

MINUTES

Lane County Commission for Children and Families
Head Start Whitaker School – 21 North Grand Street
Eugene, Oregon

November 19, 2008
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chuck Boyer, Vice Chair; Marty Beyer, Elizabeth Clewett, Rich Cook, Karen Hamilton, Kevin Maloney, Gail Parr, Kitty Piercy, Andy Whitmore, John Radich, Phil Walker, Liane Lucas, Commission members; Alicia Hays, Diana Avery, Christine Rogers, Robin Schaefer, Mo Young, Nancy Bischofs, Melissa Smith, Department of Children and Families staff; Terra Ralph, Department of Human Services staff; Rose Wilde, Department of Human Services District 5 Administration; Natalie York, AmeriCorps HOPE/Department of Human Services; Cheryl Henderson, EC Cares; Megan Turner, Pearl Buck Center; Shea Hardy, Doulas Supporting Teens; Heather Murphy, Family Relief Nursery; Karen Roth, Food for Lane County; Liz Twombly, Project FEAT; Jennifer Slater, Vena Williams, Lane Family Connections; Gary Henderson, Head Start board member, guests.

ABSENT: Judith Hampton, Chair; Shirley Swank, Ryan Stroup, Sharri Da Silva, Abigael Fender, Teresa Kintigh, Faye Stewart, Peter Sorenson, and Joachim Schulz, Commission members.

I. WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PUBLIC COMMENT

- **WELCOME**

Mr. Boyer convened the meeting of the Commission on Children and Families (CCF). He thanked the Early Childhood Planning Team and the Whitaker Head Start program for hosting the meeting. Everyone present introduced themselves.

- **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements at this time.

- **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

II. JOINT MEETING WITH THE LANE COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD PLANNING TEAM

Karen Hamilton, member of the Early Childhood Planning Team, explained that the Whitaker School was the largest early childhood learning center that Head Start operated, of the 15 centers in Lane County. She

stated that 178 children were served in five classrooms at the facility, which also partnered with Amigos, EC Cares, Montessori, and the Lane County Dental Program.

Heather Murphy, Relief Nursery, said the Early Childhood Planning Team (ECPT) looked forward to its joint meeting with the CCF. She stated that their emphasis lay on collaboration and the team was comprised of many community partners from various agencies that served young children. She underscored that their goal was to identify and build community collaborations and mutual support systems to improve the wellbeing of children ages 0 to 6 in Lane County.

Cheryl Henderson provided a brief overview of EC Cares, a public funded agency that served children with disabilities from birth to school age. She explained that she coordinated teaching assistants and placed students in the different settings. She noted that she was also an early childhood special education specialist and served several children on her caseload, though she was primarily on contract with community preschools in Lane County to serve children with disabilities in order for them to meet their needs in a typical setting with typical peers. She related that EC Cares contracted with almost 20 community preschools and paid tuition for the children to attend those settings and receive their special education services there. She noted that Head Start was also in about nine of the preschools they worked with. She said they were able to provide community preschools with some reliable income because EC Cares paid for a small number of spots and this helped them have quality early childhood programs.

Ms. Henderson discussed some of the collaborations EC Cares had engaged in, examples of which included collaborating with an Oakridge preschool cooperative which prevented it from being closed and also provided funding for a bathroom remodel. She said they placed about six to eight children with disabilities in the morning classroom, providing a special education teacher and a special education assistant in addition to the preschool teacher and ten other children. She noted that the special education students attended for four days per week and the regular classroom met for five days. She related that they had collaborated with First Place Family Shelter, which was faced with a loss of funding from the CCF. She said EC Cares had wanted to help them continue to run a quality program. They sat down with the directors and were able to hire the early intervention student, when he graduated, to become the director of their program. She stated that EC Cares currently paid for five slots, whether they were full or not due to the transient nature of their clients, and Head Start had nine slots at the facility. They also paid for a special education assistant in the morning, which enabled them to have a high quality program. EC Cares also rented a classroom from the Relief Nursery in Cottage Grove so that the young children they served did not have to be bused to Eugene, and this classroom currently served three clients but was anticipated to be serving more.

Ms. Murphy commented that it was great to be able to provide services in rural areas which frequently had less access to them.

Ms. Hays thanked them for the work on the projects that could no longer be funded by the CCF. She explained that the CCF had not been able to fund them because there had been a clarification on its childcare funds. She said it had been very painful to them to pull funding from the places it had been pulled. She related that Mayor Piercy had written letters on behalf of the services. She explained that the federal regulations had been interpreted somewhat loosely by the state and then the federal government had come in and interpreted them more strictly so that the commission was not allowed to fund some of those programs. She said they had a tremendous concern that some of the childcare slots would be lost and had appreciated the collaborative efforts to keep them open.

Mr. Radich asked if the need for programs for children with disabilities had grown. Ms. Henderson replied that EC Cares take referrals and test children throughout the year and the numbers increased every year. She noted that they had experienced a 5 percent increase from the previous year. She said the law dictated that they had to always serve them, but they had currently “maxed out” most of the programs they worked with. It was part of her job to continually look for more options to provide the services.

Ms. Hamilton stated that Head Start currently served approximately 200 children with disabilities. Ms. Henderson added that EC Cares also worked with Pearl Buck and the Relief Nursery.

Vena Williams reported that Lane Family Connections was collaborating with Head Start to lease a classroom from Lane Community College (LCC) to help support student families. She said they were also developing collaborations with the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, the Workforce Network program, and other programs in the Women’s Center.

Ms. Williams also spoke about the Infant/Toddler Network, a program funded by the CCF. She related that they had been able to increase the infant/toddler childcare slots by 36 as of September and were working with 15 childcare providers, all of whom had completed or would complete the Eckers rating scale self-assessment program by the end of the year. She said at least four were working toward their Early Childhood Education degree, all had their training certificates reviewed, and seven were working toward becoming a certified family childcare provider and this would allow them to increase the number of slots for children. The providers had also received a lot of training and would receive 32 credits of infant/toddler training through a program called Family First Connections.

Jennifer Slater, also from Lane Family Connections, added that all of the providers in the network were registered and were regulated by the child welfare division. She said the childcare division visited them once a year. She related that the providers were able to meet one another through the network and had become a support system for each other.

Ms. Williams related that they had also been asked to speak about the Florence outreach. She said Family Connections had been working in the Florence area to increase the childcare providers. It had been challenging to conduct training there, so they planned to host a teleconference classroom for it. She stated that they were working with a Florence preschool to help it become a childcare center as well as with a group called Quality Childcare for Florence. She said they were working with Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) to write grants and to build a strategic plan. Through grants and with the help of the school board and other local support they were working to establish a furnished childcare center on school grounds.

Ms. Williams reported that Ms. Murphy, with the Relief Nursery, was working on developing an infant/toddler program in Cottage Grove. She also noted that the Lane County program of Childcare Resources and Referrals would be integrating with Douglas County on January 3.

Mr. Boyer asked what they perceived as the biggest hole remaining in this area. Ms. Williams replied that the number of providers continued to drop. She said they needed to continue working on the regulations, and they needed to strengthen the mentoring and coaching support. Regarding the latter, she noted that they had more requests for those services than they could meet.

In response to a question from Mr. Radich, Ms. Williams stated that they had experienced an increase in unregistered childcare providers, who were only legally allowed to watch up to three children, which they

attributed to the economic downturn. She explained that they could do nothing to respond to complaints about such providers. She said they started a new project the previous year with the idea that they would provide trainings once a quarter for neighborhood childhood providers. They experienced four times the demand for the program than they had anticipated.

Mr. Cook asked if the increase in childcare providers in Florence included infant care providers. Ms. Williams replied that there were infant care providers and many of the childcare providers they had added through the Family, Friends, and Neighbors Providers were people who were mostly doing childcare already. She said some of them were receiving payments through the state.

Shea Hardy discussed the work of Doulas Supporting Teens. She explained that it had operated since 2003 and offered free services to pregnant and parenting teens in Eugene and Springfield and had served approximately 200 families. The services provided included doula care, childbirth education, teen parenting groups, and social activities to help create a positive social network. She stated that they had been able to have an impact on preterm labor, low birth weight, cesarean sections, healthy mother/baby outcomes at birth, and increased breastfeeding rates upon leaving the hospital.

Ms. Hardy said they hoped to increase their funding so they could do outreach into the rural areas. She related that they had developed a relationship with Healthy Start and she now visited all of the teen parent programs throughout Eugene and Springfield. She averred that this kind of collaboration was beneficial for the clients as the more support they had, the better outcomes they would have.

Ms. Hardy stated that postpartum visits were an important part of the program. She said while 16 was not a desirable age to become a parent, once the teen made that decision there was no reason not to create the most supportive network possible in the area. She provided brochures about the program to everyone.

Rose Wilde, District 5 Administration for the DHS, noted that the CCF had paid for the match that had helped gain the Americorps member. She noted that Ms. Hardy would be leaving the meeting because Doulas Supporting Teens was holding a fundraiser at Jo Federigo's.

Mr. Walker asked if the program included education about housekeeping skills. Ms. Hardy affirmed that they did. She said a large part of the program was mentorship. She underscore their emphasis on encouraging the teens to graduate from high school.

Liz Twombly provided a report on Project Family Early Advocacy & Treatment (FEAT), which was her primary focus. She explained that FEAT had a mission to implement provisions of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act related to substance exposed newborns. She said four grants had been awarded across the country. She related that they had proposed having a state-level work group, a work group in Lane County, and one funded position for a family advocate. The purpose of the project was to study how it would work within the county to have a family advocate to provide emotional support for a pregnant woman or a woman who had just given birth who had admitted to substance abuse or use during pregnancy. She noted that the funding for the position had come through the Relief Nursery.

Ms. Twombly lauded the local network of advocates and providers. She said the people working for change were the Department of Human Services (DHS) welfare and other components of DHS, the hospitals, Willamette Family Treatment Services, and the Relief Nursery. She added that they also had many other community collaborators. She noted two significant changes, one of which was a program being done by the Oregon Medical Group (OMG) that consistently screened pregnant women. She said

they had established systematic ways to ask whether women were struggling with substance abuse. She averred that a well-done verbal screening was effective. She explained that the family advocate would take referrals from those sites and help them get into treatment. She provided copies of the brochure. She related that they had convened a focus group for hospital workers that included intake workers and alcohol and recovery team members to work on the advocacy. She said previously if a woman was found to be abusing substances a caseworker would go to the hospital with a police officer and the baby would be taken away. She stated that now, as a result of changes in the DHS and as a result of the collaborative, the child welfare people and the advocate come in and figure out a plan for the woman to go to treatment with the baby. She noted that sometimes the baby would have to be removed, but for the most part it was a good time for a woman to decide to make the change. She related that out of 25 women in 2007/2008, 23 were able to complete treatment and were considered a success at closure, defined as remaining substance free and with their baby 12 to 18 months later. She added that one thing that happened when the baby was taken away from the mother was that the mother became depressed and would likely have another baby “down the road.”

Continuing, Ms. Twombly discussed the high infant mortality rate that Lane County was experiencing. She said because the cause was not yet known; they were studying the families in which this had happened. She thought substance abuse or smoking could be some of the factors contributing to this. She related that FEAT and Healthy Babies/Healthy Communities were conducting the study and had decided to collaborate.

Mr. Boyer asked how families were identified that needed the services. Ms. Twombly replied that consistent prenatal verbal screening helped. She said that sometimes hospitals knew the woman from having previously given birth and DHS knew about the children and sometimes the mothers referred themselves.

Ms. Murphy remarked that there was a lot of depth to the collaborations. She underscored that the Early Childhood Planning Team was countywide and addressed issues as they arose. She listed some of the additional partnerships, which included Birth to Three, Childcare in the Courthouse, Family Resource Centers, Lane County Healthy Start, and the Perinatal Mood Disorders Consortium.

Ms. Murphy stated that they were creative already in their efforts to try to maximize support for families but it became even more paramount in the current economic conditions. She related that they were seeing families they had not seen before, people with good jobs that had lost them and needed help. She said waiting lists were growing and resources were shrinking. She stressed the importance of reaching out to those families so that children would not get hurt.

Ms. Turner had noticed in the past three or four weeks that families that were already marginal in terms of stability were experiencing additional strife. She said they were scrambling to find ways to support families. She was seeing a lot of dialogue about how they could collaborate more and strengthen as a community to do more.

Ms. Murphy related that 4 out of 11 families served by one of the preschool classrooms had a parent laid off from their work in the past few weeks. She stressed that they already served a high rate of underemployed people.

Ms. Wilde reported that one of the services they provided was Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and in one month this fall 98 new cases had come in, the largest increase they had experienced.

She said there were 500 new cases statewide and one-fifth of them were in Lane County. She said she had asked one of the employment specialists who had indicated that the rate of people getting jobs and coming off of TANF was high. She related that he had theorized that the people were getting the jobs because they were very qualified. She stressed that this was still a disruption to them and their families as people were being displaced from their jobs and often reemployed at a lower wage.

Ms. Hamilton lauded the 100 percent Access project that United Way had taken on as one of the positive things in the community. She said the CCF had a goal in 2006 to coordinate with the program to help families enroll in the Oregon Health Plan (OHP). She related that the number of uninsured children had increased to 11,000. She stated that the project had over 60 community partners that joined together to use the resources they had to train their own personnel to enroll families in health care programs. She added that they were also trying to get a card for Lane County families that would serve as an insurance card. She suggested that they ask representatives of that project to come before the CCF and talk about it.

Ms. Hays said she would place it on the agenda for the leadership team. She noted that Oregon used to be No. 1 in the nation for food insecurity. Ms. Hamilton stated that they had worked hard to become No. 13. Ms. Hays related that Oregon had returned to No. 3. She said they were seeing people who were potentially eligible for food stamps but were not getting enrolled. She thought this could be another place to put their energy.

Ms. Piercy commented that Earned Income Credit was something they should work to help people access.

Mr. Radich stated that currently one out of seven Lane County residents were receiving food stamps.

Ms. Hays asked if he thought there were still families out there that could qualify for them. Mr. Radich responded that he thought they were still missing 25 to 35 percent. He said sometimes when people were at higher income levels they would only qualify for a small amount of benefits and they then chose not to pursue it.

Ms. Hamilton said that though a person sometimes did not receive a lot of food stamps it still opened doors for them. She related that she had attended a tea at a senior citizen affordable housing site and she had tried to convince them that this was something they paid for with their taxes and not welfare. She remarked that they had been amazed that the \$10 per month in food stamps actually opened doors where they could save \$100 or \$200 per month in other programs.

Mr. Radich thought that food stamps would be a useful tool in an economic stimulus package.

Ms. Hays asked if there was someone formulating a toolbox or whether the CCF should put together such a toolbox that could be useful to the faith community and other charitable organizations.

Ms. Hamilton remarked that the Access Project had training to train all of the providers and advocates to fill out the appropriate forms. She thought they could develop training that could be brought out to all of the different entities to do with their own clients.

Mr. Radich thought there were some things they could compile that could help families in this community.

Ms. Parr pointed out that the Resource Guide was useful.

Ms. Wilde said she contributed to the resource user database on The Lane. She agreed that having a simple one-page information sheet with the five top things that would be useful to a family in need would be a good idea. She added that she was happy to share the DHS community resource guide, which contained approximately 30 pages of information. She noted that Birth to Three also had a resource guide.

Mr. Boyer had been struck by how many service organizations and providers it took to make a healthy community. Members gave the providers a round of applause.

III. CONSENT CALENDER

a) Approve October 22, 2008 Minutes

Ms. Beyer noted that she had been listed as present, though she had not been able to attend the meeting.

Mr. Walker, seconded by Mr. Radich, moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2008 meeting of the Lane County Commission on Children and Families as amended. The motion passed unanimously, 11:0.

IV. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Hays introduced Liane Lucas, who was recommended as a new member of the Commission. She said Ms. Lucas was an active student at South Eugene High School and had recently attended the Democratic National Convention.

Ms. Lucas thanked everyone for welcoming her. She said she was studying advanced child psychology at South Eugene High School and was earning a certificate in it. She was very interested in the youth in the community.

Ms. Piercy, seconded by Ms. Hamilton, moved to recommend Liane Lucas for appointment to the Commission on Children and Families. The motion passed unanimously, 11:0.

V. PREPARATION FOR DECEMBER JOINT MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Ms. Hays said she was uncertain whether the Commissioner-elect, Rob Handy would be attending, but she hoped outgoing Commissioner Bobby Green would be there.

Ms. Hays reported that she had heard from the State regarding the CCF and the economic forecast. She said they were asked to look at a 5 percent cut for the biennium, which would translate to a 20 percent cut for the remaining six months. She explained that the state commission had found a large portion of it in programs they had not implemented and the cut had been reduced to 8 percent. She noted that there was also going to be cuts to CASA, Healthy Start, and the Relief Nursery. She remarked that the scary news

was what might or might not be in the Governor's budget when it came out. She underscored that as the needs were rising the services were declining. She related that she had heard that the Casey Foundation had lost one-third of the money available to allocate because of the stock market.

Ms. Hays felt it was important that they talk to the County Commissioners about that. She acknowledged that they know it, but said they still need to hear about it. She said the Commissioners would be deciding how to spend the renewed Save Our Rural Schools funding in the near future. She briefly touched on the arrangement the city and county had made whereby an equal amount of county road fund had been traded for city general fund dollars, so that the county could invest more in human services. She averred that it was important to continue to look at the "delicate web" and the human services part of it.

Ms. Hays said the leadership team had put together an agenda for the joint meeting. She stated that Ms. Hampton would provide an overview of the CCF and Mr. Schulz had agreed to provide a legislative update. She related that the Children's First Report Card had come out and Ms. Farr had agreed to present it. She said they would also talk about prevention as a key component of public safety. She noted that some of the representatives of Lane County public safety had been before the Board but no voices advocating for prevention had done so to date in the most recent budgetary round. She indicated that Mr. Radich had agreed to put together information from Fight Crime/Invest in Kids, primarily statistics, so that some people could begin to understand the importance and some people could continue to understand it. She stated that they would also review the priority focus areas: child abuse, childcare availability, and support for transitioning youth with mental health needs. She said they always provide time in the joint meeting for the commissioners to speak and this year they wanted to ask them what legacy around children and families would they be leaving the county. She was open to other ideas.

Ms. Hays announced that they were working on forming a childcare center that worked with dual immersion, English and Spanish. She said Security First had purchased the Temple Beth Israel and moved their center there. She stressed that this idea was in its infancy but they were working, but the person who owned the building had contacted them about the possibility of doing so and they were meeting to work on the details.

Ms. Hays reminded everyone that the meeting would be held at the John Serbu Campus at 5:30 p.m. on December 10.

Ms. Piercy suggested that the CCF do something special for Commissioner Green, given that he had served on the CCF for a long time. Ms. Hays replied that the CCF had given Commissioner Green a plaque when he left the commission. Ms. Piercy also suggested that Commissioner-elect Rob Handy be invited.

Ms. Hays noted that Mr. Handy was occupying a space in the Commission on Children and Families office.

Ms. Piercy thought it was a time for innovative thinking. She averred that the crisis would help people become less selfish. She felt that the economic downturn would cause other doors to open.

Mr. Radich agreed that it was important to find something positive in it.

Mr. Boyer said there needed to be a way to tell people what they could do and how they could do it.

Ms. Clewett related that her church had been struggling in the last year as an organization but amazing things had happened. She shared that in the last ten weeks the church had 22 small groups and each group did a community service project. Additionally the church held a service day and over 100 people from the congregation came to participate in it. She said when they had their harvest dinner the past Sunday twice the people had attended than had done so previously and the church collected twice the offering. She added that the church received four or five calls per day who were not looking for services; they were looking for money. The church tried to meet those needs. She underscored the importance of not neglecting the faith community.

Ms. Hays asked Ms. Clewett to consider writing an op-ed piece for the newspaper regarding faith communities.

Ms. Hamilton felt the CCF could help to mobilize the available possibilities as well as the people who needed them and to help match the two. She hoped they were poised to know what they wanted to ask for when the money that was being discussed for job creation and infrastructure came to be.

Ms. Beyer commented that everyone should be challenged on what their legacy would be after they left a group. She said there were CCF commissioners that should be proud of some of their work on the commission to develop early childhood services. She felt that it would be positive and it would give the idea of what they meant by working toward having a legacy when they left a group they were working for.

Ms. Hays thought this could be the warm-up for the joint meeting.

Ms. Piercy remarked that there were a lot of people who did not know how to cook anymore because the culture did not teach them. Ms. Hays responded that this pointed to the need for the Extension Service.

Ms. Hays expressed appreciation for the discussion. She said they would talk about bringing in Susan Stearns from United Way. She wanted to look into ways they participate in the trainings on accessing health care programs. She predicted they would start seeing more people who had never had a previous need for such programs.

Mr. Radich stated that the number of people covered by the OHP had increased even after OHP had been closed. He said there was nothing at this point to apply for other than through the DHS offices. He related that his staff was trained to look for people who would qualify for the 13 different Medicaid programs. He added that the only way to apply for OHP was at the DHS office and to qualify one had to be at or under 100 percent poverty level.

Ms. Avery pointed out that there had been an effort, and the commission had participated in it, to increase awareness of Earned Income Credit. She said United Way and the American Association of Retired Persons were recruiting volunteers to help with tax preparation.

Mr. Boyer adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

(Recorded by Ruth Atcherson)