

MINUTES
Braam Oversight Panel
SeaTac Red Lion, Olympic Room
SeaTac, WA
February 28, 2007

Panel Members: John Landsverk (Chair), Jeanine Long, Jan McCarthy, Jess McDonald, Dorothy Roberts

Panel staff: Carrie Whitaker

Plaintiffs' Attorneys: Casey Trupin, Bryn Martyna

Assistant Attorney General: Steve Hassett

DSHS Staff: Cheryl Stephani, Ross Dawson, Deborah Purce, Steve Norsen, Lee Doran, Nancy Dufraigne, Caroline Ford, Jody Carpenter, Steve Wickmark

Others: Linda Mason Wilgis, George Adams, Ron Murphy, Laurie Lippold, Zac Franz, Jim Theofelis, Ron Murphy, Terence Colyer, Daryl Daus, Jon Gould.

Note: The minutes are a general summary of discussion and do not attempt to document every comment.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 am.

Introduction

John Landsverk noted that the Braam process is moving increasingly into measurement of the outcomes identified in the Implementation Plan. This settlement is unusual in the extent to which it emphasizes measurable outcomes, and a lot of the work to date has focused on developing monitoring systems. Baseline (FY05) and year one (FY06) data are now available for a number of measures. These data will factor into the Panel's upcoming monitoring report, which will be published in March. In addition, the Panel is nearing completion of the professional standards, which it is required to establish under the settlement agreement. The Panel expects to publish the standards within 2 weeks.

John noted that performance on many indicators has been lower than the Panel would have liked to see, and fairly flat between the baseline year and the first year of the settlement. The challenge in moving the Braam goals forward will be to think about what interventions will substantially improve performance in these areas. John noted that Children's Administration (CA) would be presenting data and analysis in two areas— CHET (Child Health and Education Tracking) Screening and foster parent recruitment & retention.

John also noted that, in addition to administrative data, the Panel would use other sources of data for monitoring progress of the Braam agreement. A foster parent survey is being developed and will be administered by Washington State University. This will be piloted in the coming weeks, and the survey will be administered from March- May. John noted that 1,200 foster parents would be surveyed, a figure that will give the Panel sufficient data at the state and regional level, but is lower than originally planned in an effort to make the costs more sustainable. In addition, John noted that a case review is planned, which will gather data for approximately six indicators for which administrative data will not be sufficient. The case review

is the least-well developed of the data-gathering processes, and CA will be making a proposal to the Panel on how to approach this.

John stated that CA has provided updates to the Panel on work through December 31, 2006 in implementing the action steps and other initiatives required under the settlement agreement. Along with the data mentioned earlier, these will form the basis of the Panel's upcoming monitoring report.

Presentation by Children's Administration—CHET (Child Health and Education Tracking) Screening

Ross Dawson, Caroline Ford and Lee Doran gave a presentation on the CHET screening process and related data.

CA's power point presentation is available with these minutes on the "meeting notes" section of the Braam website. The following section summarizes questions and discussion related to that presentation, but does not summarize all content in the presentation itself.

Because only children who are expected to be in care for more than 30 days are referred for CHET screening at the time of placement, Jan McCarthy asked how children who were originally expected to stay less than 30 days but end up staying longer in foster care receive a screening. Caroline responded that the social worker would notify the screeners that this child needs a screening. Jeanine asked whether CA had examined any data to understand how accurately social workers are able to predict whether a child will stay for more or less than 30 days. Lee said he had looked at this type of information. He was not sure of exact figures, but he had found the data to suggest that these predictions are surprisingly accurate.

Dorothy Roberts responded to a comment that CA had made identifying access to educational records in the summer as a barrier to completing timely screening, and asked whether there might be some way to access school district records even during school vacations. Caroline responded that CA has been entering into agreements with school districts across the state, and that this issue is addressed in these agreements.

Lee Doran reviewed data on timely completion of CHET screenings, and observed that there are issues related to resources (i.e. how many CHETs can be completed) and to performance (i.e. how timely are the screens completed). Jeanine asked why performance in some regions had declined from FY05 to FY06, and Lee replied that CA had not done a comprehensive analysis by region and would need to discuss the data with regional staff.

Cheryl noted that there had been a policy change during FY06 to conform to the Panel's expectation that all elements of a screening should be complete, not just scheduled, within 30 days in order for the screening process to be considered complete. Steve Hassett noted that FY06 data should be examined with the understanding that CA did not have the Panel's Implementation Plan until that fiscal year was more than half over.

Laurie Lippold asked how the CHET and its timelines related to Kidscreen, and legislation passed in the 1990s requiring screening within 30 days. Ross Dawson responded that CHET had replaced Kidscreen, which had been implemented in 2002 to respond to 2001 legislation. He

noted that at that time, policy was that it was sufficient to schedule, not necessarily complete, the EPSDT within 30 days.

Jan asked for clarification on other data documents, which suggest that about 21% of children never get a CHET screening. Lee replied that that was correct, and noted that the way Braam examines CHET screenings gives the worst possible look at this indicator. He stated that CA intended to propose changes to the data definition such that children who are not eligible for a CHET are not counted in the data.

Steve Hassett noted that many parts of the CHET are not in CA's control, and that HIPAA has created obstacles to obtaining children's health information from doctors. This situation has improved somewhat, and a court order has been developed that DCFS workers will be able to use to obtain health and education records.

John asked whether it was possible to look at data to determine where the delays in the screening process occur—e.g. with getting educational records, doctor's appointments, etc. Jeanine Long agreed that it was important to identify the problem areas and make them public so that all parties involved can improve performance.

Cheryl noted that during this time period, CA had experienced budget reductions resulting in decreased capacity for all non-case carrying functions, including things like CHET screening.

A stakeholder asked why there was such significant regional variation, given that the obstacles identified by CA apply across the state. Cheryl Stephani noted that there are different dynamics in different regions. In Region 5, for example, there is a foster care health program in one of the hospitals. This type of model might be expanded if the medical home pilot included in the governor's budget is funded.

John Landsverk noted that explaining performance in the past is important, but it is also necessary to start planning for future improvement. He asked what a compliance plan for this outcome might look like. Casey Trupin noted that it would be important to understand regional variation and to look at both improvements and declines between the baseline year and the first year of performance. Cheryl agreed that CA was on the same page with that approach.

John Landsverk asked Casey and Steve what was contemplated in the settlement agreement in terms of compliance plans for outcomes, since the process of compliance planning to date has only dealt with action steps. Casey indicated that he'd want to look back at the agreement, but that he thought the compliance planning process and timelines would be the same for outcomes as it has been for action steps. Steve agreed.

Jeanine asked whether the regions had seen these data, and stated her ongoing concern with regional variation in performance. Steve Wickmark replied that regions had seen these data, and Cheryl noted that CA was working on strategies for improvement with the regions. Caroline Ford called attention to the presentation slide on quality assurance for the CHET process, and noted that monthly meetings were being held with the regional CHET staff and that data reports are a subject of these meetings.

Jim Theofelis asked for clarification on how the Braam data will report on outcomes for children of color. John Landsverk responded that this is an important issue for the Panel, and in a number of places in the Implementation Plan the Panel has specifically requested data by race and ethnicity in order to examine disparate outcomes. Casey asked for clarification of CA's compliance plan for the action step in the mental health section related to looking at data by race and ethnicity. After discussing with Steve Norsen of MHD during a break, Deborah Purce stated that CA had understood the Panel's comments in approving this compliance plan to mean that it was not necessary to convene a workgroup to discuss which indicators should be examined by race/ ethnicity, as originally proposed in the compliance plan. The Panel's comments indicated that the Panel was expecting all indicators in the mental health section to be broken down this way, and CA/ MHD intended to do that.

Presentation by Children's Administration- Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention

Lee Doran of CA gave a presentation on the data related to foster parent recruitment and retention.

CA's power point presentation is available with these minutes on the "meeting notes" section of the Braam website. The following section summarizes questions and discussion related to that presentation, but does not summarize all content in the presentation itself.

Lee Doran summarized data related to foster parent recruitment. Cheryl noted that it is difficult for this indicator to show progress, given that the Braam definition of an active foster home for this measure requires a child to actually be placed in the home during the year. Without more placements, this figure will not increase. John Landsverk responded that whereas the measurement of CHET screenings had been straightforward enough to allow for discussion of performance, the measures related to foster home recruitment and retention raise significant measurement issues that the Panel and parties need to resolve.

Jeanine Long commented on the importance of looking at need when setting goals for foster parent recruitment rather than setting arbitrary targets.

Lee Doran noted that CA has proposed looking at the foster home figures in relation to the number of children needing placement, by using a ratio. He also noted that the way the measures are currently structured, if CA is successful in recruitment, it will push the average years of service of the pool of foster parents down because there will be more new foster homes. This would mean CA would be out of compliance with the retention benchmark. As a result, Lee proposed that it might make more sense to look at retention by cohort to examine how long foster parents who became licensed during a given year remained active.

Cheryl Stephani noted that there had been significant growth in the use of relative care during the period being examined, so fewer children may be in need of licensed foster homes. John Landsverk suggested comparing these data to the targets set out in the foster parent recruitment contracts. Jim Theofelis commented that he has heard that prospective foster parents become frustrated by the length of time to licensure, and asked whether that issue is being examined. Ron Murphy asked whether the foster parent survey would speak to foster parents who left service in their first year. Ross replied that the survey would include foster parents who are no longer active, although it wouldn't necessarily target families who became inactive during their first year of service.

Casey asked whether these measures had been tracked before Braam, and Lee indicated that Braam measures included new definitions, although many relate to measures that were tracked previously in slightly different ways. Bryn Martyna noted that it was important to track homes per child, not only beds. A stakeholder noted that the term “beds” was problematic and that children in foster too often feel reduced to a “bed.” John Landsverk agreed that the term beds is not ideal, but the Panel had not been able to come up with a better term.

Lee reviewed additional data, and observed that it appears that foster parent recruitment is more of a factor than retention in the current dynamic of lack of growth in the number of homes.

A stakeholder noted that public opinion and public participation are important to recruitment. The type of publicity a system receives may affect whether or not people want to be part of it. Jess McDonald agreed, and noted that word of mouth from foster parents about their experience can be a critical factor in the success or failure of recruitment efforts. Daryl Daugs commented that, despite Braam, he does not see a significant change in the resources the Department is devoting to foster parent recruitment. Jess noted that change will not occur overnight. He commented on his experience in Illinois and his feeling that developing a policy framework is critical to changing practice, and that CA has been working on this but that changes in how social workers relate to foster parents will take time. Daryl expressed frustration with the Department for not engaging foster parents and parents in reform efforts such as the development of the practice model, and for resisting foster parents’ efforts to organize. John Landsverk asked foster parents to work to get a strong response to the foster parent survey so that the Panel and the parties can have better understanding of foster parents’ concerns and needs.

A stakeholder commented that the focus on foster parents missed an important issue—the need to put resources back into family preservation and reunification. Jeanine Long commented that those issues are not part of the Panel’s charge. Dorothy Roberts replied that she feels that these issues are part of the Panel’s responsibility, and that she hopes stakeholders will continue to participate and ask questions in this process. Jan McCarthy agreed with this view.

[Dorothy Roberts, Jan McCarthy and Jess McDonald left the meeting for the airport.]

Other issues

George Adams asked for an update on issues related to caseload size and monthly visits discussed at the Panel’s December meeting. John noted that the Panel continues to consider the Department to be out of compliance on these action steps and has rejected the Department’s compliance plan proposals in these areas. The Panel does intend to add an outcome and benchmark related to caseload size to its Implementation Plan. Casey commented that tracking 30 day visits was a related issue, and that plaintiffs had wanted to see these visits tracked immediately. The Department had stated that it would be tracking these visits as the policy is rolled out for different populations of children. John noted that the foster parent survey will include some questions related to social worker contact with children and caregivers.

A stakeholder asked about the Panel’s methodology for monitoring the Department’s efforts related to Braam. He noted that the data being discussed by the Panel was a “macro”

approach, and he asked whether there was any effort to take a “micro” approach by looking at how the Department handles individual cases. As an example, he referenced a child for whom he serves as a CASA who has been unable to get mental health services to meet his needs. He wondered whether there was any way that the Panel will pick up on this type of service gap, given its approach to monitoring.

John noted that the case review would look directly at cases, but acknowledged that this was different than the type of “micro” approach being discussed. Casey Trupin noted that there are areas of the Implementation Plan that examine mental health issues related to the example noted, but he agreed with the importance of seeing what’s going on with individual cases.

Steve Norsen agreed that capacity for hospital beds for children is very limited, and that the Braam indicator looking at placement of children in adult facilities would highlight extreme examples of inappropriate services. The stakeholder commented that the Department’s approach to mental health delegates service planning and delivery to the placement, so every change of placement results in a change in treatment. John encouraged the stakeholder to continue attending meetings and provide this type of feedback. He noted that the Panel would be open to looking at cases, but that it would not be involved in ameliorating specific cases. Cheryl Stephani agreed that there are limitations in mental health services for children, and she encouraged people to bring difficult cases to the attention of her office or the ombudsman’s office.

Jim Theofelis asked whether the governor’s office had seen the data presented to the Panel as it developed its budget. Cheryl commented that these particular reports were developed after the governor’s budget, but that CA leadership does talk to staff in the governor’s office about performance data in many areas. Cheryl also commented that the governor is responsible for creating a budget for all of the state of Washington, not just a focus on the Braam class. She indicated that the governor’s budget includes many initiatives related to health and education that will impact positively on children in foster care. Casey stated that the plaintiffs were very surprised and concerned by the governor’s omission of so many Braam items. John indicated that the Panel has consistently taken the position that advocating for funding or commenting on budget issues is not part of its role.

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 pm.