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**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: January 31, 2008

TO: Braam Oversight Panel

FROM: Steve Hassett, Senior Counsel

SUBJECT: **Foster Parent Survey: Non-responsive numbers**

As indicated at the past public Panel meeting, Children's Administration has followed up on the concerns previously raised regarding the non-responsive phone numbers for foster parents and relative care providers in the 2007 foster parent survey. The majority of caregivers with non-responsive numbers were not caring for children at the time of the survey. Further, CA's review has determined that CA social workers and/or licensors had alternative numbers for most of the foster parents and relative caregivers who were caring for children at the time of the survey. CA's review indicates that any numbers have been updated for those cases where there were no alternate numbers and that there are no current problems related to these numbers at this time.

**Background:**

The *2007 Survey of Foster Parents and Caregivers In Washington State* was conducted from April to July 2007 by the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center of Washington State University. The survey was designed by the Center to gather information for Calendar Year (CY) 2006 and included both active and inactive caregivers. At the onset of the survey, CA provided the Center with records for 13,187 caregivers: licensed foster parents and unlicensed relative caregivers maintained by CA in its computerized case management system, CAMIS, as of March 2007. Of this total, 7,324 were licensed foster parents (which included some relative caregivers who were licensed and received foster care maintenance payments) and 5,867 were unlicensed relative caregivers. The foster parents were licensed by CA but some of them worked with private child placement agencies that contracted with CA to maintain and supervise foster homes. Phone numbers for both licensed and unlicensed caregivers were taken from the business record module in CAMIS.

From this data base, the Center selected a random sample of 3,800 caregivers, weighted by licensing status and region. Of this sample, 1,234 caregivers responded to the Center's questionnaire. There were 781 completed interviews with licensed foster parents and 453 completed interviews with unlicensed relative caregivers. Another 694 caregivers either refused to participate in the survey or were ineligible as they had not cared for children during calendar

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year 2006. An additional 872 did not respond to phone contact and 14 could not be interviewed due to language problems or because they were deceased.

However, the Center could not contact 986 of the sample of 3,800 caregivers because the phone numbers provided by CA did not work or were disconnected and the Center was unable to find an alternate number. Despite the fact that survey director John Tarnai of the Center did not feel this was unusual in a sample of that size, this became an issue at the Oversight Panel's September meeting and allegations were made that CA was unable to contact caregivers or locate children in out-of-home care.<sup>1</sup> The Department agreed to review the issue. This memo supplements the verbal report made to the Panel at the December meeting.

### **Children's Administration Review:**

As indicated above, the survey was intended to produce data for 2006 and the data provided to the Center by CA included some caregivers who were no longer caring for children as of the time it was pulled in March 2007. At the time the survey was conducted, 239 of the 781 licensed foster parents who responded did not have foster children in their care (approximately 30% of the responses). As for unlicensed caregivers, the number was closer to 40%: of 453 unlicensed caregivers who responded, 181 did not have children in their care as of their time of their phone interview.<sup>2</sup>

CA did not address reasons for this turnover in its review of the non-responsive numbers as this issue has been fully discussed in other contexts with the Oversight Panel. However, what is key here is that a significant number of the 986 caregivers with non-responsive numbers were not caring for children at the time the data was provided to the Center by CA, much less by the time Center staff or volunteers attempted to contact them. To conduct its review of the non-responsive numbers, CA received the names of the 986 caregivers with non-responsive numbers back from WSU and checked them against the administrative data originally provided to the Center in March 2007. Additional follow-up was provided where necessary by CA's Division of Licensed Resources for licensed caregivers and on the regional level for unlicensed caregivers.

CA's review established that 697 of the 986 caregivers with non-responsive numbers at the time of the survey – or approximately 70% - were not caring for children as of the time the data was provided to WSU in March 2007. This included 300 out of 418 licensed caregivers with non-responsive numbers (72%) and 397 out of 568 unlicensed caregivers (70%).

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the September 20, 2007 article in the Seattle Post Intelligencer headlined "Quarter of State's Foster parents Can't Be Reached." Based largely on the press releases prepared by the Plaintiffs, the article led off with the misleading and inaccurate question: "If the state can't contact at least 25 percent of its licensed foster parents, is it doing an effective job of monitoring children's welfare?"

<sup>2</sup> Foster Parent Survey, SESRC Data Report 07-048, page 35.

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Because none of these 697 former caregivers were caring for children at the time attempts were made by the Center to contact them with the last number entered in the CAMIS business record, child safety was not implicated or compromised. Further, the fact that the Center did not have a working number for any particular caregiver does not mean that CA did not have such a number. The subsequent review has established that in many cases, CA social workers or licensors had a working number for the caregiver that was not properly recorded in the business record module or was maintained in a different part of the record.

In addition, the delivery of data by CA to the Center in March 2007 was essentially a point in time snapshot of that data. Because of the way the survey was structured, there was no mechanism for the Center to contact CA for an update of a non-responsive phone number once it received the data, despite the fact that CA staff continued to update CAMIS in a number of cases. This issue will be addressed in the next and subsequent foster parent surveys.

Of the 418 licensed caregivers that had non-responsive numbers from the business record when the Center tried to contact them, 160 had an alternative number in CAMIS at the time the data was provided to the Center in March 2007, usually in the Person ID section of the database. This left 258 (approximately 62%) without an alternative number in CAMIS at that time. By the time CA conducted its review in November 2007, 123 of these licensed caregivers - almost half - had had their phone numbers updated in the CAMIS business record in the normal course of business. This information was added by the licensors for these foster homes, and it appears that in many of these cases the licensors or DCFS placement coordinators had an active number for the foster homes at all times but had not recorded it in CAMIS.

This left 135 licensed caregivers with an active license, an outdated and non-responsive number in the CAMIS business record, and no alternative number in CAMIS when CA conducted its review in November 2007. Of these 135 licensed caregivers, 85 were caring for a child in March 2007. This had dropped to 65 still caring for a child in October 2007. The result of the CA review of these 135 licensed caregivers is as follows:

<b>Reason Phone Number Not Current in GUI-CAMIS</b>	<b>Number of Caregivers</b>
Licensors reports caregiver had not communicated their change of telephone number	54 (40%)
Info was correct in CAMIS at time of review and it appears there was either a WSU error or information had been corrected in the interval <sup>3</sup>	36 (27%)
Licensors had current phone number but had not entered it into CAMIS business record	36 (27%)
Other reason (e.g. License closed, Fax/Phone line, pending license)	7 (5%)
Phone number entered incorrectly in CAMIS prior to March 2007	2 (1%)
<i>Total</i>	135

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<sup>3</sup> CA cannot determine when contact information was updated.

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The 92 numbers in bold type in the grid required follow-up action by CA. These records have been updated.

The situation is somewhat different for unlicensed relative caregivers. They have no assigned licensors and once the child leaves that particular placement, the caregiver has no obligation to contact the social worker to have their phone contact information updated. Of the 568 unlicensed relative caregivers who had non-responsive numbers in CAMIS when the Center tried to contact them, it appears that CA had an alternative number for 24 of them at the time the data was provided to the Center in March 2007. For its subsequent review, CA did not consider cases of unlicensed relative caregivers who were no longer caring for a child in out-of-home placement. While the review of licensed caregivers was conducted by licensors in the Division of Licensed Resources, the review of unlicensed relative caregivers was done on the regional level by the supervisors and social workers for the children in these placements.

As of CA's review in November 2007, there were 178 unlicensed relative caregivers who had an outdated and non-responsive number in CAMIS for whom CA did not have an alternative number in CAMIS and who were identified as still caring for a child. The result of the CA review for these unlicensed relative caregivers is as follows:

<b>Reason Phone Number Not Current in GUI-CAMIS</b>	<b>Number of Caregivers</b>
Have Current Phone Number and Overlooked CAMIS Documentation	<b>63</b> (35%)
Placement and/or Case Closed	36 (20%)
SW Reports Caregiver Did Not Communicate Change	<b>33</b> (19%)
Other Reason (e.g. Youth over 18 years, duplicate business ID, SW updated GUI-Person Card only, does not have phone, etc)	22 (12%)
Info Correct in CAMIS, Appears to be WSU-Report Error	16 (9%)
Phone Number Entered Incorrectly in CAMIS	<b>8</b> (4%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>178</i>

The 104 numbers in bold type in the grid required follow-up action by CA. These records have been updated.

The question was also raised in the meeting as to whether it was appropriate for CA to count foster care beds for purposes of measurement of outcomes relating to placement stability if the licensee for those beds could not be contacted. However, this is based on the assumption that CA has no other way to contact the licensee. As indicated above, CA had working numbers for 355 of the 418 licensed caregivers who had non-responsive numbers in the survey either at or shortly after the time of the survey. An additional 54 licensed caregivers had not provided their new numbers to their licensors by the time of the CA review, but CA was obviously able to contact them.

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The information provided to WSU reflected a one time extraction of CA data from a particular source, the business record module of CAMIS. A significant number of licensed caregivers with non-responsive phone numbers had their phone number in another location in CAMIS at that time, usually the Person ID module. For placement purposes, contact information would also be kept by the placement desks or placement coordinators in individual offices in paper records, other local electronic files and/or in the placement database, which is a stand alone database. Also, case files and licensing files kept by both licensors and social workers, for the most part paper files, are often the best source of up-to-date contact information. CA cannot tap sources other than CAMIS for purposes of providing data for the foster parent survey.

CA identified some systemic problems in the course of its review:

1. When WSU staff or students conducting the foster parent survey realized the number provided by CA in the initial data transfer was non-responsive, the survey methodology provided no opportunity for the Center to contact CA to determine if CA had a working number for a caregiver or if any contact information had been updated in the interval between the data transfer and the survey. CA and the Center will address this issue in future surveys. This will probably resolve the majority of cases, at least for licensed caregivers.
2. Business Record module information is not always up to date in CAMIS. While individual social workers can update information in the Person ID module, updates in that module do not result in an automatic update of the Business Record module. Access and training to update the Business Record module is limited to specialized staff who are often not the assigned social worker and who may not get information regarding changes of phones numbers on a timely basis. This problem will also be helped by FAMLINK, which will update all relevant fields when information is entered into one field. In the interval, social workers and licensors have been reminded of the need to keep contact information current in all appropriate modules in CAMIS.
3. Placement data base information is not part of CAMIS and cannot be utilized when transferring data to WSU for survey purposes. This problem should be resolved by implementation of FAMLINK, which will include placement information as a relevant field.
4. Phone numbers for licensed caregivers were pulled by CA from a constructed data file called the licensing main, which is supposed to pull in the most current information for each business from the CAMIS Business Record module (where data for unlicensed caregivers was pulled from). CA has since determined that the licensing main may not contain the most current information and will go directly to the Business Record module file for this data for future surveys.