

Family Services Review Commission Meeting
March 2, 2006
HSB-252

Members present: Maggie Bagon, Doreen Binder, Diane Cohen-Alpert, Lorey Freeman, Miranda Herrera, Bonnie Johnson, Shirley Kaping, Rob Potter and Michael Ware

Members excused: Jessica Chanay, Bonnie Davidson, Kim Freeman

DHS representatives: Ramona Foley, Mickey Serice, Jim Neely, Dave Lyda, Angela Long, Carolyn Ross, Karen House and Nancy Sathrum

Administrative Handouts: Meeting Agenda, January 9, 2006 FSRC Meeting Minutes, 2006 FSRC Meeting Schedule (revised), FSRC Members Roster, December 2005 and January 2006 CAF Public Assistance Caseload Reports, December 2005 Self-sufficiency at a Glance Reports

Greeting and Introductions:

Meeting convened at 9:00 a.m. Rob introduced Diane Cohen-Alpert as a newly appointed member to the Commission. Diane told us a little about herself and the committees she is involved with. She has had a long standing relationship with various areas in DHS. Further introductions were made around the table.

DHS Updates

Budget – Angela Long

It is too early to give much information on the rebalance but it looks like the \$24.5 million general fund shortfall will be cut in half. Much of the projection was related to caseloads and many of those numbers have flattened out, although TANF, EDRC, Food Stamps, and Domestic Violence still have increases. There have been no changes made to the mechanics of forecasting self sufficiency caseloads, but child welfare has made a slight change in the methodology used.

The rebalance is scheduled for the first week in April. Angela gave a brief overview of the budget process, explaining the rebalance occurs every six months to revise projected caseloads, funding needs, etc.

The kicker funds were discussed. The Legislature has the authority to re-appropriate these funds during special sessions, but they have never taken advantage of this.

Food Stamp Activities – Carolyn Ross

Our error rate remains incredibly low even though caseloads continue to rise. Carolyn is trying to find ways to acknowledge the good work being done in the field. The newest federal budget cuts include changes to our policy regarding categorical eligibility. It will require us to count resources for people receiving food stamps. This will be a major hit to Oregon, 16,000 or more families, and the advocate community is working hard to remove it from the budget.

Oregon's Patti Whitney-Wise, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, was recognized as the Food Advocate of the year.

Carolyn reported that the food stamp policy team is out in the field doing a two-day training class for ongoing workers. We are also beginning an E-training to serve new field employees as they come to work with DHS.

Rob and Lorey thanked Carolyn on a job well done and for helping to change the culture of the food stamp process and working well with advocates.

Bonnie Johnson asked if new workers were given the opportunity to spend time out in the field visiting shelters and other non-profits that serve these clients. She recommended that it would be very helpful to give them a sense of the reality of poverty.

Medicaid – Karen House

Karen reported on caseload growth, budget issues and program integrity. If a family receiving TANF gets additional child support or earned income, they might move into the extended medical program for up to 12 months (could end before 12 months according to federal requirements if their income increases to a specified level). There will be some additional income reporting requirements. From the preliminary analysis, very few people will lose medical coverage. We currently have approximately 40,000 on the extended medical program.

Maggie asked about a specific case and Karen requested additional information so the situation can be researched further.

Some disqualifications have occurred because of systems issues with co-pays and premiums. Premium sponsorships were discussed and Karen was asked if DHS direct line staff provide referrals to agencies that can help with premiums. Karen doesn't believe it is an established process in DHS field offices. If a list of premium sponsors is developed by SDA, it should be posted in WIC and Planned Parenthood offices. Some

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counties have funds to pay the \$6 per person premium for the number of people on our caseload. In these cases, DHS bills counties from a computer match. Do clients know that their coverage will end if they miss a premium? What is being done to help clients navigate the system changes? Mickey asked if we would have the support of advocates to handle referrals if a statewide list was established. There are often eligibility issues because they cover their clients, but not others.

Mental health issues were discussed with Diane saying that mental health ratios are changing depending on when self sufficiency benefits are accessed. Is this being communicated to field staff and are we lobbying for funding?

► **Action:** Mickey and Rob to discuss inviting someone to a future FSRC meeting to address mental health issues.

Karen currently has one full time person providing face to face and NetLink training on eligibility requirements and is working on filling a second position.

Karen was asked what is being done to gear up for the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) that will require birth certificates to prove citizenship before obtaining Medicaid benefits. We are very concerned as this will cause problems for the department and clients. Advocate groups help people obtain birth certificates but it is very costly. Ramona and Bruce will be at the APHSA meeting next week and hope to get clarification on the options states will be given.

Bonnie Johnson asked if families who don't quite meet eligibility have other options. The Family Health Insurance Assistance Program through the Office of Partnerships may be another source for benefits.

Bonnie Johnson expressed thanks to Karen for the good work being done in her unit.

► **Action:** Karen will research and provide more information at next meeting or invite someone from OMAP to explain premium sponsorship.

TANF — Dave Lyda

**Handouts: TANF State Plan Revision Information
Update on Degree Completion Initiative
OCR Voluntary Compliance Agreement Data Report,
October – December 2005
July 2003 – December 2005 Graph of Number of Disqualified Persons**

**December 2005, Comparison by SDA of Total JOBS Mandatory and Total Disqualifications
Family Support and Connections (FS&C) Update**

TANF State Plan Status

Informational handout on state plan revisions was distributed. The disability piece is incorporated in the plan. The revised information has been sent in.

► **Action:** Nancy to send Revised State Plan to FSRC members. **Done via email on 3/8/06.**

Family Support and Connections (FS&C)

The mission of the FS&C was discussed; with primary focus of preventing TANF clients from needing to enter the child welfare system. The first meeting of the FS&C Steering Committee was held. The committee is co-chaired with the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF) and includes representation from program managers, providers, DHS central office staff, and clients. Mike Ware will represent the FSRC on this committee. Mike reported that he is learning about the successes and problem areas of the old system. There are limited dollars available so group will need to prioritize use of funds in an appropriate way. The program is reviewing how child welfare referrals are handled and continues to transition from the former Community Safety Net. Current work includes:

- Look at contract changes for next year and incorporate them into RFP.
- Look at how funds are allocated; by county or SDA. Originally based on county; however, small counties received more funds, causing a disconnect on where people are being served.
- Training continues on child welfare client risk assessments.
- Field visits have begun.

► **Action:** Dave to provide information on how many of the 110 TANF families were referred for services. **Response: According to current coding, 49 TANF clients received at least one month of service. We believe this figure is low, but will grow as staff learn the new coding process.**

OCR Quarterly Reports

- The new disability screen which provides detail of the person's disability is in place and being used. About 6% of new applicants are including disability information, approximately twice the previous number.
- The number of Disqualified Persons is holding at about 800 level.

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- Comparison by SDA on Total Disqualifications: Largest concern was SDA 9, which has lowered from approximately 20% to 7%. Umatilla now higher – in small SDA's, small numbers make big differences. No large anomalies are noted. Ongoing reviews and feedback to case managers will continue.
- The drop after January 2005 is because of the new policy being implemented on accommodating and evaluating disabilities before sanctioning client.

Degree Completion Initiative – status

Dave went over the current status of applications. The largest reason for not approving applicant is unaccredited schools and non-TANF clients. We are getting about 12 new applications per week. The total number is capped at 100. Program is currently serving clients that are within 24 months of degree completion. The amount of teen parent participation is up a bit but not significantly; we need to continue to engage this population. Word appears to be spreading on how to access this program. Advertising of program was further discussed.

► **Action:** Dave to provide strategy on how to increase the numbers without over loading program. Lorey requested that handouts be distributed electronically prior to meeting.

CAF Report — Ramona Foley

Staffing Study Status

Jim Neely reported that we are deep into phase 2 which includes TANF, ERDC, and OVRs. Expectation from contractor is that phase 2 will be complete by end of June. DHS will report back to legislature at E-board.

- Use of an outside contractor gives credibility to legislature.
- No huge change in Oregon's direction until results are in from Texas and Florida.

Mike Ware requested information from Jim on the number and racial background of foster children being diagnosed with conduct disorder and moved to OYA and Juvenile Court system. He feels many black kids are inappropriately diagnosed with this disorder and moved into court system instead of being treated for the illness. Ramona reported that there is no clear pathway to obtain this information because two separate databases were created when OYA moved from DHS. We are concerned about DHS kids being labeled with this diagnosis and being removed from our care. Ramona will discuss with Bob Jester. If a crime is committed, the court makes the decision to keep child in DHS custody or transfer to OYA.

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► **Action:** Time permitting, Mickey and Ramona will take this concern to the Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) to determine if there are patterns/trends and report back at next FSRC meeting.

House Interim Task Force Review of DHS – status:

A list of interim committees was sent out to FSRC members. A common theme is the forecast problems and \$172 million deficit. A committee was created to review budgets and forecasts to eliminate future surprises.

Other committees include:

- Sen. Carter's Senate Interim Committee on Human Services Agency Oversight met this week and focused on forecast issues.
- Rep. Dalto's House Interim Task Force on Child Welfare is scheduled to meet on March 24th. CAF will be presenting with focus on Foster Care.
- Rep. Richardson chairs the House Interim Task Force on DHS Review with Rep. Flores leading the CAF team that will focus on adoption assistance.

DHS wants to get out the message that regulations run our programs and eligibility should be consistent statewide. Work is needed to address these issues and make sure workers have consistent tools to assist clients.

- Jim reported that the Deficit Reduction Act will drive our current work, in TANF especially.
- Mickey reported that the committees have been addressing DHS IT systems. Our systems are very outdated and continually need patching.

Diane questioned how the FSRC could align itself and have a partnership with the Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) in a more concrete way. FSRC has a standing invitation to attend CWAC meetings. CWAC is a group appointed by DHS Assistant Director, has 21 members, and is chaired by Judy Steigler.

► **Action:** Nancy will send CWAC agendas to FSRC members.

Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) – discuss implementation:

Bruce and Ramona will be in Washington DC next week and will return with further detail on what states are planning in response to the DRA. Erinn Kelley-Siel from the Governor's Office and Bruce have discussed hosting a one time, 2-hour discussion to look at the federal mandates and what choices Oregon has in operating the TANF program. What will reauthorization look like? What items are negotiable and what items are non-negotiable? Our hope is for this conversation to lead to the legislative

process on statute changes. Bruce sees this as very critical and has an investment in the outcome. Two or three FSRC members will be invited to participate in this discussion.

Grievance Report — Lori Nelson

Handouts: Client Comment Form Monthly Report by SDA Summary of Complaints and Discrimination Reports by SDA

Client Comment Form: The handouts listed above were distributed and discussed. The client comment form has been helpful in giving clients a venue of communication. Negative client comments that need follow up will be returned to the branch line manager or program manager for action. The form is being accessed from the DHS web site and local offices and mailed to the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO). Lori is hoping to do on-sight visits to make certain forms are available in branch offices. Jim will also discuss at the next SDA Managers meeting. The report is CAF specific but isn't broken down by program area; Self Sufficiency, Child Welfare or Vocational Rehabilitation. The branch number will be added to future reports. If the GAO can identify the program manager, both positive and negative reports will be forwarded.

Suggestions included:

- The form may need to be more specific if necessary changes are to be made.
- Shirley requested that the field be asked to report back to the GAO so resolution of complaint can be included in the report to complete the process. (Complete means the person's complaint was resolved). Lori said she will follow up on this request.
- Members want to know how many times complaints are received on the same employee. Employee names can be used internally and Jim works with SDA Managers to ensure that problem employees are dealt with appropriately. The objective is to accomplish change.
- What is the process for FSRC members to request additional information on complaints? Process needs to be refined since members have a statutory mandate to review. Statute dictates that the information be sent through the FSRC chair.
- Is it possible for the commission to receive the reports electronically prior to commission meetings?

Client Complaint and Discrimination Report: Although the profile is good, minor adjustments and fine tuning will continue to be made to this report. The report specifies the branch number and dates of complaints, resolutions and GAO results. It was suggested that changes in philosophy and wording are needed and that DHS should look at the complaints as an educational tool to improve business practices. The complaint form will need to be reprinted by May 2006 and edits are currently being made.

► **Action:** Please send comments/requests on format/layout of form to Rob who will compile and send to Nancy, who will forward to Lori. **The GAO needs changes by the end of April 2006.**

► **Other action items: Jim to follow up.**

- If FSRC member requests complete file and resolution, does it become public record? Need clarification from legal counsel.
- Lorey requested DHS policy on grievance process to see if it refers to discrimination or the client complaint process.
- Link to DHS 0170 form was requested. Can the form be completed and submitted online? Not currently but work will continue on this process. **Link to DHS Forms page and PDF of form was sent via email on 3/28/06.**

Chair Report — Rob Potter

- Action and follow-up items:
 - Mike's request for minority breakdown of Degree Completion applicants from Dave Lyda was provided.
- **Action:** Mike asked that Jim provide staff turnover figures.
- Approval of minutes:
 - There was a motion by Bonnie Johnson, second by Diane Cohen-Alpert and unanimous vote to accept the January 9th FSRC meeting minutes as written. February 9th Policy Committee Meeting: There was a mix up on the meeting date. Only two members were present and drafted the letter sent by Lorey Freeman to Bruce Goldberg. No minutes to approve.
- Commission Membership status:
 - Kim Thomas has resigned her FSRC membership because of her new position with the Fred Meyer Trust. Kim has been a great addition to the FSRC and will be missed.
 - Diane Cohen-Alpert has been appointed from Congressional District 5 in the Business/Professional Organization category.
- Strategic planning session, discuss date and scope:

The date of the Strategic Planning Session has been moved to June 1, 2006. The meeting will be held in the Human Services Building, Room HSB-252 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Rob will create an agenda for the meeting. Ramona Foley, Jim Neely and Mickey Serice will be asked to attend the first hour of the meeting (8:30 – 9:30 a.m.) to report on:

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- what the FSRC has done well, list of FSRC accomplishments;
- what can be done better by both sides, DHS and the FSRC; and
- what DHS sees coming in the future.
- Additional meeting items to include discussion of status of sub-committees. The only committee currently meeting is Policy.
- Discuss changing FSRC meetings to every month or increasing the length of the bi-monthly meetings.
- Need electronic distribution of handouts so that phone/video participation is feasible.
- Discuss meeting format, to include 1) creation of agenda; 2) special meetings for guest speakers.
- HSB-252 has been scheduled for the first Thursday of each month from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon through 2006.

By law, all meetings and phone conferences have to be posted as public notice on website.

- Election of Vice-chair to replace Kim Thomas: Nomination by Doreen, 2nd by Shirley, nomination of Lorey Freeman, vote all in favor. New Vice-Chair: Lorey
- FSRC member roster was circulated for updates.

Policy Committee Report

Discuss current activities: Letter from Lorey Freeman to Bruce Goldberg, DHS Director, was discussed.

► **Action:** Lorey to send letter electronically to commission members.

Set next Policy Committee Meeting: Policy committee meetings to be set via e-mail for April and June.

The next FSRC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 4th, 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, in the Human Services Building Room 252. Meeting adjourned at 12:37.