

Community Summits to Take Action on Child Neglect

A proposal for the Children's Justice Act Neglect Task Force

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Introduction/Background

In 2005-06 the Neglect Subcommittee of the Children's Justice Act Task Force commissioned a study of child neglect from Portland State University. Dean Dr. Kristine Nelson, a national expert on child neglect and child welfare, served as consultant for this work, later joined by Dr. Diane Yatchmenoff. Research assistants Karen Morgaine and Cathy Kauffman provided staff support. Two reports on this work were provided to the committee and Drs. Nelson and Yatchmenoff presented these and discussed them with the Neglect Subcommittee and the larger CJA Task Force on April 13, 2006.

The final deliverable of the contract was to-
"Develop a strategic plan with recommendations for action steps to implement a coordinated statewide effort to reduce the incidence of child neglect in Oregon."

Facilitator Katharine Cahn met with members of the Neglect Subcommittee on May 11th to develop a strategic plan. The Committee reached consensus on the idea of using CJA funds to promote two or more local action planning summits on neglect in Oregon. What follows is a description of the proposed action planning process that emerged from this discussion and some models of roles the committee might take to support this process.

Community Neglect Summits: Elements of the Model

The committee agreed that there is generally a low level of local knowledge about and response to child neglect and a low level of understanding regarding effective interventions.

The committee is interested in using CJA resources (financial, professional, and political) to promote local summits that would:

1. Focus community awareness to raise the profile of neglect and increase the sense of urgency concerning this problem.
2. Educate the wider child – serving community to interventions that support neglectful families and increase child resilience.
3. Engage a wide variety of community stakeholders in action planning for vulnerable children and families

These local summits would follow an action–planning format similar to that used by the Juvenile Court Improvement seminars or other similar multidisciplinary action planning seminars known to committee members. In a morning session, presenters would present information about neglect to a multidisciplinary group of community professionals. For example, information might be provided session regarding incidence, impact on children, effective models of intervention, and what programs in the community might be related to this issue. An afternoon session would be structured to engage participants in a multidisciplinary action planning process.

Strong local leadership would be needed to assure the effectiveness of a local summit. For this reason, summits would be held in communities where a mayor, sheriff, county commissioner or other leader with the power to convene a wide constituency stepped forward to provide leadership in the form of willingness to lend his/her name to the invitation and to

provide ongoing support and follow through on action plans developed.

The Children's Justice Act Task Force would provide funding incentives to match local participation. Several models of this kind of incentive are summarized below.

Models

In all models, communities with local leadership would provide at their own expense: local speakers / panelists such as parent panels or a panel of local agency representatives on services, release time for agency participants in the action planning day, and leadership and staffing for coordinated management of action plans developed at the summit.

Three models are available for CJA involvement. Each offer a different combination of solutions to the twin problems of 1) assuring design elements key to success will be present in each offering, and 2) allowing for variations in local planning dynamics and costs. The models are:

- A. Decentralized Incentive Funds
- B. Central Resources
- C. Mixture: central resources matched with local funds

A. Decentralized Incentive Funds (local grants)

In this model, the CJA Neglect subcommittee invites proposals from local jurisdictions willing to host an action-planning summit on neglect. A set amount of funds is established ahead of time and published in the RFP. The RFP would set standards and perhaps even a format the local committees must follow in their summit and certain conditions that should be met by each initiative. Other than approving the grant and monitoring implementation, there would be no further centralized support or technical assistance.

Based on committee discussion and this contractor's experience, examples of sections of the RFP and conditions / criteria for successful applicants could include:

- Demonstrated commitment by local leaders willing to convene a summit and monitor and support follow up action plans.
- List of local agencies willing to have staff participate in the planning day with an emphasis on those who might be involved in supporting families / children at risk of neglect. Criteria for success would be that a wide range of agencies involved in addressing neglect indicated commitment to participate. For example, a successful application might include indication of agreement to participate from some or all of the following: local Commission on Children and Families, law enforcement, drug or alcohol treatment providers, education, public health, DHS / Child Welfare, DHS / Self Sufficiency, family support agencies (such as Healthy Start or family support centers), providers of concrete services such as community action programs, food banks, transportation, local tribal or off-reservation providers or other ethnic/community – based agencies, youth development.)
- Local staffing / coordination including meeting registration and managing summit logistics. Criteria for success would be adequate staff support by local agency with experience holding meetings and/or trainings.
- Plan for action. Criteria for success could be agreement to use planning format provided by the RFP or a substitute proposed format acceptable to the committee.
- Action Planning / Summit Facilitator. Criteria for success would be identification of a facilitator with an established track record in interdisciplinary action planning, preferably in children's services.

- Local Match or use of grant funds. Criteria for success would be local support for printing of handouts, meeting room rental, lunch and refreshments at meeting.

The cost of this model would depend on the number of grants awarded and the expectation of local match vs. grant support for some of the elements identified at the end of the list. Grants could range from \$5,000 – \$15,000.

Advantages:

- Similar to current grant-making role of CJA
- Maximizes local control and discretion
- Does not require central staffing by CJA or a CJA – funded central contractor

Disadvantages:

- No centralized control or influence once grant is made
- Grant-making can be cumbersome
- Barriers to grant-making may exist between CJA and certain local agencies capable of convening a summit (Can a Mayor's Office or a Commission apply for/receive a CJA grant? Need to explore.)

B. Centralized Resources

In this model, the Children's Justice Act or a designated consulting/training firm hired by and working closely with the CJA Task Force, provides all aspects of summit facilitation to local jurisdictions who apply and are selected by the CJA based on the likelihood of effective, sustained action planning, geographical representation, contacts with CJA Task Force members, or other criteria identified by the Task Force as contributing to success.

In this model the CJA or a consultant hired by the CJA provides the following services:

- Technical assistance to selected local advisory committees in planning and designing their local summit working with a pre-established format
- Payment for any content experts hired to present
- Facilitation for the summit
- Registration services and publication of all handouts and packets for each workshop
- Payment for costs of local hosting, including venue, hosting/refreshments

The cost of this model would depend on the number of jurisdictions selected. As a ball-park estimate, three action planning seminars in a combination of high and low cost areas with technical assistance and consultation and at least one 'external expert' on neglect per seminar could cost in the range of \$50,000 - \$75,000

Advantages:

- Full control by CJA over all aspects of design
- Ability to assure consistency and quality from locality to locality
- Ease of contracting
- Cost savings related to economies of scale

Disadvantages

- No mechanism for local engagement, control, and ownership
- Work for central office or designated central contractor (if contracted, could be included in cost.)

C. Central resources matched with local funds

In this model, some services and resources are centralized and others are either provided to local communities with an 'allowance' formula related to community cost of living, or local communities are invited to put up local costs as match.

Examples of centralized costs (could be purchased with one centralized contract from one contractor or could be provided by CJA staff):

- Technical Assistance to local planning committee
- Facilitation of action planning
- Consulting fees for desired speakers / content experts identified by Task Force
- Originals or multiple copies of standard handouts (such as action planning worksheets, key articles, reports or summaries of state and local statistics)

Examples of costs included in local allowance (or that local communities could be invited to put up as match) would be:

- Cost to rent meeting room
- Cost of hosting (lunch and refreshments)
- Costs of printing handouts desired by local committee (such as list of local resources, or specific handouts identified for local theme or resources)
- Invitation materials
- Registration services

Cost for this model would depend on the number of jurisdictions selected and the mix of high- and low-cost areas ('high cost' would be cost of hosting, room rental, and travel for facilitator). An example of a mix could be \$30,000 for the centralized costs, and \$5,000 – \$10,000 allowance for local expenditures.