur in all the regions. Foster parents, Marcy, Amy, Ruth, Deborah and Tess will work with DLR on this training.

**Public Comments:**

A foster parent stated that there is an RCW on how we are to treat each other, with respect, that this RCW should be a training tool, and she stated that if everyone was following that RCW, then foster parents will be less likely to complain.

A Region 4 foster parent asked, “How do we know change has happened? We don’t need a public service announcement, just change it, and then foster parents will see the change”.

Parking lot items will be typed up by Lin and sent to Michael. Michael will get these out to you by a week from Friday.

**Final Comments:**

“How did today’s meeting go? It went well”.

“What is better in the regions? Training is better in region”.

“A lot of good things happen, we can discuss issues at the table, but some things are going well”.

At the next meeting commitments from today will be met. At the next meeting we will open with success stories, so please take notice of what is working well in your communities and be ready to share that information.

