

**MINUTES OF THE  
CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT Panel**  
October 17, 2000 -- 10:00 a.m. -- Room 414 State Capitol

**Members Present:**

Rep. Nora B. Stephens, House Chair  
Sen. Dan R. Eastman, Senate Chair  
Sen. Gene Davis  
Rep. Matt Throckmorton  
Rep. Trisha Beck

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Mark D. Andrews,  
Research Analyst  
Ms. Catherine J. Dupont  
Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Tracey Fredman  
Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

**1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes** -- Chair Stephens called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. She introduced Ms. Catherine J. Dupont, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, and welcomed her to the staff saying that Ms. Dupont has worked for the Legislature previously on tax, health, and other issues.

**MOTION:** Rep. Beck moved that the minutes of the June 2, 2000 meeting and the September 13, 2000 meetings be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. Adoption Time Requirements – Legislative Auditor General Report** – Mr. John Schaff, Deputy Director, Office of the Legislative Auditor General, introduced the supervisor of the audit, Susan Verhoef. She distributed a report, “Adoption Time Requirements,” dated September 27, 2000. Ms. Verhoef briefly outlined the contents of the report, explaining that the focus of the review was reunification services and termination of parental rights. Ms. Verhoef said the recommendations made in the report were that:

1) DCFS and the juvenile courts comply with the statutory time requirements for ending reunification services and for holding the pretrial hearing to terminate parental rights and report to the Legislature the number of cases not in compliance and provide an explanation for non-compliance;

2) the Legislature clarify the intent of the Utah laws limiting reunification services to 6 months for children ages two years and younger; and

3) the Legislature evaluate the feasibility of adding additional time restrictions for completing the legal proceedings to terminate parental rights.

Mr. Adam Trupp, Assistant Juvenile Court Administrator, said that some time frames are reasonable and some are not. Referring to his letter of response to the audit dated September 22, 2000, he said that the audit clearly indicates a need to look at this issue as set forth in statute.

Mr. Richard Anderson, Deputy Director, Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), referred to Mr. Ken Patterson's letter of response to the audit dated September 7, 2000, commenting that some changes would be helpful to DCFS in being able to track time and make families accountable for what the court has ordered as opposed to voluntarily receiving services.

Ms. Dupont distributed proposed draft legislation, "Clarification of Time Limits for Reunification Services." She explained that it addresses the issue of time limits for children under the age of two. She said the draft states that the courts must order discontinuation of the services after no more than six months if the parent or parents have not made substantial efforts to comply with the service plan.

Ms. Dupont explained that a provision in the draft was not meant to in any way extend the period of reunification for young children beyond twelve months from the date of the original removal of the child.

Rep. Throckmorton agreed to work with staff on draft language and bring it to the next committee meeting.

**3. Medicaid Funding of Foster and Adopted Children – Follow-up** – Ms. Dupont distributed and discussed proposed draft legislation, "Child Welfare Oversight Panel Amendments." She explained that the issues addressed were concerns raised in the legislative audit that neither DCFS or the courts were sufficiently tracking cases exceeding their time limits, and budgetary issues.

Rep. Beck agreed to work with staff on draft language and bring it to the next committee meeting.

Ms. Dupont distributed draft legislation, "Mental Health Services for Foster and Adopted Children Task Force." She explained that the task force would be made up of eight legislators who would study the concerns of foster parents, parents of adopted children, and mental health service providers for one year. She said they would make recommendations for the Legislature, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Health, to ensure the transition of the system from a dual service delivery system to a single delivery system.

**MOTION:** Sen. Davis moved that the panel adopt "Mental Health Services for Foster and Adopted Children Task Force" as a committee bill. The motion passed unanimously.

Sen. Davis agreed to sponsor the bill. Chair Eastman agreed to co-sponsor the bill.

Ms. Dupont distributed "Overview of Adoption Subsidies." Referring to the handout, she briefly highlighted some of the statutory provisions. She inquired of the panel what they would like draft language to say. Ms. Robin Arnold-Williams, Executive Director, Department of Human Services, commented that provisions regarding the division are scattered throughout the Utah Code. She recommended a consolidation of statutory language. Ms. Arnold-Williams also suggested that a clear agreement be developed between the department and the Legislature as to what is and is not expected. Rep. Stephens agreed to work with staff further on this issue.

**4. Proposal for Division of Child and Protective Services – Follow-up** – The panel discussed this issue.

**MOTION:** Rep. Throckmorton moved that this item be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** Chair Eastman moved that this item be put on the agenda for the April 2001 interim meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Child Welfare Worker Training and On-the-Job Training Annual Reports by DCFS** – Ms. Midge Delavan, Training Coordinator, DCFS, distributed "Report to Legislative Oversight Committee, Division of Child and Family Services Training." She briefly discussed the contents of the report in the areas of the 1) practice model training initiative; 2) continuing training provisions; and 3) proposed improvements in training provision.

Ms. Caren Frost, DCFS, distributed "Utah Division of Child and Family Services Mentoring Information, January 2000 to Present." She discussed briefly the development of training and evaluation tools for mentors in the department. Rep. Stephens asked for a future report on whether the mentoring program makes a difference in the outcomes for families, and whether it improves case work and retention.

**6. Future of the Panel** – Rep. Throckmorton said the issues before the panel are important and recommended the continuation of the panel. Rep. Beck was in agreement. Ms. Arnold-Williams suggested that the panel look at whether the specific reasons the oversight panel was created still exist. Chair Stephens asked that this question be added to the agenda for next interim.

**7. Other Business** – The next meeting will be November 14, 2000 at 9:30 a.m.

**8. Adjourn** -- The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

