

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Subcommittee on Child Welfare

May 12, 2005 Hearing Room 170

8:30 A.M. Tapes 11 - 12

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Billy Dalto, Chair

Rep. Debbie Farr

Rep. Mitch Greenlick

STAFF PRESENT: Sandy Thiele-Cirka, Committee Administrator

Corina Alexander, Legislative Assistant

Pamella Andersen, Committee Assistant

MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:

Accept Report on Child Safety in the Child Welfare System – Informational Meeting

Public Comment

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

TAPE/#	Speaker	Comments
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TAPE 11, A

004	Chair Dalto	Calls the meeting to order at 8:39 a.m. Opens the informational meeting.
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report on child welfare – informational meeting

- 011 Ramona Foley Assistant Director, Children, Adults and Families, Department of Human Services (DHS). Introduces Wayne Holder and Therese Roe Lund. Submits the Expert Review of the Safety Intervention System (**Exhibit a**) and the Executive Summary of the Review (**exhibit b**).
- 023 Wayne Holder Executive Director, ACTION for Child Protection, National Resource Center for Child Safety (NRCCS). Provides contextual overview. Reports the findings are evolutionary, as progress will continue to be made. Notes they were asked to review Oregon compared to the state-of-the-art, and the standard surpasses what is actually happening anywhere.
- 064 Therese Roe Lund ACTION for Child Protection, NRCCS. Shares what ACTION for Child Protection is and how it came to be asked to develop this study. Notes how they work with states and tribes at no cost.
- 089 Chair Dalto Asks about the cost of the survey.
- 090 Holder Relates the study was funded by the federal government. Elaborates on how it is paid for based on the number of days spent in review in the field. Compares the study to larger projects done by their parent organization.
- 131 Chair Dalto Questions the investment considering there are no new findings.
- 142 Holder Reports those in agencies and working in conjunction with them usually aren't surprised by their findings. States their reports usually confirm what is already known, and experiences with staff generally reinforce earlier findings.
- 170 Rep. Greenlick Requests Holder address the evidence base for standards, particularly the safety triage models.
- 187 Holder States the evidence base is limited in all child welfare decision-making and is more related to risk assessment than safety. Reports only two studies have been done, and little will be seen in terms of evidence-based work for a long time. States the level of contact between the worker and families has a bearing on the safety of children and other outcomes such as adoption. Relates a single worker with more contact is better than multiple workers with limited contact.

254	Chair Dalto	Inquires if only Multnomah County was studied.
256	Holder	Reports they visited Multnomah and Clackamas Counties. Notes they reviewed some Critical Incidence Response Team (CIRT) reports, but primarily focused on the overall system that supports safety intervention. Mentions they had focus groups with line staff.
273	Roe Lund	References (exhibit a) page 2, noting findings are systemic in nature resulting from a statewide look at how the system supports safety intervention.
291	Chair Dalto	Inquires what staff reported.
295	Holder	Notes the point of inquiry was around their perception of how staff was guided in their day-to-day work. Results indicated half the staff did not believe policy provided clear direction for their real work needs. Comments in every state there are systems such as information systems and quality assurance that are underdeveloped.
340	Chair Dalto	Comments the issues appear to be management-related. Mentions committee review of the state hospital to determine what it should look like. States the problems are so overwhelming no one knows where to start. Observes caseworker workloads are similarly so overwhelming prioritization is a challenge and there is inconsistency in management direction. Comments people detach when decisions are so overwhelming. Relates the need for fundamental re-evaluation of how staff is distributed to increase effectiveness.
425	Holder	Responds these facts describe the crisis in child welfare, nationally. Note people give up and move on rather than stay and become masters.
450	Rep. Greenlick	Restates the need to re-engineer the entire system. Questions what other states do.

TAPE 12, A

003	Holder	Continues testimony.
006	Chair Dalto	Requests the Department offer a response to the management questions. States belief workers need to be released from certain responsibilities.

016	Foley	States the report can seem overwhelming. Comments it clearly lays out child safety cannot be accomplished 36 different ways. Notes the desire of front-line staff for more direction for decision-making. Relates questionable strategies such as family decision meetings for all families, and the definition/interpretation of threat of harm need to be rethought and exact interpretation provided.
05	Rep. Greenlick	Comments on the field's difficulty discriminating between problems and significant time bombs.
070	Holder	States the terminology needs to have the same meaning for everyone, and the same judgment criteria should be used by all professionals unilaterally.
085	Rep. Greenlick	Mentions the need to quantify the probability of an event and the consequences of an event rather than relying on instinct. Triage models need to be developed.
103	Foley	Notes staff appreciates being held accountable, they just need sharper tools. Discusses staff assignments, noting established national caseload ratios are outdated.
134	Chair Dalto	Requests confirmation Oregon is not last in addressing child welfare, but behind the national standard because other states are able to have lower caseload ratios.
146	Rep. Greenlick	Inquires what the investment is per state.
151	Holder	Reports he does not have the investment-per-state in dollars. States it is bad everywhere. Discusses standards that are five to ten years old, and the increase in responsibilities and tasks per case. Notes the job is much different than years ago. Mentions which ratios are twice as high as they should be.
206	Foley	States need for precision is essentials regardless of caseload.
224	Rep. Greenlick	Questions whether caseworkers should be clear on who their client is.
230	Holder	Reports that ambivalence is a basic fundamental problem. Restates the question as "Who are we identifying to attempt to serve?"
244	Rep. Greenlick	

States there should be a sign in every office that our client is the child.

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| 260 | Holder | Reports the principle of child-centered, family-focused was developed in the 1950's, and defines how one behaves but does not clarify specific responsibilities. |
| 284 | Foley | Discusses philosophy of strengths-needs-based approach. States the safety of the child must come first and then a move can be made to develop plans to incorporate the strengths of the family. |
| 308 | Chair Dalto | Questions why the same worker is addressing the needs of the child and the family. Recommends one person follow the child to focus on the mission of that individual's safety. |
| 336 | Foley | Relates the traditional model in child welfare is intake and assessment, as in an emergency room. States differing laws kick in based on the determination from that assessment. |
| 352 | Rep. Greenlick | Compares to the medical model calling for a worker such as a primary care physician for the child. |
| 362 | Holder | States the case-management model is the most common model. Relates the expectation is to involve professionals based on the needs of the family, with the caseworker managing the comings and goings of the professionals. |
| 386 | Rep. Greenlick | Comments there needs to be one case manager that stays with the child from beginning to end. |
| 391 | Foley | Expresses concern apples and oranges are being compared. |
| 400 | Rep. Greenlick | Relates what he observed regarding continuity. |
| 410 | Holder | States at major junctures in the process responsibility for the case changes. |
| 417 | Rep. Greenlick | Restates Holder's earlier comment the child needs to remain with one person. |
| 420 | Holder | |

Mentions the issue of workload. Comments the evidence is clear, but there is no capacity to respond.

436 Roe Lund Notes the question of consistency is with the entire family, not just the child. Elaborates.

TAPE 11, B

003 Roe Lund Continues testimony. Notes one configuration doesn't fit every community.

014 Rep. Greenlick States every time there is a hand-off, there is opportunity to fumble the ball.

017 Holder Comments on the impact of caseworkers leaving their jobs.

027 Rep. Greenlick Agrees turnover is a problem.

030 Chair Dalto Reads the ORS on the family decision-making meeting, which indicates it is not required.

036 Foley States the workers have interpreted the regulations to say they are required.

052 Chair Dalto Asks if management could say family decision-making meetings will not be used in every circumstance, and define when they will not be used.

056 Foley Confirms, yes, that could be done. Elaborates on the issue. Explains the impact of such changes.

087 Committee is at ease from 9:45 a.m. to 9:50 a.m.

098 Roe Lund Discusses the narrowing of the portal of entry into the child welfare system that they addressed in Milwaukee. Mentions the law of physics: you can't serve everyone unless you have unlimited resources. Relates the details of their Milwaukee experience and how the state came to take over the child welfare system from the counties and the criteria upon which they entered children into the system.

164	Holder	Clarifies history of child welfare.
180	Rep. Greenlick	Discusses cut off between cases served and not served.
182	Roe Lund	Confirms and clarifies they helped those deemed to be currently unsafe. Comments caseload size will not address issues with IT, supervision, lack of policy, or solid training/staff development, etc. Explains her responsibilities for her 35 case loads in the 1970's compared to what is required today. Elaborates on the solution developed for Milwaukee. Reports quality assurance tracked the quality of decision-making rather than the number of cases with beneficial outcomes.
290	Holder	Clarifies Milwaukee was unusual in that they started with nothing – even office equipment. Reiterates what Oregon is experiencing is consistent with most of the nation. States the most critical challenge is implementation. Relates a serious common mistake is trying quick, ready fixes that don't hold rather than making a long-term investment. Discusses the issue of changing leadership and its impact on effectiveness.
331	Chair Dalto	Questions why the United States is so backward in child welfare.
338	Holder	Speculates it is a question of which of our values are real to us. Reports other developed countries lag behind us in child welfare. Comments on the political and economic influences that are constantly changing. Notes part of society wants problems to be better without really knowing they exist.
374	Roe Lund	Adds there hasn't been a concerted, sustained effort to become more disciplined and professional. States this results in young, inexperienced workers, rather than a requirement for seasoned veterans.
396	Rep. Greenlick	Relates the need to have one simple change the committee can make to improve things.
421	Holder	States most issues can be remedied by Department management and staff. Notes sufficient capacity is the single biggest issue. Relates the value of discussing issues in the open. Mentions the Center's national forum on workload management and demand in December.

002	Holder	Continues testimony. States dialogue is critical.
005	Rep. Greenlick	Emphasizes the need to eliminate dual messages to case-workers of caring for children versus caring for families.
020	Chair Dalto	Inquires on changes in Alabama, Holder's recommendations on law enforcement being more involved in removals, and their impressions regarding the two CIRT reports they reviewed.
037	Holder	States the need to build expertise, which takes time. Comments knowing what is wrong and knowing how to fix it are different.
055	Chair Dalto	Comments on the integral role of poverty.
063	Holder	Discusses societal problem of distribution of resources. Believes the CIRT is a good idea and can provide guidance for what needs to go into the quality assurance program. States Alabama reform is somewhat of a myth. Elaborates. Relates removing children from homes needs to be a collaborative effort with law enforcement, as the authority is better managed by law enforcement.
125	Chair Dalto	Inquires how many states have law enforcement drive removal of children.
126	Holder	Relates the vast majority do.
129	Rep. Greenlick	Comments external validation is helpful. Notes his concern with the state of research in this field. Would like to see research funds to address these issues and the risk assessment model.
161	Chair Dalto	Closes the informational meeting. Adjourns the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

- A. **Child Welfare, Expert Review Safety Intervention System, Ramona Foley, 16 pp**
- B. **Child Welfare, Executive Summary of the Expert Review of the Safety Intervention System, Ramona Foley, 5 pp**