

**Oregon CAPTA Panel  
Annual Report**

**Jackson County Report**

**2010 Annual Report**

**July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011**

**Panel Members**

<i>Chair:</i> Roxann Jones	Senior Project Coordinator, Commission on Children & Families
<i>Support Staff:</i> Michelle Wilson	Development Director, Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)
Josh Miller	Intake Supervisor, DHS Child Welfare
Mary-Curtis Gramley	Executive Director, Family Nurturing Center
Diana Hamilton	Program Manager, Jackson County Victim Witness
Jennifer Mylenek	Executive Director, CASA
Marlene Mish	Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Center
Michelle Pauly	Deputy District Attorney, Jackson County
Rene' Wold	Program Coordinator, The Job Council
Melissa Wolff	Branch Manager, DHS Child Welfare

***Alternate Members:***

Lisa Smith	Program Manager, CASA
Dawn DelRio	Clinical Supervisor, Family Nurturing Center

***Other Attendees:***

Pam Bergreen	Branch Manager, DHS Child Welfare
Mary Chambers	Unit Supervisor, DHS Child Welfare
Karla Carlson	Supervisor for Screeners, DHS Child Welfare
Rosemary Jernigan	Supervisor, DHS Self-Sufficiency
Anna Loeffler	Volunteer Coordinator, Children's Advocacy Center
Kelly Packard	Caseworker, DHS Child Welfare
Jodi Matheny	Caseworker, DHS Child Welfare

## Meetings

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Location</i>
Tuesday, July 20, 2010	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, August 17, 2010	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, September 21, 2010	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, October 19, 2010	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, November 16, 2010	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, January 18, 2011	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, February 15, 2011	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, March 15, 2011	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, April 19, 2011	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, May 17, 2011 (scheduled)	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC
Tuesday, June 21, 2011 (scheduled)	3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	CAC

## Activities

- 1) The Jackson County CAPTA panel contracted with an outside facilitator to conduct three focus groups around the topic of teens in foster care. The following groups were represented in the focus groups: youth in care or who had been recently returned to their parents custody; CASA's; foster parents; child welfare workers; mental health workers; developmental disability service caseworkers, and Independent Living program staff. The primary goals of the focus groups were to: 1) determine what foster care looks like for teens in Jackson County; 2) discuss how we could improve the child welfare system for teens, caseworkers, foster parents, ILP, and CASA's; and 3) what we need to change or build into the system for programs like CASA, mentors and foster parents who serve the teen foster care population.

Several themes emerged from the focus groups, and our panel identified the following areas that the panel could explore supporting: 1) relationship building; 2) system communication/collaboration; 3) mentoring; and 4) training.

- 2) The Jackson County CAPTA panel had recommended to the State in our 2009 Annual report the need for mentoring type relationships for adolescents in the foster care system. Based upon the additional information we gleaned from the focus groups that we conducted, our panel agreed to pilot two mentoring projects in Jackson County that would serve youth in the foster care system. The duration of the projects is from January 2011 – September 2011. Provided below is a description of the two pilot projects that we are providing funding for this year:

- A) *CASA's Mentoring Youth to Independence (MYTI)* is an advocacy/mentor driven program utilizing volunteers to advocate for services for youth preparing to age out of foster care, and to provide mentorship beyond each youth's wardship. The vision is to help ease the

transition into adulthood from foster care for older youth and to provide them with a positive mentor relationship to support them as they grow into independent adults. The project will serve 8-10 youth ages 14 and older in permanent foster care. The youth will complete a goal assessment at the beginning of the MYTI program and at the end of the year to record progress. MYTI will focus on 4 key areas when working with the older youth: life skills, job readiness, education, and living options/plans.

- B) The Children's Advocacy Center's *Reach for the Stars* mentoring project will serve 8-10 adolescent girls in foster care to participate weekly in a group mentoring project that is based on evidence-based practices. The benefits to these youth include increased self-esteem, increased relationship and communication skills, increased skills in setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, and increased ability to make positive decisions for their lives. The desired outcome is to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors like resiliency and positive mental health. The youth will be provided with a community volunteer mentor and will experience weekly activities that include meal preparation, craft projects, outings, and reflective activities such as journaling and group sharing. The project will be measured through written assessment by both the participants and staff members. The youth will be assessed for their beginning and ending abilities and behaviors.
- 3) We reviewed two cases whose status was still open in the child welfare system at the time of the review. The first case was a critical injury case involving a toddler which had been founded for Threat of Harm, due to parental substance abuse issues. The second case our team reviewed was a multiple referral case involving a toddler resulting in the child being placed in relative foster care due to founded Threat of Harm.

In both cases much of the team's discussion focused on on-going supportive services either for the parents or the relative foster care placement, not only while the case is open but directly following the decision to return children or develop a permanency plan with a placement resource. Family support services are used to strengthen the ability of families to care for their children, and quite often are tied to eligibility factors based upon the status of the case. Removing these supports too early can adversely impact the family's ability to safely continue to parent their child.

Another area of discussion was whether or not there is a central place for DHS, law enforcement, and the courts to learn if a person who comes into their case load is involved with one or the other systems. A centralized system would be a prudent way for agencies to work together to ensure the safety of children. While some systems do exist for this, they are not all used by all agencies. More consistency in this area would give all parties more complete information when making decisions which could impact the safety of children in families who come into contact with these agencies.

## Recommendations

- 1) Our panel recommends that DHS/Child Welfare continue to explore and expand supportive services to caregivers to ensure that during the reunification process, important services are tapered off at an appropriate level and new community resources are enlisted for the long-term. This will ensure that families who have been experiencing a high level of supportive services do not find themselves resource-poor during a difficult transition period in their lives, resulting in a lowered chance for success and ongoing child safety.

### **DHS Response:**

*This recommendation is consistent with the needs and development of children and their families during the reunification process. It will be forwarded to the Family Based Services consultant who oversees the contracts for time-limited reunification services.*

- 2) We recommend that DHS/ Child Welfare work with law enforcement and the court systems to develop a centralized system that would allow the agencies to cross-check system involvement. This would enhance the effectiveness and collaboration amongst the systems and, most importantly, provide better outcomes for child safety.

### **DHS Response:**

*The Department utilizes databases such as OJIN and LEDS to conduct background checks on individuals of interest. These databases enable the agency to cross-check involvement with courts (including restraining orders, criminal and civil cases) and law enforcement (criminal charges).*

- 3) We recommend that DHS continue to work proactively to allow timely referrals and connection of children in the system to supportive services. We recommend that mentoring programs with proven positive results be invested in for youth in the foster care system, with a high priority placed on offering this resource to teens, especially those who may age out of care without a permanent family support system.

### **DHS Response:**

*Currently, there are projects such as Powerhouse and Oregon Mentors, which provide mentoring for teens. Oregon Fostering Youth Connections has also identified this area as a priority.*

## Looking Ahead

We look forward to being informed of DHS's response to our local CAPTA recommendations in a written report as information becomes available. We appreciate the opportunity to assist the State of Oregon in improving our child protective services system in its goal of ensuring safety, permanency, and well-being of children in our communities.

