

Washington County Citizen Review Panel Minutes: March 17, 2009

Present: Jolene Abelson, Rick Backman, Ann Bebeau, Bob Benson, Dani Horan, Melissa Charley, Anita Keyes, Mary Nelson, Sue Lewis, Dawn Blanchard

Approval of Minutes From the February Meeting

Motion by Anita Keyes; seconded by Bob Benson.

Introduction of Dawn Blanchard (Ombudsperson for American Indian Families). Dawn is an attorney/consultant for the state of Minnesota. She explained her duties and how she handles complaints with social service agencies which may include:

- Formal investigations, paper reviews
- Assisting counties on complying with federal and state laws
- Make recommendations to the counties
- Public policy initiatives regarding child protection of American Indian children

American Indian children are 9 times more likely to be in foster care or out of home placement and African American children are 7 times more likely to be in foster care or out of home placements than Caucasian children.

Dawn typically has 20-30 cases per year. The White Earth and Leech Lake tribes have their own foster care systems.

Update from Washington County Community Social Services – Rick Backman

- December/January were slow months/few referrals
- Spring usually brings more referrals
- Currently there are 4 open positions, the intake position will be filled internally. A few of the positions will remain open. Social Services will experience a \$1 million reduction in program cuts. 1 position will be eliminated and reserve money is being utilized.
- Legislation – North Star project. This bill will create an equal pay system for foster care and relative care assistance.
- Governor Pawlenty's budget includes more cuts in health care, not children's services
- No fathers have volunteered as of yet for DHS's Father's Project
- Gail Peavey resigned as a CRP member due to conflicts in her work schedule
- Recruitment of new members was also briefly discussed. More diversity on the panel is desired.
- Rick handed out "Strengthening Families and Community Resource Guide"
- Melissa attended a town hall meeting for the DFL state legislature on the Governor's budget regarding health care costs.

Update from Minnesota Department of Human Service – Anita Keyes

- April 21st, 6-9 pm CRP Recognition and Training Event at the Washington County Service Center in Cottage Grove.

- Anita spoke briefly about the Father's project and the groups meeting to work on their individual assignments.
- A meeting was scheduled on recruitment and screening of new members – Don is the contact person. The interview team will include Don, Anita, and a panel member. It is anticipated that new members will be inducted in August. The orientation is now on the DHS web site.
- The Washington County volunteer recognition reception will be held April 21st from 5:00-6:30 pm.

New Business

- Anne distributed sticker and an information card from Prevent Child Abuse MN
- Anita passed around the brochure from the Winona CRP which contains the information on children being left alone.
- Bob and Mary are planning on attending the National CRP Conference in WY in May. A motion was carried and approved to provide funds to pay for Mary's registration fees.

Old Business

- The panel discussed the distribution of the child protection flyer for the Stillwater schools. Stillwater schools needed 4400 copies and a volunteer to assist in the distribution. Sending out an electric copy of the flyer was suggested. This issue was tabled for now.
- Anne provided a copy of a "letter to the editor" that she wrote on the "Not Safe for under 8" brochure/flyer.
- Dawn Blanchard suggested including ethnic publications for our letters.

Committee Work

- All Panel Project - 2009 Fathers Project
 - Team 1 – Anne & Melissa, assessing resources and environment
 - Team 2 – Bob & Dani, will interview 3 social workers
 - Team 3 – Sue & Bob, will interview fathers if possible
- Final report is due in June

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm