

Family Services Review Commission Meeting
January 9, 2006
HSB-352

Members present: Doreen Binder, Jessica Chanay, Bonnie Davidson, Kimberly Freeman, Lorey Freeman, Bonnie Johnson, Rob Potter, Kim Thomas, Michael Ware

Members excused: Maggie Bagon, Miranda Herrera, and Shirley Kaping

DHS representatives: Bruce Goldberg, M.D., Ramona Foley, Mickey Serice, Jim Neely, Sue Abrams, Dave Lyda, Angela Long, Carolyn Ross, Karen House, Lori Nelson and Nancy Sathrum

Guests: Sen. Kurt Schrader, Mike Leachman, Oregon Center for Public Policy, and Patti Whitney-Wise, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force

Administrative Handouts: Meeting Agenda, Discussion Questions for Senator Schrader, October 2005 and November 2005 CAF Public Assistance Caseload Reports, October 2005 and November 2005 Self-sufficiency at a Glance Reports, November 14, 2005 FSRC Meeting Minutes, December 5, 2005 FSRC Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Greeting and Introductions:

Meeting convened at 8:30 a.m. Roll call and introductions made at 9:00 a.m. upon the arrival of Senator Schrader.

Bruce Goldberg Update:

- FSRC vacancies: Jessica Chanay is in attendance today, two new members are in process, leaving two outstanding positions.
- Budget update: DHS has a \$172 million budget shortfall caused by:
 - increase in medical caseload and cost per case, primarily in OHP
 - increase in Foster Care
 - difference in current projections as compared to last spring's forecast
 - more people needing services
 - loss in federal match dollars
 - accounting issues
- The state controller has been invited to review our revenue tracking and forecasting workgroups are being formed, with recommendations expected in early March. Monthly reviews of the numbers will be done to keep predictions as accurate as possible.

Senator Schrader, Questions:

1. The Oregon Center for Public Policy report, "The TANF Shell Game: Oregon uses funds for helping poor families be self-sufficient to cover other budget holes," details

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how the state has shifted TANF funds to fill budget holes in programs that don't directly impact TANF families over the past 10 years. We have shifted resources from the front end of problems affecting families to the back end while poverty hasn't gone down. From your experience with the budget in the Legislature, what is your view on the issues raised in this report?

Response: Sen. Schrader has read the report and thinks it is well done, but he doesn't agree with all the perspectives. Much of the information predates his time in the legislature. There have been increases in Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) and decreases in JOBS. While Health Services and Education both have increased needs, funding for health services has increased and education (K-12) has held flat. He has advocated for Health Care and ERDC. The need for wrap around services to stabilize families and how to organize services to best meet the needs of our clients was discussed.

2. When you look at the concerns being raised by legislators and the public about increased number of children in foster care (and the crossover with TANF families), the increase in spending in corrections and the continuing lack of system response to poor families, particularly minority families, aren't we spending more now on these problems and their ramifications than we were before we shifted TANF spending and reduced spending on upfront services such as Oregon Health Plan?

Response: If we could quantify this, we'd have a great argument, but Oregonians won't believe it until we can do this. We also need the buy in from business. Bruce doesn't think that DHS currently has the capacity to get the data needed to connect the dots for the legislature. We continue to scramble to meet the day to day needs, but require a better strategic plan to meet these needs and understand the linkages to take care of these issues, including OHP, ERDC, MH, etc.

3. We have seen no increases in TANF spending from the federal or state governments in the last 10 years yet the cost of living continues to go up, eroding the purchasing power of these funds. At the same time, the eligibility income level for TANF remains the same as in 1991 and the amount of the monthly grant has only been raised \$5 since 1991. So a low-income family with children needs to be poorer today to qualify for less. How do you think this trend is affecting Oregon's low-income families.

Response: If we put more money into the TANF grant instead of other Self Sufficiency (SS) programs, are we doing what we should? If it helped stabilize families, he would agree, but he doesn't think the TANF grant is substantial enough to really help families.

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The qualification for TANF also helps you qualify for other services. Today you need to be poorer to qualify for cash grant and other SS services. Bruce agrees with scope of need and advocacy and stated that DHS needs strategic plan to start making the necessary investments. It was agreed that additional money won't be available because of the problem of public trust and that system flexibility is needed to use the available money to effectively assist clients.

4. How do you see the continuum of care for low-income families in this state at the present time? The committee didn't ask this question.
5. How is the State going to invest resources and/or what system changes can be made to turnaround funding and service reductions? The committee didn't ask this question.
6. What educational process can we develop to educate legislators and taxpayers about what's going on with low-income families in this state?

Response: This is a difficult question. People should contact their legislators prior to session to discuss the issues and help establish priorities. The message needs to be consistent and unified. SS wasn't controversial last session and was funded up front. Look at it as a department-wide issue and be clear about what must be done to meet the state's human services needs. Focus on outcomes and how to meet them.

Due to time constraints, the committee didn't ask questions 7 and 8.

Meeting opened to guests: Patti Whitney-Wise, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, asked how much of the current problem is the result of earlier cuts? Is there a way to track clients and collect data on how early services could have helped save money in the long run. Sen. Schrader suggested asking clients at intake why they are there, if they are on standard population, have no employer-based health care, etc. This group can help DHS figure out what we can do and how to engage partners to help meet these needs.

Mike Leachman mentioned that the big picture is important and we need to recognize that we are working against a message that government is wasteful. We need to put resources into the politics of explaining what we do. TANF reauthorization may force more unrealistic measures on us. Mike referred to Demos (www.demos.org) in New York, an organization working on government practice issues.

Bruce agreed that the politics of inefficient government needs to be addressed head on. We fuel the fire when we can't account for the money DHS spends. We need to

establish a greater degree of accountability and better align the DHS mission with our business practices to create efficiency. Sen. Schrader believes we need to use objective data and prioritize services to educate the public on the good work being accomplished. Show what is done well to gain public trust. As the system gets tighter, Oregonians will want to turn things around. He sees glimmers of hope and requested feedback on the legislative DHS priority list (to be provided to FSRC members). **Action: Mailed list to members on 1/18/06.**

DHS Updates

CAF Report — Ramona Foley

Staffing Study – discuss plans and related actions for implementing recommendations:

Recommendations out of Phase 1: Continue to watch Florida and Texas and their approach to devolve some of the functionality now belonging to the state to private business. Both states think they can reduce their administrative costs by 50%. These numbers seem to be unrealistic when talking to those in the private non-profit sector.

Action: Web link to 12/29/05 E-Board letter sent to FSRC members on 1/12/06.

Jim Neely reported that Phase 2 involves ERDC and TANF. We are looking at new technology methods for improvement; imaging, processing applications on-line, etc. We will continue to watch other systems around the country to find a suitable replacement for our Legacy system.

After four rounds of layoffs and significant bumping and filling of vacancies, approximately 30 staff left DHS service; about 15 from CAF. In the re-alignment of case managers, we have right-sized and now have fewer case managers and more Human Services Specialists. It usually takes a while to recover from the upset caused by the layoff process.

Mike Ware asked about the turn over rate and experience of Case Managers. He said it appears that kids are kept in foster care instead of going to residential care and that DHS is dumping kids when they move to OYA services. There is less turnover and fewer complaints about the effects of turnover in SS than on the child welfare side. **Action: Jim will send turnover figures out to FSRC members.**

Kim Freeman mentioned that it would be very helpful if DHS had better access to Department of Education and Employment Department records to help measure and track client success in the workforce-based system and to effectively speak across the continuum. The majority of resources reside in Education. We have a good relationship with Employment, but timing is a problem as employers aren't required to report in timely manner.

Dr. Goldberg's letter to the Governor was sent out to members via email. Jim reported on quality control efforts in the FS program to assist in lowering the error rate to decrease sanctions. As this is done in Medicaid eligibility, savings will likely be generated. The savings may not be substantial, but it is a quality control issue.

Budget — Angela Long

Handouts: Summary of 1/06 Report of Financial Status

2005-07 Rebalance and 2003-05 Close-Out Letter dated 12/29/05

DHS budget – status of budget shortfall:

The \$172 million shortfall is comprised of three main issues, as stated above in Bruce Goldberg's update.

DHS is using a joint application for SS benefits, but many people are choosing not to apply for TANF cash grants. Many don't want to comply with the requirements, often because of drug/alcohol or mental health issues. Staff continue to meet face to face with applicants. DHS is attempting to be more pro-active in notifying applicants of other programs they may qualify for. **Action: Angela to get information on SPD savings related to caseloads and cost per case changes. Action: Send out electronic document explaining services. Both action items completed by e-mail on 1/12/06.**

Food Stamp Activities — Carolyn Ross

Handout: CD on Business Process Re-engineering, Food Stamp Program State Director's Conference, FY 2006

Our food stamp error rate this year is 5.94%, below the 6% penalty rate. The error rates for the last two years were 7.79 % and 13%. We will continue work to maintain this lower error rate. Outreach continues and caseloads are rising. We reached 412,000 for November 2005 and were first nationally in outreach. Our state's hunger rate is declining as food stamp benefits increase and our administrative rates are very low nationally, a fact that we should attempt to market.

Medicaid — Karen House

Karen introduced herself as the new Medical Programs Manager and gave the following updates:

- The Standard program remains steady with 24,000 eligibles.
- SB 782, eliminates premiums in 1-10% of poverty level. Checked with OMAP, waiting for CMS approval.
- SB 913, effective 1/1/06, Medicaid coverage is suspended if client receiving SSI is incarcerated. Benefits are automatically restored if client is released within 12 months.

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- We hope to have a new, simpler application to re-apply for medical and TANF by late spring.
- The central office processing center continues to receive 8,000-9,000 applications per month. Medical only applications are processed in central office. If other benefits are requested, applications are sent to branch offices.
- Verification of citizenship: Medicaid rules will require birth certificates and/or passports. We can access Oregon Vital Statistic records to verify citizenship within our state but this will be a huge burden on cases coming from out of state.

TANF — Dave Lyda

Handouts: Update on Degree Completion Initiative

**October 2005 General TANF Adults/TANF DJ Persons Minority Data
OCR Voluntary Compliance Agreement Data Report, July - Sept. 2005**

TANF State Plan Status: The TANF State Plan has been signed by the Governor and submitted. Changes were made to incorporate disability language with Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug and Domestic Violence. Until we hear otherwise, we will continue to operate as if approved.

TANF Disqualification Report, discuss minority statistics:

The numbers are small so the percentage looks large. Mike Ware requested the minority breakdown for all programs. About 7.4% of adults had a disqualification, of that number, blacks were 6.4%. It appears that there is no discrimination for disqualifications.

Lorey is still concerned about SDA 9 (Hood River, The Dalles) and asked how the policy is being implemented. The numbers seem to be disproportionate to other SDA's and she questions if clients are getting the support services they need. **Action: Discussion to be continued at the next FSRC meeting.**

Degree Completion Initiative: Applications have slowed down and DHS will be doing some outreach and advertising for the program to get up to the 100 applications. The program continues to serve clients in their first or last year of a degree program.

Action: Mike asked Dave to provide the minority breakdown of applications at the next meeting.

Family Support and Connections (FSC): There has not been a lot of movement in this program. The contract in Crook county is up and running. Due to data entry issues, our Federal Report is late and an extension has been requested. This is a voluntary program to help TANF families at risk of being referred to child welfare. It may take a while to make the shift from the previous Community Safety Net program. **Action: Nancy will continue to request details on the FSC Steering Committee meetings.**

Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Quarterly Reports, discuss status: The OCR reviewed our programs and had questions regarding services provided to people with disabilities. An agreement is in place through July 2006. We continue to work on identifying and documenting disabilities within our caseload. The numbers on the quarterly report continue to be about the same. TRACS now includes disability pages on case plans and the roll out of training is complete. There is a 41 page user manual that is available if requested. Positive changes have been made to meet these challenges, especially around learning disabilities. This data will provide a stronger argument when we negotiate with the Feds on participation requirements. A learning assessment needs (LAN) screening is done up front. Depending on the score achieved, the client is then referred to a professional for a full assessment to identify the disability. It also helps identify learning style problems. The numbers will most likely increase as training has rolled out and branches begin using the new TRACS program.

Grievance Report — Lori Nelson

Lori introduced herself and apologized for not responding to the request for additional information that was received from Lorey Freeman. Specific questions will go to Jim Neely this week for review. Complaint forms are now in branches and posted to the Web.

New grievance reporting process:

Internal resources have been identified to help finesse the FileMaker database system. The November report included all DHS clients, not just CAF, however we can now pull out only CAF clients for future reports. The Branch number has been added and three areas will be included in the report; the complainant's issue, the resolution by the line/program manager, and the resolution with the Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO). Work continues on the transfer of database information to Excel so it can be distributed electronically. Food stamp complaints were included in the November report; however, per process developed by the feds, the FS discrimination complaints are forwarded to San Francisco for investigation. Other FS NetLink training on the complaint process began last week and went well. Training will continue on a monthly basis. The next reports from the new database will be distributed in early April when the January through March, 2006 is completed.

Chair Report — Rob Potter

- Action and follow-up items:
 - Budget, what can be provided? No answer. Bring back to next meeting.
 - FSC – get steering committee meeting date. **Action: Nancy to track.**

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- Approval of minutes:
 - November 14th FSRC meeting: There was a motion by Kim Thomas, second by Mike Ware and unanimous vote to accept the November minutes as written.
Vote: In favor: All. Opposed: None.
 - December 6th Policy Committee meeting: Motion by Kim Thomas, second by Lorey Freeman and unanimous vote to accept minutes as written.
Vote: In favor: All. Opposed: None.
- Commission Membership status: Commission membership was discussed. Jessica Chanay, Former Recipient, has recently been appointed. The Governor's Office is working on the appointment of Sonia Thomas and Diane Cohen-Alpert. Shirley Kaping has been on the commission for 14 years and the Governor's Office would like to find a replacement for her. This will leave the commission with three vacancies, two recipients and one Public Welfare Specialist.
- A Strategic Planning Session was scheduled to plan and prioritize how the FSRC works with DHS and discuss linkages to child welfare. The meeting was scheduled for the first Thursday in April 6, 2006; 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon in HSB-252 so new members can participate.
- Discussed changing FSRC meetings to another day: A motion was made by Bonnie Davidson and 2nd by Kim Freeman to change the day of the FSRC meetings to the first Thursday of the month and update the commission ByLaws to reflect this change. Vote: In favor: All. Opposed: None. The meetings will be held in HSB-252 so video conferencing can be utilized if needed. It will be decided at the strategic planning meeting whether the meetings will continue on a bi-monthly basis or be changed to monthly. The meetings will begin with a commission only caucus from 8:30 – 9:00 a.m., followed by a full commission meeting from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.
- Utilize March caucus to discuss strategic planning session. Mike suggested having a point person for specific issues who would be responsible to review, research and brief other members on their particular items.
- Election of FSRC officers (Chair and Vice-chair): There was a unanimous vote to continue with the current leadership; Rob Potter as Chair and Kim Thomas as Vice-Chair.
- The current FSRC member roster was circulated for updates.

The next Policy Committee meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, February 15th, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Oregon Food Bank in Portland. Phone conferencing is available if requested.

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The next FSRC meeting will be held on Thursday, March 2nd, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (with commission-only caucus from 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.), in the Human Services Building, HSB-252.

Meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.