



2014 ANNUAL REPORT
CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD
Oregon's Foster Care Review Program



*Every Day Counts...
in the life of a child in foster care.*

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Leola McKenzie
CRB Director

2014 was a busy year for CRB! As you will see from this report, we worked on a number of activities to improve our board member recruitment, training, and case reviews while continuing to advocate for improvements in our child welfare system. I applaud Suzanne Callahan, Tina Qualls, David Smith, and Christina Jagernauth who spent many hours updating our new volunteer orientation training with four hours of online training modules that prospective volunteers can complete at their own pace in the comfort of their own home.

Under the leadership of Rakeem Washington and with the support of Marion County Circuit Court Judge Lindsay R. Partridge, the Marion County CRB developed and implemented a specialized board that reviews all of the county's foster youth age 15 or older. Volunteers on this board have had experience working with teenagers outside of CRB and are highly skilled in interacting with them during reviews. They received special training on the risks and challenges older foster youth experience, relevant child welfare policies and programs, and questions that should be asked during reviews to ensure youth are adequately prepared for independence.

Our three CAPTA Citizen Review Panels (not to be confused with our 59 Citizen Review Boards), tasked with evaluating the extent the Department of Human Services is discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with state and federal plans, policies, and laws, focused their attention on:

- Reducing the number of children with a permanency plan of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (Douglas County);
- Increasing safety and permanent connections for older youth in foster care (Lane County); and
- Determining whether laws, policies, and procedures relating to relative placement have a disproportionate impact on communities of color (Multnomah County).

Some of their findings and recommendations are already informing and contributing to local improvement efforts, and I am grateful we have this forum to fulfill our system advocacy mandate.

CRB will be celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. As I look back on all the events and people that got our program to where it is today, I feel a deep sense of responsibility to keep alive the passion and energy for child advocacy that established citizen review in our state. While Oregon's child welfare system has made many improvements, there is still much work to be done. All children need and deserve safe, permanent, and enriching homes. Our volunteer board members are dedicated to ensuring these needs are met for children in foster care. I am thrilled that in 2015, we will be undergoing a 5-year strategic planning process to organize and focus our efforts in the pursuit of this goal.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our 300 volunteer board members and 24 staff, 2014 was a fruitful year for CRB. I am excited to share all the work we accomplished in the following annual report.

Sincerely,

Leola L. McKenzie

WHO WE ARE

The Citizen Review Board (CRB) is a program within the Oregon Judicial Department that reviews the cases of children in foster care. The reviews are conducted by boards made up of volunteers from the community who are appointed by the Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court. Currently, there are 59 boards in 33 of Oregon's 36 counties and approximately 300 volunteers serving on them statewide. Each board can have up to five members and two alternate members.

Transparency and Public Oversight

CRB was established by the Oregon Legislature in 1985 in response to Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. This law clarified expectations for state child welfare agencies regarding keeping children out of foster care and permanency planning for children in foster care. PL 96-272 set out numerous requirements for states to remain eligible for federal reimbursement of certain foster care related expenses. One of the requirements was that the case of every child in foster care must be reviewed every six months while the child is in care.

States have flexibility on who can conduct these reviews. Some, like New York and Nevada, have judges do them. Others, like Massachusetts and Colorado, have internal reviews conducted by the child welfare agency. Oregon, like South Carolina, Arizona, and Delaware, has a citizen review process.

There are obvious advantages to a process involving citizen volunteers. They are independent, bring a wide variety of backgrounds to the table, and usually have more time to devote to reviews including carefully

reading all case material in preparation for those reviews. Citizen volunteers offer a unique common sense perspective on child welfare cases, and provide a review environment that is typically less formal than a court hearing, often resulting in more meaningful participation from youth, parents, and foster parents. They bring transparency and public oversight to a system that is largely closed due to the confidential nature of the cases, and help ensure the system does not stray too far from the values of the community.

In Oregon, CRB and the courts share responsibility for conducting periodic reviews. CRB typically conducts the first and second reviews (at 6 and 12 months respectively), the court conducts a permanency hearing at 14 months that also qualifies as a periodic review, and then the CRB and court alternate reviews every six months thereafter until the child leaves foster care.

Our Reviews

Most boards meet monthly and can review up to 10 cases in a day. Prior to the reviews, board members have access to specific case material in order to familiarize themselves with the cases. Legal parents or guardians, foster parents, youth age 14 or older, attorneys for parents and children, court appointed special advocates, and child welfare workers are invited to each review. Additionally, other interested parties such as service providers, grandparents, and other extended family may be invited.

During reviews, board members must answer a series of questions, called findings, that determine whether



the state has provided sufficient services to the family, how the parents are doing in those services, and what type of goal is most appropriate for the child (i.e., reunification with a parent, adoption, guardianship, or another planned permanent living arrangement). Before making each finding, board members direct questions to those present at the review to fill in any gaps in information from the case material and gain insight into different perspectives that may exist on what has occurred in a case. The board's findings and any recommendations are compiled into a report and sent to the juvenile court, child welfare agency, those who attended the review, and any legal party not able to attend.

Our Volunteers

Volunteer citizen review board members have a role that is more challenging than most volunteer experiences. In addition to understanding the complex

legal issues related to child protection, they must comprehend the intricate social and clinical considerations that determine what is in the child's best interest.

In 2014, 357 board members collectively donated 29,911 hours of service to the state preparing for and conducting 3,398 reviews of children in foster care. This is a cost benefit to the state of \$848,582. Additionally, during 2014, these citizen volunteers completed 4,497 hours of continuing education on topics important to the cases they review.

Oregon law directs the program to recruit board members from groups with special knowledge or interest in foster care and, as far as practicable, that they be representative of the various socioeconomic and ethnic groups of the area served. CRB is making special efforts to increase the diversity of its boards. In 2014:

- 25% of boards had a member who is a person of color,
- 42% had a member 35 years of age or younger,
- 41% had a member who reported earning less than \$35,000 annually,
- 61% had a member with a background in education,
- 47% in health care,
- 25% in law, and
- 12% in social work.



Top: Sitting (from left) Field Managers Sam Tazumal, Maiya Hall-Olsen, Jennifer Goff, Shary Mason (JCIP Model Court and Training Analyst), Amy Benedum, Molly Johnson. Standing (from left) CRB Field Managers Laurie Judd, Walt Gullett, Robin de Alicante, Tina Qualls, Suzanne Callahan, Rakeem Washington, David Smith, Lisa Romano, Sandy Berger, Steven Lindeman, Amy Church (CRB Volunteer Resource Coordinator). Lower left: Kevin Coulson, Business Operations Lead, and Tiffany Lamberth, support staff. Lower right: Support staff Kendra Bentz, Tina Ellenwood, Nadine Pressley, Megan Carsley. Not pictured: Leola McKenzie, Director; Christina Jagernauth, Assistant Director; John Nichols, Field Manager; Rebecca Regello, Field Manager; Craig Coleman, support staff.

Our Staff

CRB has 24 full-time and part-time employees. Thirteen are Field Managers responsible for coordinating local boards, staffing reviews, preparing the boards' findings and recommendations reports, and representing the CRB on local child welfare improvement workgroups. The remaining employees include seven clerical staff, a volunteer coordinator, the assistant director, and director. Most staff work out of two main offices located in Salem and Portland. Eight staff work out of courthouses located in Eugene, Hillsboro, Medford, Pendleton, and Coquille.

Statewide Juvenile Dependency Statistics

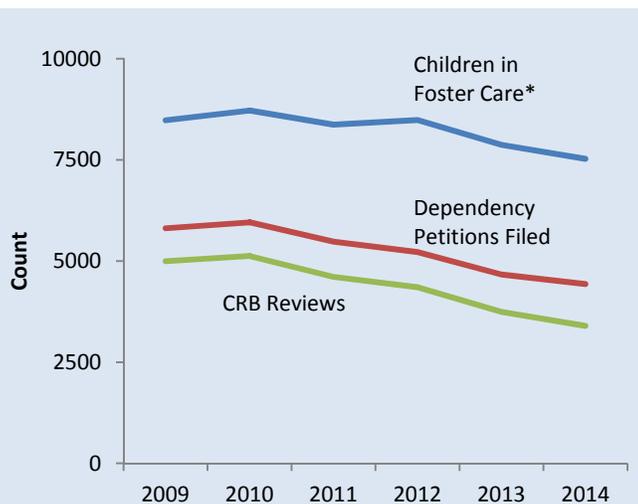
(Jan. 1, 2014 – Dec. 31, 2014)

Unless otherwise noted, the below statistics are for the 2014 calendar year. Data on dependency petitions, CRB reviews, and children reviewed by CRB were collected from the Judicial Department's Data Warehouse and Odyssey systems. All other data was collected from DHS' Oregon Child Welfare Data Set.

Children in Foster Care	7,522*
Dependency Petitions Filed	4,432
CRB Reviews	3,398
Children Reviewed by CRB	4,413**

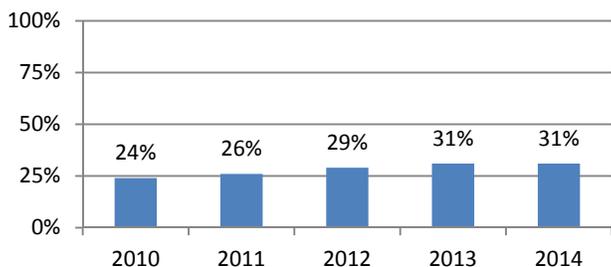
*Number of children in foster care on December 31, 2014.
**Children reviewed multiple times are only counted once.

Children in Foster Care	
Age	
0-2 Years	19%
3-5 Years	17%
6-8 Years	16%
9-11 Years	12%
12-14 Years	13%
15+ Years	22%
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	M*
Black/African American	7%
White	70%
Hispanic (any race)	15%
Top 5 Reasons for Removal	
Neglect	66%
Parent Drug Abuse	45%
Inability to Cope	14%
Inadequate Housing	13%
Physical Abuse	12%

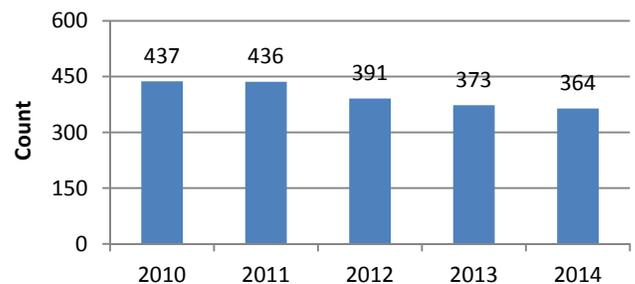


*On the last day of each calendar year.

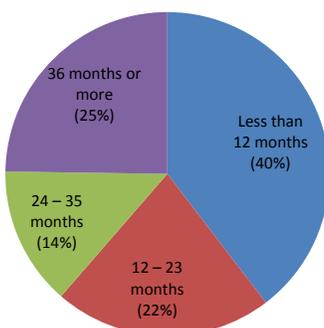
First Placement With Relative



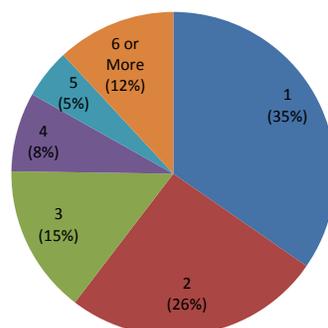
Youth Exiting Care at 18 or Older



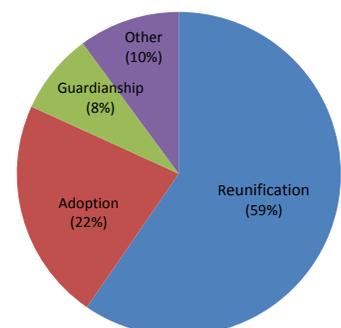
Length of Time in Foster Care



Number of Placements



Discharge Reason



Education

Volunteer Orientation eModules

Oregon law requires that volunteer citizen review board members complete a 16-hour orientation training prior to serving on a board. For the last 30 years, this training has been delivered in-person over two days. While feedback on the training has always been positive, CRB staff consistently hear from volunteers that the days are very long, particularly when coupled with lengthy travel time. To address this issue, in 2014, CRB developed four hours of orientation training modules that prospective volunteers can complete online. These modules cover the history of the CRB, relevant federal and state laws, how to prepare for and conduct reviews, questioning strategies, and board demeanor.

The online modules have a number of benefits:

- ◆ Prospective volunteers now come to the in-person portion of the training already familiar with the concepts that will be discussed;
- ◆ The modules replace much of the lecture portion of the in-person training, which enables attendees to focus on applying the concepts during a series of practice CRB reviews;
- ◆ Prospective volunteers can complete the modules at their own pace in the comfort of their own home; and

- ◆ Because the modules are posted to the web, anyone can get specific information about the review process and volunteer experience.

In February 2015, CRB began requiring that all prospective volunteers complete the online modules and associated practice quizzes prior to attending the in-person orientation training, which was reduced to just 12 hours. Initial feedback on the modules has been overwhelmingly positive. The modules can be viewed on the CRB website at:

<http://courts.oregon.gov/OJD/OSCA/cpsd/citizenreview/pages/OTeModules.aspx>

Annual CRB Conference

More than 200 volunteer citizen review board members and child welfare partners attended the CRB “Every Day Counts” Conference at the Hilton Conference Center in Eugene May 2 and 3, 2014. This annual event, which began in 1988, provides attendees opportunities to hear from national speakers on child welfare issues, participate in a variety of educational workshops, and to connect with volunteer board members from across the state.

In 2014, Cory Jewell Jensen, a nationally recognized speaker on child sex abuse, presented a keynote on how sex offenders target and seduce children, why children often don’t report the abuse, and the latest research regarding appropriate contact between sex offenders and their children. Following the keynote,



conference attendees choose from a diverse array of workshops on conducting trauma-informed reviews, services for incarcerated parents, health and medical issues of children in foster care, aiding youth in developing a healthy racial and ethnic identity, and a variety of other topics.

A highlight of the conference was the charitable giving it generated. Baskets filled with prizes and goodies donated from local boards across the state raised \$3,819 to support Camp to Belong, which reunites siblings living in separate foster care homes in a summer camp setting.

Local Trainings

Volunteer citizen review board members also had opportunities to attend a variety of trainings held at the local level throughout the year. Coordinating and sponsoring local trainings for volunteer board members and child welfare partners is another important way CRB contributes to improving the overall child welfare system. In 2014, local trainings were held on the Foster Care Bill of Rights, Indian Child Welfare Act, drug and alcohol treatment, Independent Living Program, CRB policies and procedures, and many other topics.

Volunteer Handbook

In August 2014, a new tool for volunteer citizen review board members was added to the CRB website. The *Volunteer Board Member Handbook* is a collection of information on many topics that come up during CRB reviews. Each topic is organized under the relevant finding the board is legislatively mandated to make and most have links to other websites where the reader can find additional information. The handbook was written entirely by CRB field staff and will be updated annually so board members have a single point of reference for up-to-date information on matters relevant to their reviews. The handbook is available on the CRB website at:

<http://courts.oregon.gov/OJD/docs/OSCA/cpsd/citizenreview/2014.07.07CRBMemberHandbook.pdf>



Above: Attendees at the 2014 Annual CRB Conference. Below: Baskets for the Camp to Belong fundraising event.

Voluntary Case Reviews

Approximately 3% of CRB reviews statewide involve cases where the child has been placed in foster care under a voluntary agreement between a parent or legal guardian and the Department of Human Services. Due to the nature of these cases, and the fact that they are relatively infrequent, there is a lot of confusion about them among child welfare workers and CRB volunteers and staff.

A workgroup of CRB staff was convened to develop a tool that would alleviate some of this confusion. A technical assistance guide of myths and facts about voluntary cases was developed and, in 2014, made available to volunteer citizen review board members on the CRB website at:

<http://courts.oregon.gov/OJD/docs/OSCA/cpsd/citizenreview/2013.12.11VoluntaryReviewsGuide.pdf>

Innovation

Specialized Board for Older Youth

Teenagers and young adults strive for independence as they seek to carve their own slice of the world. Children growing up outside foster care learn independent living skills through their parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, spiritual community and so forth. Children growing up inside foster care see many disruptions in these relationships and may not receive the natural supports critical for developing independence. The experiences of these youth place them at higher risk for unemployment, poor educational outcomes, health issues, early parenthood, long-term dependency on public assistance, incarceration, and homelessness.

In 2014, planning began to create a specialized citizen review board in Marion County that would review all of the county's foster youth age 15 or older. Board members with experience working with teenagers outside of CRB and those highly skilled in interacting with teenagers during reviews were recruited to the board. They were provided special training on the risks and challenges foster youth experience, relevant DHS policies, the Independent Living Program, and questions that should be asked during reviews to ensure youth are adequately prepared for independence.

CRB worked closely with the juvenile court and DHS in Marion County to tailor reviews to meet the needs of foster youth and to ensure foster youth appear for CRB reviews and court hearings. The specialized board began reviewing cases in January 2015.

More Trauma Informed Reviews

In 2013, CRB contracted with the Trauma Informed Care Project at Portland State University (PSU) to improve the effectiveness of reviews by finding ways to make them less traumatic for the parties who attend, particularly parents and children. Mandy Davis and Diane Yatchmenoff of PSU observed several boards and, based on those observations, recommended that some program practices and forms be modified to better accommodate individuals with a history of trauma.



A small workgroup of CRB staff was assembled to implement those recommendations. In January 2014, CRB made the following changes to support trauma-informed reviews:

- ◆ The findings boards make during reviews were reframed as questions rather than statements,
- ◆ A guide of the findings and typical questions the board asks when considering them was created so parties attending a review could more easily follow along with the board, and
- ◆ The documents sent to parties notifying them of a review were updated to include more details of what usually occurs during reviews.

Additionally, many boards have implemented other trauma-informed practices such as summarizing the basis of jurisdiction at subsequent CRB reviews (rather than reading it verbatim), providing refreshments, acknowledging tension and anxiety, prompting parents to ask questions if they don't understand, and many other little common sense changes that make a big difference in making someone feel more comfortable and respected.

Planning a New Computer System

The CRB uses a sophisticated computer system called JOIN (Juvenile OJIN Integrated Network) to track cases of children in foster care, schedule CRB reviews, and collect various other data. In 2013, CRB was informed that the platform hosting JOIN would be going away once all the circuit courts transition to Odyssey, the Judicial Department's new computer

system. This combined with problems JOIN had been experiencing since implementation of ORKids, child welfare's new computer system, prompted the CRB to make the decision to replace JOIN entirely.

In 2014, CRB worked closely with the Judicial Department's technology, financial, and legal counsel divisions in drafting a proposed contract with Tyler Technologies, the software vendor that supports Odyssey, to conduct a formal gap analysis. The analysis would determine what functionality CRB needs that Odyssey does not currently accommodate and propose plans with cost estimates for adding the functionality.

New Secure File Transfer Provider

Volunteer citizen review board members must read through hundreds of pages of case material in order to adequately prepare for each review day. Historically, this material was copied and mailed via the US Postal Service which cost CRB almost a quarter of a million dollars a biennium. In 2011, CRB started saving the case material to discs and mailing them to selected board members. The following year, many more board members had volunteered to switch to electronic case material and CRB purchased software to send the files securely over the internet via the OJD Secure File Transfer website. By the end of 2014, over 75% of board members had made the switch resulting in substantial cost savings to the program.

In March 2014, CRB switched to a new provider to host its OJD Secure File Transfer website. The benefits of the new provider include the ability to issue an unlimited number of licenses to send files

securely through the site and that use of the site no longer comes at a cost to CRB because the Judicial Department purchased the software for all courts and administrative divisions within the Department.

Partnership

New Agreement with DHS

About every five years, CRB and the Department of Human Services (DHS) negotiate and sign a new memorandum of understanding that defines specific protocols each entity agrees to implement in order to support effective and efficient CRB reviews. The most recent memorandum was updated in 2014 and signed in October of that year. Key updates include:

- ◆ Clear identification of what documents are expected to be included in the case material submitted by DHS prior to the review,
- ◆ How those documents should be ordered, and
- ◆ Specific interested parties (e.g., grandparents, adoption workers) for which DHS will provide CRB contact information if they are involved in a case so CRB can invite them to the review.

The quality of case material and persons who appear for a review can dramatically impact the effectiveness of a review. The new memorandum will assist CRB Field Managers as they work with local DHS offices on improving in these areas.

Reviewing Youth Offenders

In the 2009-11 biennium, the State of Oregon was facing a half-billion revenue shortfall and CRB was asked to reduce its budget by \$99,945. CRB immediately implemented a number of cost saving measures including discontinuing reviews of delinquency cases. Because Oregon had opted out of federal Title IV-E reimbursement for youth offenders in qualifying foster placements, periodic reviews of these cases were not required by federal and state law and CRB could not collect federal reimbursement for conducting them. With the staff reductions necessary to implement CRB budget cuts, eliminating these reviews was the only way to not overburden



remaining staff and maintain quality reviews of dependency cases.

The 2011 Legislative Assembly directed the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) to explore opting in to federal Title IV-E reimbursement. In 2014, OYA and the Oregon Judicial Department began discussions about reestablishing a citizen review process to meet the Title IV-E periodic review requirement.

Participant in a Joint Task Force

In 2013, the Legislative Assembly established an 11-member multidisciplinary task force charged with analyzing current conditions of Oregon's juvenile dependency system and reporting recommendations for improvement to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees. Task force members included representatives of the judiciary, CRB, court appointed special advocates, public defenders, child welfare, district attorneys, and the attorney general's office.

The task force met seven times, heard from twenty-two witnesses, conducted research, and analyzed information. Its final recommendations were published in a report on December 3, 2014 and centered on two key areas: 1) Improved legal representation for parties, and 2) Providing a judiciary with sufficient time and resources to give parents and children the attention and priority that they deserve.

The full report is available online at:

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/201311/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/42148>

Statewide Visitation Survey

For children in foster care, visits with parents, siblings and other family members preserve attachments and reduce anxiety about the foster placement. Frequent and quality visits between children and parents are also one of the best predictors of successful and lasting reunification.

Last year, the Lane County Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Citizen Review Panel conducted an extensive review of local visitation practices and found that initial Visit and Contact Plans

were often not being reviewed and updated as required by DHS policies. The Lane County Panel reported on their visitation study at the July 2014 Citizen Review Panel Planning Meeting. The three panels that participated in that meeting strongly encouraged CRB to explore the effectiveness of visitation policy implementation across the state. In anticipation of the federal Child and Family Services Review that will occur in 2016 in Oregon, DHS agreed to partner with CRB as a way to follow-up on the Lane County Panel's work.

CRB created a survey to assess visitation plans. The survey was designed to collect information on how often visits occur between a child and his or her parents and siblings, whether the Department of Human Services (DHS) is making concerted efforts to ensure the frequency and quality of visits are sufficient to maintain or promote the continuity of the relationship, if visitation plans are being reviewed with parents according to DHS policies, and whether the board believes the current visitation plan needs to be updated given the circumstances of the case.

From November 1, 2014 through April 30, 2015, boards were directed to complete a visitation survey for every child reviewed with a plan of return to parent. Preliminary results suggest that in the majority of cases, DHS is making concerted efforts to ensure the frequency and quality of visits support continuity of the relationship, but that there may be some work that needs to be done surrounding visitation with fathers and updating visitation plans more frequently. Final results of the analysis will be available in June 2015.



2014-15 CAPTA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL REPORT

In 1996, an amendment to the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) mandated that every state establish at least three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) to review systemic issues within public child welfare and make recommendations to improve related policies, procedures, and practices. The Act requires panels to submit a report to the state child welfare agency annually and, within six months, the agency must respond to the report.

The Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) transferred responsibility for administering the panels to the Oregon Judicial Department's Citizen Review Board (CRB) in 2012. This year, the CRB established three panels in Douglas, Lane, and Multnomah counties. Panel members included volunteer citizen review board members, judges, DHS staff, attorneys, court appointed special advocates and staff, foster parents, former foster youth, and other community stakeholders involved in the child welfare system.

Panels met at the Oregon Garden on July 14th and 15th, 2014 for a two-day kickoff session. Attendees

heard from Lois Day, Director of DHS' Office of Child Welfare Programs, about agency priorities and federal planning processes. Panels were then asked to brainstorm a list of system issues in each of their counties. Each panel prioritized those issues and selected one to explore throughout the year. Multnomah and Douglas counties initially chose placement with relatives as their area of focus and Lane County chose services and supports for older youth in foster care.

Between August 2014 and March 2015, each panel examined federal and state laws and policies, and reviewed data and resources. Panels also met with community stakeholders, including local juvenile court judges and staff, current and former foster youth, child welfare managers and staff, child advocates, attorneys, foster parents, service providers, educators, and business leaders to discuss system issues and review draft recommendations. In April 2015, each panel hosted a community forum to share their findings and draft recommendations, and solicit community input and recommendations.

The Citizen Review Panels would like to extend a warm thank you to all the community members who attended panel meetings. Your questions, comments, and support for the CAPTA work was greatly appreciated.



DOUGLAS COUNTY CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

PANEL MEMBERS

Citizen Review Board

Volunteers

Maria Bianchi
Jennifer Doerner
Tom Nikirk
Jack Rone
Linda Wells
Robyn Widmann
Staff
Walt Gullett

CASA

Katherine Elisar
Susan Knight

Dept. of Human Services

Darlene D'Angelo
Sandy Henry
Lisa Lewis

Dept. of Justice

Summer Baranko

Public Defense

Warren Bruhn
Kathryn Kosstrin
Gina Stewart
Jason Thomas

FOCUS

Significantly reduce the number of children with a permanency goal of another planned permanent living arrangement and eliminate it entirely for children under the age of sixteen.

The Douglas County CRP identified increasing relative placements and relative connections immediately after a child is placed in foster care as a priority area to explore. As they began to evaluate data related to the county's children in foster care, the panel's attention was drawn to the concerning number of children with a permanency goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). Recent federal legislation has mandated the elimination of APPLA as a permanency goal for children under 16 years of age. The Douglas County panel strongly supports this shift.

Given that APPLA on its face is the least permanent option for children in foster care, the panel decided to narrow their focus to significantly reduce the number of children with APPLA as a permanency goal and eliminate it entirely for children under the age of 16. With strong support from DHS, the panel was able to collect detailed data on the county's 77 children in foster care with a permanency goal of APPLA.

The statistics paint a disturbing picture:

- Over the last five years, these 77 children have experienced 350 placements, with an average of over 4 placements per child;
- These children spent an average of 70.3 months in foster care; and
- Five children under the age of ten have a permanency goal of APPLA.

At the panel's meetings with child welfare stakeholders, conversation centered on court and child welfare agency processes within the county. Agreement was reached that things had been done in certain ways in Douglas County for many years and it was time to reevaluate how the system operates. A suggestion was made to reinvigorate the county's Model Court Team given that a new referee will soon be taking responsibility for the juvenile docket. Panel members and stakeholders agreed that this convening of the court, agency, attorneys, court appointed special advocates (CASA) and other stakeholders would be a good place to discuss how the

What does APPLA look like in Douglas County?

(point in time data from November 2014)

77 children in foster care (about 23%) had APPLA plans.

- ◆ Together, they had 350 placements in the last 5 years.
- ◆ They averaged about 6 years in foster care.
- ◆ 23 were placed with a relative.
- ◆ 26 (34%) were age 13 or younger.
- ◆ 5 were under age 10 (the youngest was 3).



system could be reconfigured to more effectively serve children and families, and to have a conversation about shared values to ensure that everyone is working toward a shared set of goals for systemic reform based on agreed principles.

Since the panel began its work, much progress has already been made. A CASA is now assigned to every child with an APPLA goal. DHS also conducted Permanency Round Tables on 17 children with APPLA goals and 12 of them now have goals that will lead to greater permanency.

At the panel's public forum in April, DHS reported that while the 17 Permanency Round Tables were conducted by DHS' Central Office with its own prescribed processes, future round tables could be administered locally. Douglas County DHS would then be able to tailor the process to meet local needs. For example, attorneys and CASA could be invited to participate. Panel members agreed with a local attorney at the public forum that attorney presence during round tables is critical given that they have been working so closely with the children, often over a period of years.

Also at the public forum, DHS reported that there has been a significant spike in the number of children in care. Last summer, there were approximately 271 children in care and there are now 400. This important change must be explored further by all system stakeholders, and the re-invigorated Model Court Team is a viable venue to have this conversation.

Panel Recommendations

1. DHS immediately eliminate APPLA as a permanency goal for all children aged 15 and under.
2. The court appoint a CASA for any child with an APPLA permanency goal, beginning immediately.
3. The court reinvigorate the Douglas County Model Court Team and convene the team in a strategic planning effort to:
 - a. Develop shared values to guide practice,
 - b. Identify and challenge the "way we've always done things in Douglas County" and develop and implement new methods and practices that better serve children and families,
 - c. Further define the systemic financial disincentives to permanency – developing methods to ensure the system pays for what children and families actually need, and
 - d. Define methods to create urgency for permanency when children are placed in a safe relative placement.
4. DHS adopt policy as soon as possible mandating that all verbal children be asked, throughout the life of the case, about possible relative placements and connections.
5. DHS develop its own local process and conduct permanency round tables on a regular basis for any child in care whose permanency goal is APPLA. As part of the permanency round tables, DHS invite other county agencies, like employment, health, and education, as there might be other resources available to children of which DHS may be unaware.

Lane County Citizen Review Panel

PANEL MEMBERS

Circuit Court

Hon. Eveleen Henry
Hon. Valerie Love

Citizen Review Board

Volunteers

Maria Bybee
James Horton
Bev Schenler
Roz Slovic
Staff
Lisa Romano

CASA

Jean Mestdagh

Dept. of Human Services

Sydney Putnam
Julie Spencer
Bridget Byfield

Foster Youth

Michelle Palmer

Foster Parent

Tiffany Olsen

Independent Living

Andrea Hansen-Miller

Private Attorney

Cathy Ouellette

Public Defense

Tricia Hedin

FOCUS

Increasing safety and permanent connections for older youth in foster care.

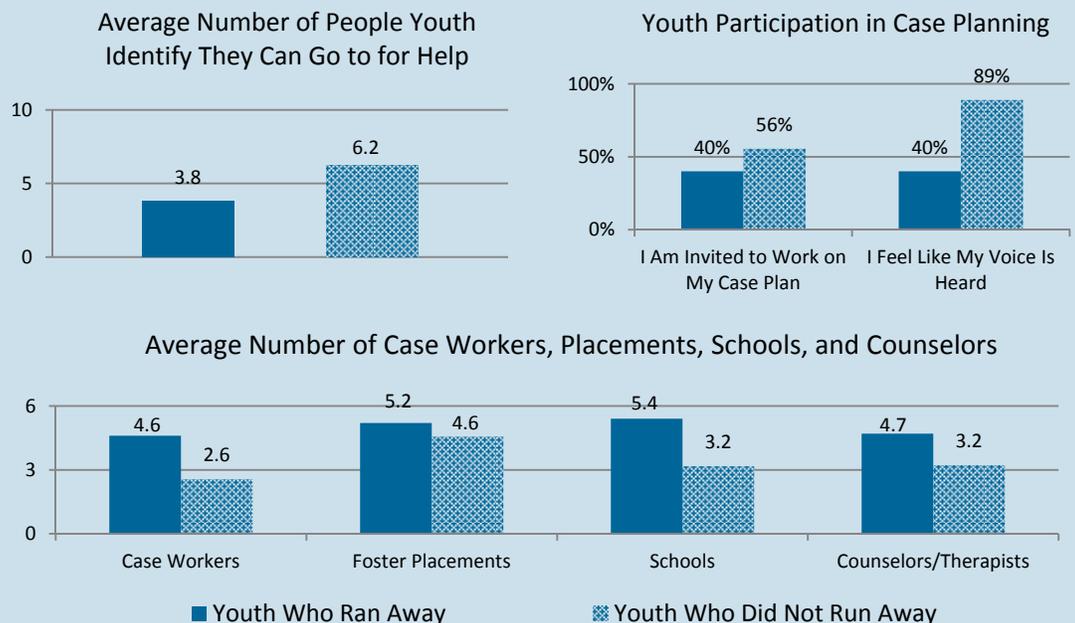
The Lane County CRP focused on increasing safety and permanent connections for older youth in the foster care system to ensure adequate services and supports are in place to help them become successful adults and productive members of the community. The panel was particularly interested in exploring ways in which the system could provide supports to prevent runaway behavior and lower the risk of commercial sexual exploitation of children in foster care. At their first stakeholder meeting on October 3, 2014, the panel chose to narrow their scope to a project focused on keeping youth connected by looking at what types of supports older youth need to remain in care successfully.

Early in their work, the panel identified a number of issues of concern including:

- Failure to identify victims or youth at risk of commercial sexual exploitation,
- Lack of skilled foster homes for older youth,
- Lack of a secure shelter and residential treatment facilities in Lane County,
- Re-entries into foster care,
- Need for better exit strategies for older youth,
- Need for ongoing relative searches,
- Barriers to participation in services and programs,
- Post-DHS involvement in services, and
- Foster parent retention and support.

The panel surveyed 30 foster youth age 14 or older. The majority of them were involved in the Independent Living Program (ILP) or Foster Youth Connections (an advocacy group of current and former foster youth) because the survey was administered at ILP and Foster Youth Connection meetings. Thirty-three percent of the foster youth surveyed had run away at some point and, when they did, most stayed with a friend or at a shelter.

Differences Between Foster Youth Who Ran and Those Who Did Not



Of youth who ran away, 70% said "cooling down" helped them return to foster care. Compared with youth who did not run away, youth who ran had fewer people they would go to for help; more changes in caseworkers, foster placements, schools, and counselors; and were less likely to feel like they had real power to make decisions in their case. The panel gathered additional information through a focus group of foster youth and by DHS conducting file reviews of youth who had run away.

The panel had a serious concern that there is no local shelter facility in Lane County. Historically, youth have been placed out of county when they need short term shelter care. After hearing from foster youth and community partners, the panel wrote a letter of support to the Oregon Legislature supporting funding for a local shelter facility.

The panel discussed many issues facing older foster youth in Lane County. While all of their important findings could not be included in the panel's final recommendations, the panel wishes to note the following:

The Foster Youth Bill of Rights

DHS policy requires that the Bill of Rights be posted in all foster homes. The panel discussed the importance of foster parents personally reviewing it with the foster youth in their homes.

Connections for Foster Youth

Given that the surveys and focus groups conducted by the panel illustrated that children are less likely to run away if they can reach their support people, the panel discussed the importance of each youth having a laminated wallet-sized contact card in their possession containing the names and after hours contact information for their worker, lawyer, therapist, and CASA. The panel also supported the idea of older foster youth serving as mentors for younger foster youth.

Youth Voice

Youth who felt empowered to participate in their case plans and believed that their voices were heard were less likely to run away. The panel discussed the idea of conducting a yearly meeting, to which foster youth could invite attendees, to discuss the overall plan for the youth and hear any recommendations or concerns the youth may have.

Panel Recommendations

1. DHS seek all public and private funding opportunities to establish a short term shelter facility in Lane County.
2. DHS develop additional transportation resources so foster youth can participate in extra-curricular activities, the Independent Living Program, Foster Youth Connection, jobs, and internships. The panel also recommends that DHS provide information to older foster youth about Foster Youth Connection and other opportunities to interact with other foster youth.
3. DHS develop specialized training and additional supports (e.g., foster parent mentor program, support groups) for foster parents who care for teens.
4. Fact sheets for each foster home outlining the rules of the home, family dynamics, etc. be developed by DHS to assist in better matching foster youth with foster families.
5. A protocol to identify youth at risk of or having been exposed to commercial sexual exploitation be developed by a workgroup of interested stakeholders representing the court, DHS, foster parents, CASA, and attorneys. Training and implementation should be accomplished within the next six months.
6. A task force be appointed by DHS within three months to follow up on the panel's recommendations.



Multnomah County Citizen Review Panel

PANEL MEMBERS

Citizen Review Board

Volunteers

Jean Cauthorn
 Donna Ching
 Charlotte Cook
 Diane Greenman
 Jason Wishert

Staff

Tiffany Lamberth
 David Smith

CASA

Betsy Stark Miller
 Lynn Travis

Dept. of Human Services

Kellie Barber
 Edgar Perez

Parent Mentor

Alicia Knox

Public Defense

Jennifer Meisberger

Service Provider

Leah Hall, Morrison Ctr.

The Multnomah County CRP chose relative placement and life-long connections as its area of focus. The panel explored whether law, policy, and practice relating to relative placements have a disproportionate impact on communities of color, with more relatives from those communities being ruled out as placement resources.

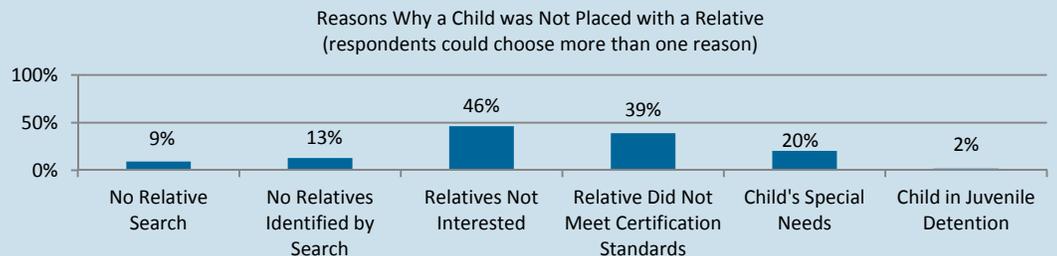
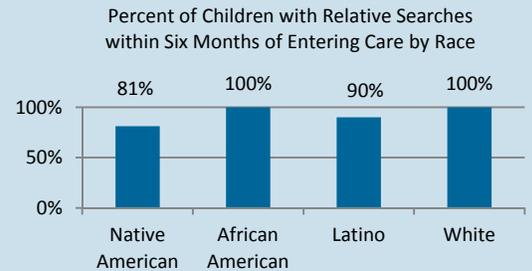
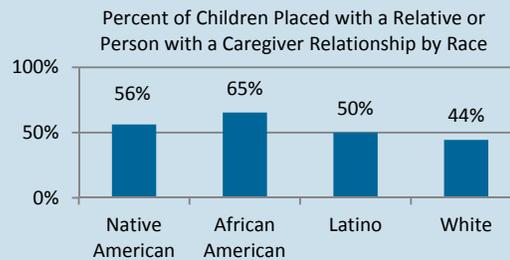
The panel reviewed DHS policies and procedures, surveyed DHS staff, and conducted focus groups with foster parents and DHS foster care certifiers. Foster parents and certifiers shared barriers that both relative and non-relative foster care providers must overcome in order to provide care.

Most importantly, providers noted that the reimbursements for foster care are inadequate. They cannot afford to pay for day care for the children in their care so many foster parents are unable to work. This places even more financial pressure on foster families. Foster parents also noted that their first monthly payment is not received until a child has been in their care for a full month. This places a burden on foster families to “front” the cost of items and services needed by their foster children during the first month of placement.

Certifiers reported that criminal background checks and child welfare history are barriers to certifying more relatives. Adult children residing in the relative home may have had previous system contact that precludes certification of the relative home. The panel learned that DHS does not track denials and requests for non-safety waivers for eligible criminal records. Since the panel has begun its work, DHS has seen value in tracking this information to ensure consistency in the application of policy across waiver requests.

Both the certifiers and foster parents expressed concern about the lack of support groups for foster parents. The church groups through the Embrace Oregon program were noted as especially supportive. Foster parents were concerned that the home study process is very intrusive and they sometimes feel blamed for the problems in the family. Workers are concerned that the safe home study takes approximately three times longer to complete than the previous process.

Relative Search and Placement Statistics



FOCUS

Relative placement and life-long connections.

Former foster youth attended the panel's second stakeholder meeting. They noted that they had never been asked whether they had relatives with whom they were connected. DHS policy states that the agency "must communicate with the following individuals to identify the child or young adult's relatives or persons with a caregiver relationship: (a) The child or young adult's parents or legal guardians; (b) the child or young adult, whenever possible[.]"

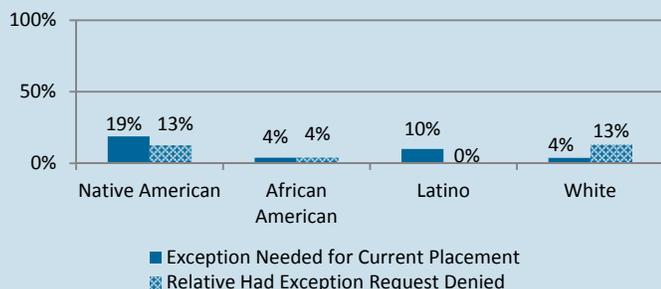
Stakeholders also expressed concern that the letter sent to relatives can be seen as unwelcoming. The panel was informed that there is no requirement that DHS follow up personally with relatives once the letter is sent. DHS procedures, however, do direct staff to make initial contact with relatives in person or by phone to assist relatives in working through emotions and answer any questions immediately. The procedures indicate the letter sent to relatives should be in follow-up to the initial contact in person or by phone. See [DHS Child Welfare Procedure Manual, Ch. IV, Sec. 3](#), Pgs. 5 - 8.

DHS assisted the panel by performing a case review of relative placement issues. No disparity was found by race in placement rates. It was noted, however, that most of the Latino families in the small sample did withdraw from consideration as placement resources. Further examination of these cases may illuminate patterns that cause this to happen. In 22% of the cases, either no relative search was done or no relatives were identified. The panel discussed the importance of DHS considering Family Decision Meetings as required by law as these meetings provide a helpful forum to identify relatives. ORS 417.368 requires the meeting to be held within 60 days of placement. If DHS elects not to conduct the meeting, they must document the reasons for that decision in the case plan.

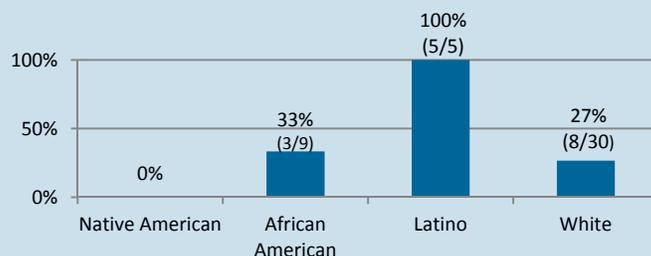
Panel Recommendations

1. DHS modify policy and practice, as soon as possible, requiring all verbal children be asked about their relatives to help aid and expand the relative search effort. Children need to be asked over time as new information becomes available. All attorneys and CASA should ask verbal children about relatives beginning immediately.
2. Foster parent support groups and mentoring program be re-initiated by DHS. The panel noted it would be helpful to have certifiers follow-up personally with foster parents to explore what types of support they need and to help them get connected with those supports.
3. DHS re-write the letter to relatives to make it more welcoming.
4. DHS ensure caseworkers are aware of procedures to make initial contact with relatives in person or by phone prior to sending them the letter.
5. DHS review and revise the relative inquiry form to include additional information to be reported. The form does not capture adequate information as written. Information needs to be captured about relatives who would be able to support the child in other ways if they cannot be a placement resource (respite, visits, support, hearing attendance, etc.).
6. Multnomah DHS follow-up immediately to ensure compliance with ORS 417.368 to consider Family Decision Meetings in every case and hold them within 60 days or document why a meeting is not appropriate in individual cases. The panel recommends that relative identification be incorporated into the Family Decision Meeting.

Exceptions to Foster Home Certification Requirements by Race



Relatives Who Withdrew their Request to be a Foster Placement by Race



CRB STATEWIDE STATISTICS 2014 CALENDAR YEAR

COUNTY	CRB REVIEWS	CHILDREN REVIEWED*	INTERESTED PARTIES IN ATTENDANCE	BOARD DAYS	AVERAGE MINUTES PER CRB REVIEW	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS
Baker	22	33	128	6	40	4
Benton	23	33	155	6	33	6
Clackamas	156	188	535	35	33	15
Clatsop	59	68	252	12	31	5
Columbia	120	170	450	19	32	7
Coos	123	161	450	24	37	9
Crook/Jefferson	56	70	311	12	39	4
Curry	22	18	73	6	36	4
Deschutes	114	130	651	22	41	12
Douglas	131	190	572	34	38	16
Grant/Harney	14	17	82	6	38	3
Hood River	8	11	39	5	35	3
Jackson	204	271	993	48	39	25
Josephine	163	217	741	25	35	11
Klamath	162	192	856	24	30	14
Lake	20	20	78	6	28	6
Lane	737	917	3,567	107	30	54
Lincoln	91	126	600	21	31	8
Linn	160	214	768	34	30	13
Malheur	80	111	521	12	37	6
Marion	372	516	1,497	82	33	42
Multnomah	76	84	177	23	31	22
Polk	77	93	331	24	38	12
Tillamook	31	39	131	6	33	4
Umatilla/Morrow	89	116	824	22	39	11
Union/Wallowa	22	27	176	9	44	5
Wasco	57	77	278	12	37	5
Washington	144	201	599	45	38	25
Yamhill	65	103	391	12	34	6
STATEWIDE	3,398	4,413	16,226	699	34	357

*Children reviewed multiple times in the same year are only counted once.