

**COMPILATION OF
RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM PREVIOUS REPORTS
RELATING TO WASHINGTON'S
CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM**

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For Use By

The Joint Task Force on Child Safety for Children in Child Protective Services or Child Welfare Services
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MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy and Procedure

1. Establish state leadership for a foster care improvement plan implementation. *Improvement Plan* at 17.
 - a. Provide consistent leadership, develop ongoing relationships with stakeholder groups, establish regional and statewide teams to coordinate and implement, and identify data systems and reporting mechanisms to support reform.
2. Actively learn from, and benchmark successful models from other states. Participate in multi-state forums that will inform management and staff about successful new approaches elsewhere. *Riveland* at 10.
3. Develop timely methods for operationalizing successful innovations statewide. *Riveland* at 10.
4. Encourage all regions to emphasize use of Family Group Conferences and other techniques that involve the extended family in problem resolution and lead to more relative placement. Track for evaluative purposes. *Riveland* at 11.
5. Continue pursuit of "blended funding" opportunities, seeking greater authority where necessary from Federal and State authorities. The concept of having the "money follow the child" should also be pursued. *Riveland* at 13.
6. We recommend that Secretary of DSHS and the Assistance Secretary of Children's Administration undertake a comprehensive program re-design and work process improvement analysis which will provide detailed information on what has to occur, both in the nature of their work and in the nature of the information system, to produce more effective and more informed workers and correspondingly improve service to children and families. We further recommend the Children's Administration report to the Governor and the Legislature on a scheduled bases on progress achieved during and as a result of this project. *Management* at 43-44.
7. We recommend efforts that will accelerate changes in the Children's Administration culture. In our opinion, the Children's Administration exhibits attributes which indicate the organization is change resistant. *Management* at 43.
8. Utilize a respected contractor to analyze the rate structure of Washington State, compare it to similar states and make

recommendations for improvements. *Foster Care* at 3.

9. Continue and enhance the Medical Consultation network as needed. Workers should be trained or informed regularly about its use. *Riveland* at 12.
10. The Children's Administration should analyze the characteristics of re-occurrences of serious child abuse/neglect after a case is open and on recently closed cases. *JLARC* at 21.
11. The Department should ensure that a report to law enforcement or the prosecutor's office is made when they learn that a mandatory reporter has failed to report child abuse or neglect. *Fatality Review* at 1 (*Gomez Review*).
12. The Department must create a concurrent planning model that gives clear guidance to social workers on how to proceed in dependency cases in which concurrent planning is an appropriate option. *Fatality Review* at 2 (*Nobles Review*).

Roles and Priorities of DSHS

13. The agency policy and/or state law should clarify as succinctly as possible priorities for CPS staff in instances of alleged or real abuse and neglect. At present, child safety and family reconciliation are viewed as competing priorities, often delaying successful resolution of cases. *Riveland* at 14.
14. We recommend that the Legislature and the Governor clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Children's Administration. *Management* at 42.
15. The Legislature, with the active assistance of the DSHS Secretary and Children's Administration Assistance Secretary and their staff must clarify the words and phrases in child welfare law which are left to individual social worker interpretation. *Management* at 43.
16. To increase the impact of the Children's Administration's resources and to improve its ability to accomplish its mission, we recommend that consideration be given to focusing the agency's scope. We recommend that Children's Administration serve only families and children where the child has been abused or neglected, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Similarly,

we feel that steps should be undertaken to focus the scope of the Children Administration's leadership roles. *Management* at 43.

a. Examples of children who should be served by agencies other than Children's Administration are developmentally disabled, former juvenile justice clients, and behaviorally disordered children.

17. There are a number of unresolved legal issues that we believe impact the morale of staff and the overall ability of the Children's Administration to function in the most effective manner possible. Some issues are a result of gray areas in the law, which may never be completely resolved, but for which some additional clarification may be possible. We recommend that Children's Administration staff continue to work with the Attorney General's Office. *Management* at 70.

Case Documentation and Data Systems

18. We recommend improvements be made to case documentation standards so that all case records include: a clear and accurate picture of the child (e.g. education, health, ethnicity and primary language, special needs) siblings, and caretakers; clear information regarding issues surrounding the child's safety and the family's needs for support; and clear information regarding casework decisions made and to be made, service and permanency plans, and case progress. *Management* at 79.

19. The Children's Administration should continue investments to upgrade the CAMIS system. We particularly recommend improvements which will enable the following: implementation of more extensive but less time-consuming, case documentation practices; tracking staff compliance with policy and practice standards; and tracking progress on the agency's selected performance indicators. *Management* at 88.

20. The CA Case and Management Information System (CAMIS) and its Graphic User Interface (GUI) are fraught with problems and difficult to use. The effort to implement a different computer data base system should continue as currently planned by CA. *Fatality Review at 18 (Robinson Review)*.

21. The Children's Administration should import Case and Management Information System data into a relational database (that contains information from additional sources) at regular intervals. *JLARC* at 22.

Communication and Collaboration

22. Leadership must establish clear expectations for all offices to coordinate closely with community partners with the goal of creating a seamless network of support. *Riveland* at 11.
23. It is recommended that the Children's Administration leadership make efforts to improve agency communication, both internally and with external stakeholders. Internal communication improvements should be made both horizontally, across departments and regions, and vertically, from management staff to field workers. Communication should be improved with important external stakeholders such as the general community, the service provider community, the Legislature, and other DSHS agencies. *Management* at 66.
24. We recommend that the Secretary of DSHS and the Assistant Secretary for the Children's Administration take leading roles in developing collaborative linkages with other state agencies and with other DSHS divisions in regards to children's and family policy. The Secretary and the Assistant Secretary should review and restate the relationship of DSHS and the Children's Administration with the Community Networks. The Children's Administration should continue to improve coordination of services with the Division of Mental Health and the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse to maximize federal funding. *Management* at 72.
25. Continue projects with groups statewide to address cultural bias in service delivery and decision-making. *Riveland* at 13.
26. Leadership must focus on mission and strategy. It must clearly articulate the beliefs critical to Children's Administration. It must foster greater trust among citizens that it is working in everyone's best interest. This trust can be enhanced by managing the public's expectations about what the agency can and cannot guarantee. When bad things happen, as they surely will, the agency must get back to the mission driven message, and not get totally sidetracked by the crisis. It is important to all that a "climate of trust" be developed--trust between the staff and the administrators; between staff and clients; between the agency and partners; and between the agency and the community. *Riveland* at 21.
27. The Secretary of DSHS and the Children's Administration Assistant Secretary, Regional Administrators, and Area Managers should begin an aggressive communication strategy to educate, inform, and engage the citizens in preventing child abuse and neglect. Meet with community leaders, editorial boards, community groups to tell the story that child abuse/neglect is everyone's business. Understand your responsibility to get the word out in a consistent, active, and strategic way. It is important to "put a face" on the success stories and the workers behind them. Craft and carry out a viable communication strategy. *Riveland* at 21-22.

28. The goal is to have communities become involved in permanency issues by increasing awareness of problems and potential solutions, taking action to implement the solutions, and advocating for permanency for children. *Permanency* at 25.
29. The DSHS Secretary and the Children's Administration Assistant Secretary must continuously reinforce the agency's commitment to collaborative service delivery by leading by action in collaborating and coordinating with colleagues and the community and by establishing expectations for Regional Administrators and Area Managers and holding them accountable to those expectations. *Management* at 46.
30. CA should continue its work with community partners in developing protocols for intervening with families in which domestic violence is an issue. Fatality Review at 4 (Robinson Review).

Bibliography

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2. "Child Protective Services in Washington State Administrative Assessment" Riveland Associates (*Riveland*), July 2000.
3. "Project Overview, The Management Improvement Project," Office of Financial Management report of the Deloitte & Touche Consulting Group Project (*Management*), January 1997.
4. "Foster Care Task Force: Final Report," DSHS Children's Administration (*Foster Care*), December 1999.
5. "Child Protective Services Report 97-2," Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), 1997..
6. "Recommendations of Respective CA Fatality Review Committees by Issue" Office of Family and Children's Ombudsman (*Fatality Review*), August 3, 2005.