

**MINUTES OF THE
CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT Panel**
November 14, 2000 -- 9:30 a.m. -- Room 416 State Capitol

Members Present:

Rep. Nora B. Stephens, House Chair
Rep. Matt Throckmorton
Rep. Trisha Beck

Members Excused:

Sen. Dan R. Eastman, Senate Chair

Members Absent:

Sen. Gene Davis

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** – Chair Stephens called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.
2. **Follow-up on Draft Legislation** – Ms. Cathy Dupont, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, distributed draft legislation “Child Welfare Oversight Panel Amendments.” She explained that one addition had been made since the October meeting, which states that the division, the attorney general, and the judicial branch shall report to the committee on those cases that don’t comply with time limits for pretrial and adjudication hearings. Ms. Dupont said the bill increases committee involvement in budgetary issues and authority to report to the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee and Executive Appropriations Committee.

Chair Stephens said she would soon be presenting the required annual report of the Child Welfare Legislative Oversight Panel to the Health and Human Services Committee, together with the proposed legislation.

Ms. Dupont distributed draft legislation “Clarification of Time Limits for Reunification Services” and explained briefly the additions made since the last meeting. Ms. Dupont said that Section 78-3a-310, would be amended to require the court to initially to set the dates for other required hearings at the adjudication hearing. She said that Section 78-3a-311, would be amended to require time requirements for children two years of age or younger to be consistent with older children who are removed from the home. Ms. Dupont said that Section 78-3a-312 would be amended to require that when a consolidation of the permanency hearing with the hearing on the termination of parental rights is held, the courts would to make a determination whether reasonable efforts have been made by DCFS to finalize the permanency goal for the child.

She explained that this is a federal requirement in order for the division to receive their funding for the child.

Chair Stephens commented that work was moving ahead on additional draft legislation “Mental Health Services for Foster and Adopted Children Task Force,” adopted by the committee last month, and special needs adoption services.

3. DCFS Reports on Performance – Mr. Ken Patterson, Director, and Ms. Caren Frost, Department of Child and Family Services distributed draft charts “Percent of CPS Investigations Initiated Within Required Time Frame” and “Annual Report on Mentoring.” Ms. Frost indicated that the charts indicate positive trends to be highlighted in the Annual Report on Performance Goals and Outcomes to be released at the end of December. Mr. Patterson commented that the Adoption SAFE Families Act Report Card indicated that the only area the division was reported below the national average was the number of placement changes.

Mr. Craig Monson, Office of Services Review, distributed “Offices of Services Review, FY2000 Annual Report.” Mr. Monson commented that the Case Process Review and Qualitative Review, which were utilized in preparation of the report, are required by statute and the Milestone Plan. He said the case process review tests compliance with policy and statute, while the qualitative review tests how well outcomes are achieved for the child and family and how well good case practice is being followed. Mr. Monson discussed briefly improvements and concerns as noted in the report.

Ms. Frost said that the federal review of DCFS will be in the year 2003. She briefly explained that the federal evaluation process includes a self assessment of programs and effectiveness of those programs, and interviews of DCFS personnel with a focus on the areas of safety, permanency and well-being.

4. Annual Report by the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman – Ms. Marsha Peterson, Child Protection Ombudsman, and Director, Ombudsman’s Office, distributed the “1999/2000 Annual Report of the Office of Child Protection Ombudsman.” Ms. Peterson briefly reviewed the history and role of the Ombudsman’s office to augment the problem solving ability of the Department of Human Services and the Division of Child and Family Services. She explained that the role of an ombudsman is to ensure that government agencies treat their clients fairly, promptly and respectfully. Ms. Peterson mentioned some of the findings as contained in the report. She also said that the recommendations by the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman included training of case workers regarding the use of the family DCFS case histories and information regarding the appropriate use of collateral contacts, development of services and planning in creating effective service plans with parents, providing clients with notice of agency actions, and improving the timeliness of services.

5. Annual Report by the Foster Care Citizens Review Board – Ms. Patricia Worthington, Director, Foster Care Citizen Review Board, distributed “Annual Report of the Utah Foster Care Citizen Review Board” and “Foster Care Review Defined.” Ms. Worthington said that the most important accomplishment of FY 2000 was the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Foster Care Citizen Review Board and DCFS. This memo defines responsibilities, outlines frequency and process of scheduling reviews, describes availability of case information for review, and outlines procedures for resolution of concerns. Ms. Worthington said that the number of new volunteers has increased by 185 in the past year, with a turnover of about 25%. She said that the number of boards has also increased. She also talked briefly about diversity and training of volunteers.

6. Report by the Foster Parent Foundation – Mr. Dallis Pierson, President, Utah Foster Care Foundation, and Mr. Richard Shipley, Chair, Volunteer Board, distributed “Status of Current and Potential Foster Families.” Mr. Pierson reported that there are currently 1,282 foster families, with 226 families currently in training and 372 families who are in the Office of Licensing for consideration of being licensed. He also talked briefly about turnover and some reasons families leave the system. Mr. Pierson suggested that the legislature might help the foster care system by assisting DCFS with budgeting issues.

7. Updates from DCFS – Ms. Frost explained that the division is working towards becoming an accredited child welfare agency. She said that a self-study is in progress as required by the process. Ms. Frost talked briefly about the workgroup which is reviewing the eighteen necessary standards for accreditation. Ms. Frost stated that the application would be submitted at the end of November.

Ms. Joelle Horel, Foster Parent Relations Specialist, DCFS, distributed “Retention of Foster Homes in Utah, October, 2000.” She talked about the results of a survey of former foster parents which helped identify some of the reasons for the loss of foster families. Ms. Horel said 973 surveys were sent out with a return rate of 36%. Findings were categorized as either family factors or system issues that influenced the decision not to relicense. She reported that 34% of families were not relicensing because they were adopting their foster child. Ms. Horel reviewed other reasons cited including 32% of families who said they had concerns about unspecified DCFS policies and procedures.

Ms. Horel introduced Ms. Kit Hansen, President, Foster Family Association, who talked about the lack of knowledge or contact a foster parent has with a child after the child leaves the foster parent's home.

Mr. Richard Anderson, Deputy Director, DCFS, gave an overview of the Annual Inventory of Early Intervention, Preventative, and Family Preservation Services. He talked about

the availability of information due to the Internet, the importance of the focus on the development of local services, and family support centers.

8. Report from the Council on Sexual Victims and Offenders – Rep. Trisha Beck reported that the National Violence Against Women survey found that sexual violence is a crime committed primarily against youth, and that many people are affected by just one incident. Rep. Beck outlined prevention measures to decrease violence, including parental involvement and community awareness. She stated that the most effective way to reach the majority of youth across the state is to work in conjunction with educators. Rep. Beck said that the Council created an Education and Prevention Collaborative Advisory Board and together the Board and the Council recommendation a collaborative, organized, sexual violence education and prevention program be implemented throughout Utah schools and communities. Rep. Beck talked briefly about the contents of draft legislation “Sexual Violence Prevention and Education,” which asks for funds for fiscal year 2001-2002 for enhancement of educational programs.

9. Other Business – Chair Stephens said that this would be her final meeting with the Committee. She thanked those who have contributed to the positive efforts of the work which has been done over the six years since the panel was organized.

10. Adjourn -- The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.