

MINUTES
Braam Oversight Panel
SeaTac Red Lion, Rainier Room
SeaTac, WA
March 17-18, 2008

Monday, March 17

Panel Members: John Landsverk (Chair), Jan McCarthy, Jeanine Long, Dorothy Roberts

Panel staff: Carrie Whitaker

Plaintiffs' Attorneys: Tim Farris, Bill Grimm, Erin Shea

Assistant Attorney General: Steve Hassett

DSHS Staff: Cheryl Stephani, Deborah Purce, Lee Doran, Jody Carpenter, Steve Wickmark, Debbie Willis, Bernice Moorehead, Robin McIlvaine, Cristina Limpens, Lyn Craik, David Marshall, Barb Putnam, Brenda Villareal, Robert Nelson

Others: Laurie Lippold, Jim Theofelis, Ron Murphy, Traci Russell, Dave Wood, John Morse, Mary Peddle, Martin Cross, Shanda Luthy, Elena Selkie, Sydney Forrester

Note: The minutes are a general summary of discussion and do not attempt to document every comment.

The meeting was called to order at 1:15pm.

Introduction

John Landsverk welcomed participants to the meeting and noted that the settlement agreement has reached its midpoint. The Panel is now working with the parties to revise the February 2006 Implementation Plan based on issues that have arisen to date. A draft revision was shared with the parties and stakeholders in December 2007, and the Panel is now developing another draft informed by those comments. The Panel will share this draft in April 2008, with the goal of publishing a revised Implementation Plan in May.

Cheryl Stephani introduced Children's Administration staff members who are increasingly involved in Braam activities since the departure of Ross Dawson: Bernice Moorehead, interim director of policy and planning; and Debbie Willis, who worked extensively with Ross on Braam issues and has now taken on an expanded role.

Panel Revision of Implementation Plan

John Landsverk referred to a handout summarizing the timeline, process, and general issues related to the revision of the Implementation Plan. He noted that the handout was for informational purposes and should not be considered a final document.

John asked for the parties' reactions to the Panel's plan to share the next draft of the Implementation Plan with the parties and stakeholders for comment. Steve Hassett agreed that the draft should be shared with stakeholders. He recommended that the Panel request that comments from stakeholders be submitted prior to comments from the parties, so that the parties are able to react to stakeholder comments in their responses. He also stated that, within reasonable boundaries, stakeholders providing comments should be identified. Jim Theofelis

agreed that stakeholders should have an opportunity to comment on the next draft and that if he were to comment, he would identify himself and his organization as the source of the comments.

It was agreed that the next draft of the Implementation Plan would be posted on the Panel website, along with an invitation for stakeholders to provide comments. Stakeholders will be asked to identify themselves or, if they wish to remain anonymous, to identify their role or interest in the foster care system (e.g. foster parent, foster care alumnus, etc). Comments from stakeholders will then be shared with the parties in order to allow them to consider this feedback in their responses.

Laurie Lippold asked for clarification of the process of revising the Implementation Plan. Jan McCarthy explained that several processes were occurring simultaneously. The Panel had drafted revisions to the Implementation Plan and shared them publicly. Separately, the Department had issued a document proposing significant changes to the Implementation Plan. It was explained that the Panel's process would be discussed that day during the public meeting, and that the Department would provide more information on its proposal in a presentation on the following day (Tuesday, March 18).

Carrie Whitaker summarized the timeline and process for the revision of the Implementation Plan. She reiterated that a draft had been released for comment in December, and the Panel was currently developing another draft based on this input. The revised draft would be posted in April, with the goal of finalizing the revisions in May. Because many changes to the Implementation Plan are likely, the Panel had consulted with the parties regarding the timing of the Panel's next Monitoring Report. Ordinarily, the Panel would issue a Monitoring Report in March or April. However, the parties and the Panel had agreed that the Panel should wait until the process of revising the Implementation Plan is complete before issuing its next Monitoring Report. Therefore, the Panel intends to issue a Monitoring Report based on the requirements of the revised Implementation Plan in June 2008.

John summarized some types of changes the Panel intends to make in the revised Implementation Plan. He noted that a number of outcomes would be shifted to informational reports. Unlike outcomes, informational reports will not be matters of compliance and benchmarks will not be set, although the Panel will reserve the right to reinstitute benchmarks. John noted that this change was responsive to comments that the original Implementation Plan includes too many outcomes. Jeanine Long noted that both parties had agreed to the shifts to informational reports.

John Landsverk noted that benchmarks for outcomes will include specific numeric targets, in lieu of targets for a certain percentage improvement over baseline performance. He noted that in some areas, the pace of the expected improvement had been changed and would reflect a more achievable rate of growth. John observed that few comments had been received from the parties on these issues. He also stated that the revised Implementation Plan will articulate rules for compliance decisions based on regional performance differences.

John indicated that the Panel had selected several specific areas for discussion at the public meeting.

CHET- Child Health/ Education Tracking within 30 days of placement

John noted that there had been considerable discussion at previous Panel meetings related to the CHET process and the Department's policy definition of a completed screen. John asked Steve Hassett to summarize a recent letter submitted to the Panel on this subject.

Steve indicated that the major sticking point is the issue of when a CHET should be considered complete. He noted that the Department does not dispute the importance of CHET screens, and he pointed out that Washington's screening process is innovative when compared to screening procedures in other states. The Department's main issue is the definition of a complete CHET and concerns about the ability to obtain information that is outside the Department's direct control, such as medical and educational information. Steve noted that previous policy required medical and educational information to be obtained and a staffing meeting to be held in order for a CHET to be considered complete. The revised policy requires the Department to have done all of the screening components within its control, and to have at least requested the medical and educational records. Steve noted that there are two statutes related to the CHET screening process, and that the revised policy is consistent with statutory requirements. He noted that the Department is concerned that, by objecting to the Department's policy change, the Panel is micromanaging the Department's day-to-day management authority in a manner inconsistent with the Braam Settlement Agreement. The agreement gives the Panel the authority to develop outcomes, benchmarks and action steps, but explicitly states that the Panel is not to supplant the Department's day-to-day management authority. Steve noted that it is the role of the Department, not the Panel, to establish policy. He pointed out that even the most relevant Council on Accreditation (COA) 8th edition standard (FC 2.06) indicates that assessments are to be completed "**within timeframes determined by the agency**" (emphasis added).

John Landsverk stated that the Panel does not want to get involved in CA's policy definitions and is in agreement that this is not the Panel's role. He noted that the discussion of this issue appears to be stuck on the word "complete," and he proposed that the Panel remove this word from the Implementation Plan. He also noted that of the five domains of the CHET process, screenings in three areas (emotional/ behavioral, developmental, and connections) are within CA's control, while two other areas (educational and medical) require coordination with other systems. He stated that the Panel has asked for data regarding the timeliness of screening of each of these domains but has not received the data. He reiterated the request, and indicated that the data might reveal that it would be appropriate for the Panel to establish separate outcomes and benchmarks for the different domains of the CHET process.

Jeanine Long echoed the request for data. She expressed frustration that the Department has continued to state that screenings could be accomplished in a timely manner but for the challenges of obtaining medical and educational data, but has never shared any data to illustrate the nature or extent of the problem. These data are necessary, and the Panel may then consider setting separate benchmarks.

Jan McCarthy noted that the Department's policy looks at the screening process through the lens of what the CHET screener has done, whereas the Panel's monitoring focuses on what services the child has received. Steve Hassett noted that there may be information related to the child's educational and medical background that can't be captured in administrative data.

Cheryl Stephani indicated that the Department would need to assess its data system and get back to the Panel with a response on how the data can be parsed.

John Landsverk noted that Steve's letter related to the CHET policy had stated that the Panel's position on these issues had been inconsistent, based on minutes from Panel conference calls shared with the parties. John stated that the minutes of Panel conference calls are to be viewed as summaries of Panel discussions, but not as formal decisions. The Panel will communicate formal decisions through written correspondence and published Panel documents.

Bill Grimm noted that Steve's letter related to the CHET raised a number of issues. He objected to Steve's proposal that the Panel apply a test similar to that employed by administrative tribunals in defining its role, stating that it was inconsistent with the settlement agreement. In addition, he referred to a question in Steve's letter as to whether the policy would advance the health and well-being of children. Bill posited that there is no way the CHET policy revision could be viewed as having a positive impact on children. He referenced extensive research on educational and medical obstacles faced by children in foster care, and questioned what the Department had done to resolve the issues of coordination with the medical system or with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Bill also indicated that he did not necessarily disagree with the proposal to establish different benchmarks based on the Department's level of control in a given domain.

Erin Shea suggested that the requirement for school districts to provide educational records to CA within 2 days of a request included in recently-adopted HB 2679 should improve CA's ability to obtain educational information.

Cheryl Stephani responded to Bill Grimm's question of how the Department was working with the school system, referring to the development of memoranda of understanding with school districts across the state, the convening of educational summits, and the educational advocates program. Steve Hassett noted that a wealth of information on these and other initiatives has been provided to the Panel and plaintiffs. He also reminded Bill that the challenge of obtaining educational records stems from the fact that CA must work with 296 individual school districts, because OSPI does not have and cannot release individual student data to CA.

John Landsverk stated that data on screening of the individual domains of a CHET screen would shine light on the challenges in each area, and requested that this information be provided to the Panel.

Placement stability

John Landsverk noted that placement stability represents one of the central issues of the Braam lawsuit. The Panel had sought additional consultation on how to measure stability in care, and had obtained recommendations from Mark Courtney of Partners for Our Children on a more comprehensive approach to this issue.

Carrie Whitaker summarized several concerns related to the existing Braam measure of placement stability, as well as ways in which the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) measure does not fully capture stability. She outlined three measurement approaches discussed with Mark Courtney. Used together, these would provide a much more comprehensive look at stability:

- *What percentage of children remain in their original placements 6 months, 12 months and 18 months after entry into care? (of children still in care)*
- *Of those children who experience a placement move within their first twelve months in care, what proportion have a second move in the next twelve months?*
- *For children who have been in care for two years or more: moves per care year (or placements per care year)*

Carrie emphasized that these represent initial ideas, and that numerous details of data definitions would need to be discussed.

Jeanine Long noted that she would also like to see a chart showing the total number of placements, including the number of children with no placement moves all the way up to the largest number of placement moves.

John Landsverk noted that the alternative measurement approach would heighten the focus on stability during the initial period in care, which research suggests is a critical time for stabilization. In addition, the “moves per care year” measure would provide a more sensitive and accurate look at instability for children in care for a longer period, including the type of pattern of instability that prompted the original Braam lawsuit.

Jeanine Long stated that it is important for the Department to see these types of data to understand where problems exist. Cheryl Stephani agreed, and noted that CA already examines many different measures related to placement stability.

Bill Grimm stated that discussion of a more comprehensive measure of this issue would be worthwhile. Steve Hassett suggested that it would be useful to look at instability among adolescents, because of the frequency of movement for this population.

John Landsverk suggested the creation of a small workgroup involving CA, data experts, plaintiffs and Panel representatives to discuss and make recommendations related to measurement of placement stability.

Traci Russell stated that her agency uses a measure similar to moves per care year, and has found it useful in assessing program effectiveness. She asked how runaway episodes would be counted, and John Landsverk responded that the Panel does not include those in placement counts. In addition, he noted that the Panel supports excluding the child’s first move to live with relatives or siblings from the placement count.

It was agreed that a small group would be convened to discuss these issues.

Matching

Jeanine Long noted that during her time as a legislator, discussions of placement stability focused on the need to ensure that foster parents have the necessary information, skills and expertise to meet the unique needs of children placed in their homes. Legislation reflected the importance of the match between foster parents’ skills and children’s needs in promoting stability.

Although the Panel considers matching to be an important issue, Jeanine noted that the Panel has continued to struggle with how to measure it. She noted that each child’s situation is so

unique that it is hard to come up with across-the-board rules for what qualifies as a match between the child and the home. In discussions within the Panel, the group has agreed that the bottom line for children is whether or not a child is moved.

As a result, the Panel has determined that the outcomes related to matching will be replaced with the following informational reports:

- percentage of children placed in relative placements
- percentage of children placed in foster homes licensed for the age of the child placed
- percentage of children for whom Family Team Decision Meeting (FTDM) was held within 72 hours of placement
- percentage of children who move within the first 8 days of placement

In addition, the Panel notes that several measures that will be retained as outcomes do relate to matching and will help the Panel to understand this issue:

- placement stability
- percentage of children placed with one or more siblings
- percentage of children placed in their home school area
- support for foster parents

John clarified that, unlike in the previous draft of the revised Implementation Plan, the Panel now intends that, even when FamLink is operational, the matching outcomes will be replaced by informational reports.

Cheryl Stephani agreed that it is difficult to measure matching because of the many and competing priorities in placement decisions. For example, she noted that it is important to place children with relatives, but this can result in a change in school. No single piece gives the full picture. A related issue is support and training for foster parents to meet children's needs. John Landsverk agreed, noting that research suggests that support for foster parents is an effective strategy in stabilizing children in their placements.

Bill Grimm asked for clarification on what information can be accessed by the person placing a child. Cheryl Stephani indicated that there is a database with basic information on the characteristics and skills of foster parents, and that a more complete database will be available as part of FamLink. Steve Hassett also noted that placement coordinators at DCFS offices have a wealth of information about the characteristics of foster homes based on their own experience working with foster parents or in notes or files that may not be part of the database.

Mental Health Crisis Services

John Landsverk noted that it had been the Panel's understanding based on earlier discussion with the Mental Health Division (MHD) that it would be possible to measure the timeliness of mental health crisis services by looking at the percentage of cases in which crisis services are provided on the same or next day as a request for services. However, a recent memo to the Panel from the MHD Director indicated that these data will not be available. Robin McIlviane of the MHD explained that this is because the service request captured in administrative data does not show the type of service being requested. She also noted that intakes are not required for crisis services, which further limits the type of data available.

Jeanine Long suggested using the foster parent survey to obtain these data. Jan agreed, and suggested that the responses be treated as informational reports to better understand the extent of the problem. If the data suggest that timeliness of crisis services is a significant concern, a better data source could be developed. The Panel agreed to this approach.

Educational Outcomes

John Landsverk noted that a small group including CA, plaintiffs, Panel staff, Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) staff and Janis Avery of Treehouse had recently convened to make recommendations related to the educational outcomes to be measured under Braam.

Jody Carpenter noted that the group had discussed each of the outcomes related to education from the original Implementation Plan, as well as a related action step. The group's recommendations were as follows:

- Enrollment within 3 days- this outcome should be shifted to an informational report. Jody noted that OSPI data for this item reflect the day a child was enrolled, not necessarily the day a child actually attended school. In addition, Carrie Whitaker noted that data staff had explained that it would be difficult to calculate this measure because variations in school calendars make it impossible to precisely calculate when 3 school days had elapsed. Jody noted that the action step requiring data on the reasons for delays in enrollment would also take the form of an informational report.
- Placement in the same school- Jody stated that the group had agreed that this should be retained as an outcome with benchmarks. Carrie Whitaker added that, due to data limitations, the outcome would need to be slightly rewritten to focus on school changes during the school year. In addition, the group had agreed with a Panel suggestion to exclude children placed with relatives and with siblings.
- Age-appropriate grade level- The workgroup agreed that this outcome as written is extremely difficult to measure. It was recommended that the outcome be replaced by an informational report on Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores based on WSIPP reports.
- High school graduation- Jody noted that the group had recommended that this should be retained as an outcome with benchmarks. Data will be obtained through WSIPP reports.
- GED completion- Jody stated that there was ongoing discussion of a data source for this item. If data can be obtained through the State Board of Technical and Community Colleges, an informational report will be provided. One challenge with this outcome relates to the age at which youth obtain a GED, which is frequently several years after leaving foster care.

Jan Mc Carthy asked whether FamLink would provide any additional data related to educational progress. Steve Wickmark noted that date of enrollment will be captured. Cheryl Stephani stated that FamLink will include the child's grade level, which could be used to assess whether the youth is advancing grades. There was discussion of adding this as an outcome, although several participants indicated that this would not be meaningful. Almost all children would advance a grade level each year, the more important issue is accumulation of credits.

Traci Russell noted that her agency focuses on whether children receive appropriate educational services, including special education. Martin Cross stated that his agency has created "high school plus plans" for each youth, which are reviewed on a quarterly basis to assess whether the youth is on track for high school graduation.

John Landsverk commended the work of the workgroup, as well as CA's efforts to work with OSPI to obtain data. He noted that, nationally, educational data for children in foster care is an area that is not well developed. He indicated that it would be useful to include an outcome related to credit accumulation, but that it may not be possible due to data limitations.

Case Review- Division of Licensing Resources (DLR)/ Child Protective Services (CPS) Data

John Landsverk reminded the group that data for some Braam outcomes are being gathered through a case review process. The first case review assessing the thoroughness of investigations completed by DLR for abuse/ neglect referrals for children in licensed placements has now been completed.

Lyn Craik and Cristina Limpens from the Children's Administration quality assurance unit provided a handout detailing the results of the case review, and presented the findings to the group. Lyn noted that the review had been conducted by the CA team, using case review questions approved by the Panel and developed through a small group process involving CA, plaintiffs, Panel staff, and Lucy Berliner of the Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress. Lucy Berliner also participated in the review process as an independent reviewer to ensure reliability and accuracy of the data.

Lyn explained that the case review team had examined 230 cases, a sample size allowing for 95% confidence at the statewide level. The sample was stratified by region and included children in foster homes, group homes, state operated/ certified facilities, and unlicensed/ closed homes. The review used DLR/ CPS referrals, investigative assessments, and narrative information from electronic records to assess the thoroughness of investigations.

The team found that 87% of cases were fully compliant. Full compliance for a case required compliance with each of the following four questions (compliance on individual questions is noted in parentheses):¹

- Were all suspected victims of alleged child abuse or neglect (CA/N) interviewed? (*99.1% compliance*)
- Were all subjects interviewed? (*97% compliance*)
- Was adequate information gathered during the investigation to assess child safety? (*89.6% compliance*)
- If child safety concerns existed, were appropriate actions taken to ensure the safety of the child? (*96.9% compliance*)

Lyn summarized the reasons for findings of non-compliance in each of these areas, and indicated that the case review team had discussed the results of the review process with regional offices.

Tim Farris asked whether the review process had examined the timeliness of the investigation. Lyn stated that this information would be provided through administrative data.

¹ Note: Because full compliance for a case required compliance with ALL of the different questions, the overall compliance rate is lower than the passing rate for the individual questions.

John Landsverk commended the work of the case review team. He asked how much staff time had been required for the review. Lyn replied that seven people had been on site conducting reviews for four days, and that a very significant portion of Cristina Limpens' time for several weeks in advance of the review process had been required for preparation. In addition, the Department contracted for Lucy Berliner's participation in the process.

Initial Health Screen

John Landsverk noted that the Panel's requirement for initial health screenings (IHS) for children entering foster care had been a persistent area of disagreement between the Department and the Panel. He noted that Steve Hassett had recently submitted a letter to the Panel on behalf of the Department arguing that the Panel did not have the authority to impose the IHS requirement because it went beyond the goals of the settlement agreement.

John Landsverk indicated that the Panel believed that the parties should discuss the question of whether or not the IHS requirement is within the Panel's scope. Steve Hassett noted that to his recollection this issue has never been raised in direct party-to-party discussions, and the Department would be willing to discuss this issue with plaintiffs.

Bill Grimm stated that his reading of the settlement agreement suggested that the Panel has clear authority to require IHS for children entering foster care. He noted that this is a key aspect of safe and stable placements, and is consistent with the settlement agreement's statement that outcomes should be guided by professional standards. He noted that numerous health professionals around the nation have agreed that initial health screens are critically important.

Jeanine Long agreed with Bill's statement that the initial health screen is nationally recognized as a standard of care. She indicated that the Panel is unanimous in its belief that this is a safety issue, and failure to provide health screens within 3 days of placement presents a risk to the child and to others in the home in which the child is placed. Jeanine stated that the Panel does not feel that it is acceptable to conduct health screens using a nurse phone line. The Panel believes that a health professional must actually see the child during the screen.

John Landsverk stated that the parties should discuss the issue of scope and get back to the Panel. If the parties are not able to reach agreement, the Panel will need to decide how to proceed.

Public Input

Martin Cross of the YMCA referred to the discussion of placement stability and matching, and indicated that his agency serves youth with challenging behavioral issues. He noted that as part of the recruitment process, a list of possible behaviors is provided to prospective foster parents. The agency explains to foster parents that a variety of challenging behaviors may arise, but that the agency is prepared to provide support and training to foster parents.

Laurie Lippold stated that it will be important to collect information on whether school districts are following the new legislative requirement to provide educational information within two days of a request from CA. She also asked for clarification on why the Department feels that the 72 hour initial health screening is outside the Panel's scope. Steve Hassett replied that the related goal in the settlement agreement calls for health screenings within 30 days of a child's entry to foster care, and that there is no basis for tightening this requirement to 72 hours. He

clarified that the Department was not arguing that CHET screens are outside the scope of the Panel's monitoring; the Department's primary concern related to CHETs is that the Panel is overstepping its role by micromanaging the Department's ability to set policy.

Jim Theofelis suggested that it would be helpful if all attendees at the meeting were provided with copies of documents and letters being discussed by the parties and the Panel. John Landsverk agreed and it was decided that copies of relevant materials would be available at future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55pm.

Tuesday, March 18

Panel Members: John Landsverk (Chair), Jan McCarthy, Jeanine Long, Dorothy Roberts

Panel staff: Carrie Whitaker

Plaintiffs' Attorneys: Casey Trupin, Tim Farris, Bill Grimm, Erin Shea

Assistant Attorney General: Steve Hassett

DSHS Staff: Cheryl Stephani, Deborah Purce, Lee Doran, Jody Carpenter, Steve Wickmark, Debbie Willis, Bernice Moorehead, Robin McIlvaine, David Marshall, Robert Nelson, Marjorie Fitzgerald, Stephanie Sarber

Others: Laurie Lippold, Jim Theofelis, Jennifer Strus, Ron Murphy, Traci Russell, John Tarnai, Mary Peddle, Elena Selkie, Sydney Forrester, Nancy Roberts-Brown, Jeff Petty

The meeting was called to order at 9:10am.

John Landsverk stated that the morning would be devoted to a presentation from Children's Administration on a variety of topics.

The Department shared a power point presentation, which is available along with these meeting minutes at www.braampanel.org.

Supplemental Budget

Cheryl Stephani indicated that the supplemental budget passed by the Legislature and awaiting the Governor's approval provides funding for a number of important Children's Administration initiatives. An increase of \$43.8 million will fund court-ordered supervised visits, increasing the number of children who can receive behavioral rehabilitation services (BRS), accelerated hiring of staff for monthly visits, contracts to facilitate sibling visits, 12 additional CHET screeners, 7 staff for DLR licensing, safety evaluations, home support specialists, educational advocates, school-based foster home recruitment pilots, and an expansion of multi-dimensional treatment foster care (MTFC).

Casey Trupin agreed that this represents an excellent budget for children and noted that plaintiffs and advocates were very pleased with the increased funding. He indicated that the continued need for reduction of caseloads remains a concern.

Laurie Lippold noted several other areas in which the new budget provides additional funding, including an expansion of the Mockingbird foster care model, training for dependency courts, a study of youth aging out of foster care by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP), and ongoing funding for the Braam Panel's operations.

Jan McCarthy asked for clarification on the monthly visit funding. Cheryl stated that the biennial budget had provided funding to hire additional staff, but that this additional funding will accelerate their hiring, such that staff can be hired by May 2008. Increasing the number of caseworkers reduces the workload such that the monthly visit policy can be implemented for all children in care by September 2008.

Legislation

Cheryl Stephani provided an overview of the following legislation passed during the 2008 session:

- SHB 2679- Improving Education Outcomes for Children in Foster Care
- E2SHB 3145- Child Long Term Well-Being
- E2SHB 3205- Dependency Matters
- 2SSB 6206- Agency Reviews and Reports on Child Abuse, Neglect and Near Fatalities
- SSB 6306- Visitation Rights for Relatives of Dependent Children
- HB 2835- Federal Criminal History Checks

Bill Grimm noted that in other states, the federal Adam Walsh Act has led to delays in relative placements and/ or a loss of federal revenue due to placement with relatives without the required background checks. He asked whether this had been an issue in Washington. Cheryl noted that HB 2835 had implemented statutory language required by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to facilitate background checks. Steve Hassett noted that the Department is involved in ongoing discussions with Washington State Patrol and the FBI regarding compliance with the Adam Walsh Act.

John Landsverk observed that the expansion of MTFC, tiered foster parent classification, and expanded BRS services all have implications for placement stability. Cheryl Stephani agreed, and noted that CA would be working with partners including foster parents and Partners for Our Children to discuss overall strategy in this area and integration of these initiatives.

Accreditation

Cheryl Stephani summarized recent correspondence between CA and the Council on Accreditation (COA). She stated that 44 of the 47 offices had participated in site visits and met COA standards, and the remaining offices were preparing for site visits. Cheryl referred to copies of letters shared previously with the Panel, and indicated that she had felt that the nature of the relationship between COA and CA had shifted in late 2007. She indicated that a response from COA to CA's most recent letter had been received on March 6, 2008. In that letter, COA narrowed its list of concerns and extended several timelines.

Bill Grimm stated that it is misleading to say that offices have met COA standards, which implies that the standards have been implemented. In fact, the process allows offices to develop corrective action plans in areas in which standards have not been implemented.

John Landsverk asked for clarification regarding when the process will shift from COA's 7th edition standards to the 8th edition standards. Cheryl indicated that her current understanding is that this will occur at the time of reaccreditation, which will begin immediately after accreditation is achieved.

Children's Mental Health Update

Robin McIlvaine of the Mental Health Division (MHD) provided an update on children's mental health initiatives. She noted that there has been increased collaboration between regional children's coordinators and headquarters staff, and improvements related to tracking and responding to Notices of Action (NoA). She also noted an increased emphasis on transition planning for children entering and being discharged from inpatient facilities.

With respect to the implementation of the 2007 legislation focused on children's mental health (HB 1088), Robin highlighted pilot programs in two regions focused on education of primary care doctors on mental health issues, an expanded Healthy Options mental health benefit for children who do not meet access to care standards (ACS), a review and redesign of ACS and the children's MH benefit package, improved medication management, an evidence-based practice (EBP) institute, pilot programs for wraparound services, and expansion of multidimensional treatment foster care.

Dorothy Roberts asked for confirmation that HB 1088 did not apply exclusively to children in foster care. Robin confirmed, but stated that several elements of the bill would have significant impact on children in placement. Robin discussed other work related to expansion of EBPs, including Partnership for Success and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy.

Bill Grimm asked whether Washington had been affected by the recent federal rule change restricting Medicaid funding for targeted case management (TCM) and the rehabilitation option. Cheryl indicated that Washington is very much affected by this, having used large amounts of Medicaid funding for TCM. However, the Legislature has stepped up and made a very significant investment in order to replace the anticipated loss of federal funds in this area.

FamLink

Cheryl introduced Jeff Petty, a consultant, and Stephanie Sarber, a supervisor from the Kent office, to provide an update on FamLink. Cheryl noted that the development of FamLink had involved a huge amount of coordination between the technology team and users based in the field.

Jeff Petty stated that development of FamLink had been based on extensive discussion with the field, and had incorporated requirements to meet data needs related to the federal reporting process, Braam outcomes, and the Governor's Management and Accountability Project (GMAP). He stated that the first FamLink release (including case management functions) would occur in 2008, and the second release (including financial and contracting modules) would occur in 2009. Cheryl clarified that by the end of March, CA would announce a revised target date for release 1. It is still expected that this will be within 2008.

Jan McCarthy asked whether any changes the Panel makes to the Implementation Plan would have implications for FamLink. Cheryl indicated that if there are brand new data requirements, these will need to be addressed in release 2, because it is too late to add new requirements to release 1. Jeff pointed out that even if new data elements are added to the system, there may still be an additional waiting period for the development of new reporting capabilities.

Jeff noted that CA's existing computer system is really a patchwork of separate databases, many of which do not interface with each other. FamLink will integrate these disparate components. In addition, the new system is designed to support case management functions. He noted that the challenge of rolling out a massive system redesign relates largely to the pace and extent of organizational change, as opposed to technological obstacles.

Jeanine Long requested information on all elements in FamLink related to Braam. Specifically, she requested a list of all elements for which data would be immediately available when FamLink is operational. In addition, Jeanine requested a second list of elements for which data

would need to be entered and therefore would be delayed, along with an indication of when reports would be available. Jeff indicated that this could be provided.

Children's Administration Logic Model/ Priority Performance Measures

Cheryl Stephani stated that Children's Administration had been working closely with the Panel on revising the Implementation Plan over the past several months. Simultaneously, the Department had begun to explore with the Panel and plaintiffs whether a different approach to working toward the Braam goals would be possible. In February, the Department shared a proposal for a different approach in the areas of placement stability and unsafe and inappropriate placements. Subsequently, John Landsverk and Carrie Whitaker met with CA and the plaintiffs to learn more about this proposal. Cheryl noted that CA will continue to refine its proposal, but that they wanted to take the opportunity of the public meeting to provide background on its origin.

Cheryl noted that there had been a lot of internal discussion at the Department related to the need to focus efforts on strategies that will actually create change and improve outcomes. As part of that process, David Marshall has developed a logic model, which seeks to connect strategies to desired ultimate outcomes. This logic model process tests the relationship between various processes and ultimate outcomes, to see which processes have real impacts on the desired outcomes.

David Marshall stated that this was the first time the agency had comprehensively looked at which activities have the strongest impact on key outcomes. He noted that, with the proliferation of performance measures under Braam, the CFSR, and GMAP, the field has been searching for greater clarity on what are the most important things to pay attention to. As a result, CA has now developed a set of priority performance measures. David referred to the last page of the power point handout, which identifies these priority performance measures. He noted that long-term measures include things like recurrence of maltreatment, placement stability, permanency timeliness, and success of youth transition to independence.

David explained that under the logic model approach, there is ongoing testing and statistical analysis to determine the relationship between strategies and ultimate outcomes. David reviewed several examples outlined in the power point presentation. He stated that in the time since the implementation of the 24 hour/ 72 hour response time for CPS referrals, he has tested the relationship between the policy and outcomes such as re-referral and prevention of placement. Through this analysis, he has concluded that the response time policy does have a positive impact on these outcomes, even when controlling for other factors. In another example, David has tested to determine which strategies are linked to stability of placements. He noted that even when controlling for other factors, there is a clear relationship between kinship placement and stability.

David noted that the logic model is an ongoing process of testing and re-testing to understand and confirm all the linkages between strategies and outcomes. He stated that this process will be improved with the implementation of FamLink and through continued development of data sharing relationships with related agencies and departments.

John Landsverk thanked David for an excellent presentation, and stated that this approach provides a good rationale for separating the Braam outcomes into ultimate outcomes and intermediate measures. Cheryl Stephani agreed, and noted that this approach was useful

because it creates a focus on efforts that are truly connected to ultimate outcomes. She stated that as more demands are placed on the agency, it is critically important to be able to focus in areas that actually translate into outcomes.

John Landsverk noted that, in an earlier discussion, he had proposed that the process of revising the Implementation Plan that the Panel and parties have been discussing over the last several months and the discussions related to an entirely different approach to Braam based on the logic model should be separate and parallel processes. Casey Trupin agreed. Casey stated that this had been a very helpful presentation, and that from plaintiffs' perspective, the Implementation Plan and agreement are not set in stone. However, he indicated that discussions of an alternative approach could be lengthy. In the meantime, Casey stated that the process of revising the existing Implementation Plan and the Panel's ongoing monitoring based on these expectations should continue.

Jan McCarthy asked whether the Department had done this type of analysis in all six areas of the Braam agreement. David replied that a lot of data are available and have been examined, but that the area of well-being remains the weakest in terms of data availability.

Dorothy Roberts observed that the logic model approach appears to be a very dynamic process, with ongoing testing and re-testing of relationships. Cheryl agreed, and stated that a static model will never be a useful approach to systems reform. She stated that this is a continuous quality improvement approach, with a focus on sustainable improvement.

Steve Hassett stated that the Department's recent proposal focuses on placement stability and safety of placements because these are important priorities, and it is difficult to address well-being issues without first addressing stability and safety. John Landsverk questioned this, and Jan McCarthy stated that the relationship may be more circular. Safety and stability influence well-being, and well-being in turn influences stability and safety. Cheryl agreed.

Jan McCarthy and Jeanine Long observed this had been a very useful presentation, but that it remained unclear how this approach might look in the context of the Braam process and what would and would not be included in a revised Implementation Plan using this approach.

John Landsverk observed that this discussion presented a framework, but not a blueprint, for moving ahead. He stated that there would need to be significant additional work by CA and discussion between CA and the plaintiffs to further develop this idea. Casey agreed, and indicated that it was difficult to respond without additional detail, but that plaintiffs are very open to working with the Department.

Youth Survey

John Tarnai of the Social and Economic Services Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University stated that the youth survey process was moving forward. In January, SESRC pre-tested the survey with a group of 15 youth at the Mockingbird offices in Seattle. The survey was well-received. Since then, the survey planning group had made additional revisions. In early March, the questionnaire was finalized, and the contracting process was completed and the institutional review board (IRB) approvals were obtained. Letters were mailed to foster parents and youth alerting them about the survey.

John stated that interviewers had begun making calls on Monday, March 17, and had completed 40 interviews on the first day. Interviewers reported that youth were eager to talk about their experiences in foster care.

John Tarnai noted that initial survey results would be discussed with a focus group of youth in May, and a final report would be published in June.

Steve Hassett noted that the Department is enthusiastic about the survey, but may not be able to undertake an effort of this size every year. The scope of the survey has become very broad, even though the survey is serving as the data source for only one Braam outcome. He noted that the survey was more ambitious than is necessary for Braam data purposes, and unlike the foster parent survey, the youth survey is not required under the Implementation Plan. Jan McCarthy noted that although the Panel will use the survey as the official data source for only one Braam outcome, numerous questions in the survey are relevant to other Braam outcomes and will provide the Panel with significant additional information on these issues.

Jim Theofelis expressed his appreciation to all involved that the survey is being conducted, stating that it is critically important to obtain a youth perspective on Braam-related issues.

Foster Parent Survey

John Tarnai noted that the foster parent survey workgroup had agreed to an approach for 2008 that will result in a slightly shorter survey than the 2007 version, because open-ended questions will not be included in this year's questionnaire. In addition, about 18 questions have been deleted from the survey because the information is available elsewhere or because the questions were not useful.

John Tarnai noted that some fine-tuning still needs to be done before the survey is launched, but that the project remains on track.

John Tarnai estimated that the omission of the open-ended questions in 2008 should reduce the average duration of the survey by approximately 7-10 minutes. Casey Trupin pointed out that a handful of open-ended questions are still included in the survey to ensure that foster parents have an opportunity to share concerns.

Additional Comments

Laurie Lippold requested clarification on the timing and process for moving forward with the revisions of the Implementation Plan and the development of CA's logic model approach. John Landsverk explained that the Panel would publish a revised Implementation Plan in May 2008 and would issue a monitoring report based on the revised plan in June 2008. He stated that the discussion related to the alternative logic model approach would be a lengthier process. Cheryl agreed, and stated that CA needed to do additional work and initiate conversations with the plaintiffs in order to further develop this idea. John Landsverk stated that the parties should provide an update on this process at the Panel's June meetings.

Traci Russell asked how the Department envisions its alternative approach being structured, and whether target dates would be included in their proposal. Cheryl indicated that the approach was modeled after processes developed with the Center for the Study of Social Policy in several other jurisdictions when their settlement agreements were revised. The model is based on ongoing reassessment of strategies, consistent with a continuous improvement model.

John Landsverk returned to the previous day's discussion of initial health screens. He indicated that the Panel would communicate to the parties a date by which the parties should report back on their discussion of whether this requirement is within the Panel's scope. If the parties are unable to reach agreement by the date selected by the Panel, the Panel will make a decision.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.