

***Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee Meeting
December 14, 2007
Lutheran Community Services
605 39th Ave NW
Portland***

Members in attendance: Gloria Anderson (acting Chair), Cecilia Baricevic, Kirsten Brown, Crystal Riley, Robert Heiney, and Neeru Kanal. DHS support staff present Wendy Elstun

Meeting called to order at 1:30 by Gloria Anderson.

The topic of Culture vs. Customs was raised:

Gloria spoke about Mexico and what the consulate considers abuse. What is culturally acceptable in Mexico regarding age difference in domestic relationships and what is considered abuse in the United States? Power and control are the factors to look at not necessarily age.

Kristen mentioned that Una Swanson, Program Manager with DHS/CAF, is working on a draft with the Marion County child welfare office to clarify at what age both minors need to be before they can be in a relationship. Gloria suggested the County's draft was reviewed with Jan Slick. Neeru asked if it is legal in their refugees home county would it be legal here. Gloria explained if it is a crime here then their culture does not matter.

Administrative Rule:

Gloria asked the members if the draft Rule & Policy that were sent out for review were acceptable. All attending members approved the draft. Stated it looked good.

Article on Female Genital Mutilation:

Gloria asked if any of the members had come in contact with this issue. Neeru stated that it is considered physical abuse and a Federal crime.

Crystal asked if members of the committee needed to “get the word” out to the public. It does occur in her groups and has been discussed by inside personnel. She mentioned Mark Kinze made a presentation to her group. Kristen raised the question about whether this is being reported. Bob stated he would like more information on what types of questions needed to be asked by Child Welfare Staff. Neeru informed the members this is an on going medical issue for the rest of their life. She made the point that it is against the law and there should be something in the orientation packet. Gloria had two additional points

- . First, Does Oregon have a statute and/or do we need one. There has been a Federal Law since 1996*
- . Second, Does CPS need to take a closer look at what the child welfare worker knows and what do they need to know.*

Kristen wanted to know whether the procedure was done before the child arrived in the US, would CPS treat that as a threat of harm. Gloria stated we need training. She brought up the possibility of partnering with Crystal and her community contacts in order to get the reaction and understanding of the refugee community.

Program Updates:

The rate of refugees is slow. Arrivals not up to the 50,000 mark. Soviets are still the highest refugee group. With Africans and Cubans ranking second and third.

It was mentioned that the Patriot Act has slowed down the processing of refugees. There is a national movement trying to get Congress to make changes to the rules.

Gloria brought up the issue of services and resource. What is the best way to provide what services and resources are available?

Kristen thought it would be help if the Community Partners provided a presentation to educate staff regarding who to contract and what process work. She will work with Miriam Green and Cecilia regarding an all branch meeting with Community Partners.

Meeting Dates for 2007

March 8, 2007

December 13th, 2007.

June 14, 2007

September 13th, 2007