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# **Child Welfare Partnership**

Graduate School of Social Work  
Portland State University

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## ***Community Child Neglect Summits***

April – August 2007

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# ***Community Child Neglect Summits***

## **Part 1: Overview**

### **Background**

In 2005-06 the Neglect Subcommittee of the Children's Justice Act Task force (CJA), Oregon Department of Human Services, commissioned a study of child neglect from Portland State University. Dean Dr. Kristine Nelson, a national expert on child neglect and child welfare, served as consultant for the work, later joined by Dr. Diane Yatchmenoff. Two reports on this work were provided to the committee and Drs. Nelson and Yatchmenoff presented these and discussed them with the Neglect Subcommittee and the larger CJA Task Force on April 13, 2006. The desired outcome was to, "develop a strategic plan with recommendations for action steps to implement a coordinated statewide effort to reduce the incidence of child neglect in Oregon." On May 11, 2006 the strategic planning process was facilitated by Dr. Katharine Cahn, Executive Director of the Child Welfare Partnership at Portland State University. The CJA Neglect Subcommittee acknowledged that there is generally a low level of local knowledge about and response to child neglect and a low level of understanding regarding effective interventions, therefore it reached consensus on the idea of using CJA funds to promote local action planning summits on child neglect in Oregon.

### **Goals for the Community Child Neglect Summit(s)**

- Increase community awareness to raise the profile of child neglect and increase the sense of urgency concerning the child neglect problem.
- Educate the child-serving community about interventions that support neglectful families and increase child resilience.
- Engage a wide variety of community stakeholders in action planning for vulnerable children and families.

The CJA felt that strong local leadership would be imperative to assure the effectiveness of a local Summit. For this reason, preference would be given to communities where a mayor, sheriff, county commissioner, judge, or other leaders with the power to convene a wide constituency could step forward to provide leadership, provide ongoing support and follow through on action plans developed. In addition, criteria for a successful proposal would include a wide range of agencies involved in addressing neglect indicating a commitment to participate, including: local Commission on Children and Families, law enforcement; drug treatment providers, education, public health, DHS, family support agencies (such as Healthy Start or Nurses Home Visiting), and providers of concrete services. The CJA Task Force invited proposals through "A Letter of Interest" from local jurisdictions willing to host an action-planning summit on child neglect, and selected the Child Welfare Partnership for oversight of the project.

### **Role of Portland State University, Child Welfare Partnership**

Dr. Katharine Cahn and Kellie Herold provided statewide oversight with support and technical assistance to each of the seven local jurisdictions selected to host a Community Child Neglect Summit. In addition, Dr. Katharine Cahn brought expertise to the interdisciplinary action planning process.

PSU's oversight included the following:

- Assisted each community with the planning and designing of their local summit
- Provided technical assistance, developed a standardized planning format, agenda and handouts
- Provided state statistics and community data regarding child neglect
- Identified and provided a content expert
- Facilitated the Summits
- Provided a final report on the implementation of action plans and effective strategies

## **Part 2: Program Design**

The Community Child Neglect Summits had two important design components,

- Education (presentation by a content expert and use of a local panel)
- Action planning that would engage the community in a local response to neglect

### **Education**

#### **a. Content Expert**

In the morning session, child neglect expert Dee Wilson, MSW provided a comprehensive picture of child neglect and its impact on children and ultimately our communities. Dee Wilson, MSW is the Director of the Northwest Institute for Children and Families, at the School of Social Work at the University of Washington. Dee has published a number of articles on child welfare subjects, including, most recently, "Chronic Neglect: Needed Developments in Theory and Practice," in the November/December 2005 issue of Families in Society.

Dee's presentation covered the following topic areas:

- Definition and incidence of child neglect
- Why it's a problem calling for urgent action (even though it can look benign)
- The difference between chronic and situational neglect
- Impact on the development of children
- How big a problem in our community? (local, state and national statistics)
- Best Practices-Innovative approaches to prevention, intervention, and community engagement

In Multnomah County the planning committee decided to utilize Dr. Lila Keltner, a local child abuse expert, as their keynote speaker regarding child neglect.

#### **b. Panel**

In addition to the formal presentation, each Summit had a multidisciplinary panel made up of local community experts and service providers. Each panel member was asked to share what services they provide, what they see in terms of child neglect in the local community, how these families impact the local system, what is working well in the community, and where are the gaps. Two outcomes were expected from utilizing a panel:

- Increased awareness that child neglect is a local problem
- Increased urgency in the community

It was part of the program design that the issues that panel members raise would likely be part of what the community will want to talk about (and find solutions for) when doing the community action planning process in the afternoon.

### **Action Planning**

The afternoon consisted of Dr. Katharine Cahn engaging a wide variety of community stakeholders in action planning, with a goal of developing sustainable programs, collaborations or projects that will:

- develop programs or funding that support neglectful families and increase child resilience
- increase community awareness to raise the profile of child neglect
- increase community collaboration and remove barriers that exist across disciplines

The action planning process began with a large group brainstorming session followed by the prioritization and selection of the projects or ideas that would result in a plan appropriate for that jurisdiction. The participants then worked in small groups to develop the project description and next steps for implementation. Each small group reported back to the full group. It was important to end the action planning session with closing comments by community leadership about what will happen to the plans developed.

### **Part 3: Program Outcomes and Lessons Learned**

There were seven child neglect summits during the time period April 2007-August 2007.

#### **Coos County**

Summit date: 7/16/07

Approx # of Attendees: 128

Applicant: Coos County Commission on Children and Families

Political Sponsor: Coos County Commissioner Kevin Stufflebean

Coordination: Judy McMakin, Coos County Commission on Children and Families

Strengths of Coos Summit:

- Strong leadership in county. Mayor Jeff McKeon, City of Coos Bay and Mayor Rick Wetheral, City of North Bend attended.
- Commissioner Stufflebean was articulate about impact of neglect on local community.
- Dan Smith, CEO of the Bay Area Hospital spoke of the importance of community collaboration across disciplines.
- The law enforcement community was an active part of the Summit.
- Coos County has already developed strong collaborative relationships and a support system for families, the Summit was able to build upon the community strengths.
- The “Family Panel” was excellent and demonstrated how personal connections with service providers, judges, etc were instrumental in recovery for many families.
- The Action Plans will be incorporated into the Coos County Comprehensive plan of Services to Children and Families (part of CCF).

The Action Plans developed at the Coos Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix A.

#### **Crook County**

Summit date: 6/02/07

Approx # of Attendees: 62

Applicant: For the Children

Political Sponsor: Gary Williams, District Attorney

Coordination: Brenda Comini, Crook County Commission on Children and Families

Strengths of Crook Summit:

- Very clear ownership by the ‘Welcomers’, Gary Williams, DA and Judge Cooper.
- The law enforcement community was an active part of the Summit - Under sheriff Jim Hensley.
- Pat Carey, DHS District 10 Manager spoke about the local child neglect trends and challenges
- The local panel of experts was an excellent multi-disciplinary mix of a sergeant, a school nurse, a home visiting nurse, and DHS.
- An Action Plan was developed to initiate bringing a Relief Nursery to Crook County.
- There was citizen involvement as a result of a newspaper article about the Summit.
- The business community shared commitment to job development and reducing unemployment
- The “Gap Mappers” action plan is an exciting example of how this community is working across agencies to maximize home visiting services, rather than be competitive.
- Brenda Comini was successful in demonstrating how the Action Plans will be incorporated into the Crook County Commission on Children and Families Comprehensive Plan

The Action Plans developed at the Crook Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix B.

## **Jackson County**

Summit date: 7/27/07

Approx # of Attendees: 85

Applicant: CAPTA Panel

Political Sponsor: CAPTA Panel

Coordination: Dr. Curtis Oddo, Jackson County Children's Advocacy Center

Strengths of Jackson Summit:

- Strong leadership was provided by Michelle Pauly, Deputy DA, Roxann Jones with the Jackson County Commission on Children and Families, and Doug Mares, DHS Jackson County.
- The maternal health program had recently lost half its funding and the Summit provided a venue for networking around this issue and how to maximize remaining resources.
- This is a community experienced in strong multi-disciplinary collaborations such as Community Family Court and MDT.
- Innovative Action Plans were developed around expanding quality child care and parenting education.
- The Action Plans are to be incorporated into the Commission on Children and Families Plan and into the Community "End Homeless in 10 Year Plan".

The Action Plans developed at the Jackson Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix C.

## **Lane County**

Summit date: 7/19/07

Approx # of Attendees: 55

Applicant: Court Appointed Special Advocates of Lane County

Political Sponsor: Juvenile Judge Leonard

Coordination: Megan Friese, Court Appointed Special Advocates of Lane County; Lane DHS

Strengths of Lane Summit:

- Strong leadership and positive message by Judge Kip Leonard and closing comments by Alicia Hays, Lane County Commission on Children and Families communicated political commitment to carry out the work that was done.
- A powerful presentation was made by a father who had successfully utilized services about the importance of connection and community support. He emphasized the value of having a supportive employer.
- Debi Farr, a former state legislator was part of the planning process
- The business community was represented, including participants from America Marketing Assn, Oregon Community Credit Union, Steward Family Foundation.
- A strong presence from the faith community included pastors from 3 local churches
- Lane County will have a follow up Summit in April in conjunction with National Child Abuse Awareness/Prevention Month.
- CASA will be providing leadership in the support of the implementation the action plans. The committee chairs for each Action Plan will meet with Megan Friese on Sept 25 to report progress. The Action Plans will also be monitored and supported by Alicia Hays, Lane County Commission on Children and Families.

The Action Plans developed at the Lane Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix D.

## **Malheur County**

Summit date: 7/13/07

Approx # of Attendees: 118

Applicant: CAPTA & MDT

Political Sponsor: MDT

Coordination: Kelly Poe, Malheur Commission on Children and Families; CAPTA

Strengths of Malheur Summit:

- Very clear ownership by the ‘Welcomers’, Mike Kee, Ontario Police Chief and Representative Thomas Butler.
- The law enforcement community was an active part of the Summit, including Detective Ramon Rodriguez, the chair of the MDT.
- Strong leadership by Wendy Hill, DHS District 3 Manager.
- Local panel was excellent and consisted of Judge Patricia Sullivan, Rebecca Maxwell –Healthy Start Manager, Erin Landis –Assistant DA, Suzie D. Sap – Middle School staff and foster parent
- Compelling story from a Mom who shared her experience of having kids in the system and her ongoing healing. She shared the value of a respectful accountable relationship with her worker.
- This community is recovering from a trial resulting from a child abuse related death and used some of the time on the agenda to bring closure.
- Harney County brought a group of people who formed their own action planning group.
- One Action Planning group had 22 participants to begin identification of the Board of Directors for a relief nursery in Malheur County.
- The Action Plans developed will be monitored by CAPTA at six and twelve months post Summit.

The Action Plans developed at the Malheur Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix E.

## **Multnomah County**

Summit date: 7/23/07

Approx # of Attendees: 86

Applicant: CAPTA

Political Sponsor: City Commissioner Saltzman

Coordination: CAPTA; Cares Northwest

Strengths of Multnomah Summit:

- Strong leadership by the ‘Welcomer’, Dan Saltzman, Portland City Commissioner
- Multnomah County allocated slots for participants to assure cross disciplinary representation.
- Good leadership from DHS with Jerry Burns and C. Graf
- This community had a local expert in Leila Keltner, MD and customized their Summit by utilizing her as the community content expert.
- Karen Gibbs, DHS facilitated an interactive exercise regarding a neglect case to demonstrate how a neglect case unfolds in Multnomah County.
- Many evaluations had positive feedback about the opportunity to network
- The Panel of community experts included Judge Paula Kurshner, Dr. Leila Keltner, and many community partners and service providers.
- The Multnomah CAPTA panel is focusing on neglect this year. Kevin Dowling stated that they will incorporate Summit Action Plans into their annual report.

The Action Plans developed at the Multnomah Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix F.

## **Wasco County**

Summit date: 08/02/07

Approx # of Attendees: 80

Applicant: Wasco Commission on Children and Families

Political Sponsor: Wasco Commission on Children and Families

Coordination: Trudy Townsend, Wasco Commission on Children and Families

### Strengths of Wasco Summit:

- Positive and pertinent message by the ‘Welcomer’, Bill Lennox, County Commissioner. Bill shared his experiences working for the United Nations in Kosovo in the investigation of human trafficking and child abuse. He stressed the importance of government attention to vulnerable children.
- This Summit had three panels utilizing many community experts working in social services, Headstart, law enforcement, education, domestic violence, drug treatment, mental health, and a pediatrician.
- DHS had an opportunity to educate this community on the Oregon Safety Model. Bill Sheirbon, DHS District 9 Child Welfare Manager had a PowerPoint presentation regarding local statistics regarding child neglect.
- Good representation from Home Visiting Nurses and they created cross-agency action plan to increase access to services.
- The Action Plans developed are to be incorporated into the Commission on Children and Families Plan for Senate Bill 555.

The Action Plans developed at the Wasco Summit and the participant evaluations are included in this report as Appendix G

### **SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED:**

- Multidisciplinary collaboration works and is a rich process
- The Summits gave participants an opportunity to network across disciplines
- Families and communities are the experts in their own systems and have expertise to develop solutions
- Clear ownership by the political leader in the community set the tone for the day.
- Action planning is better focused if the educational part that precedes it is comprehensive in going beyond just a definition of neglect and thoroughly explores causes and model EBP programs and interventions. This helps the group focus in on what might benefit their own community.
- Dynamic tension lies in defining which part of the continuum of families is addressed in the education component of the Summit. While there is value in having each community “customize” their own Summit, having a different content expert in Multnomah County shifted the focus of the day. Dr. Keltner’s presentation covered mostly the definition of child neglect and the examples she utilized were regarding middle class families and some DHS involved clients. Following her presentation the large group exercise also focused on a DHS involved case. This was unfortunate as most of the families experiencing neglect don’t ever end up involved with DHS. So the action planning got stuck to some degree with participants focusing on DHS. The result was that the group seemed to miss the role a community can play in serving families and keeping children out of the DHS system.
- The educational component needs to be comprehensive in its exploration of the core underpinnings of neglect (poverty, limited functioning, domestic violence, addiction, mental health) so communities can try to put concrete services into place. It is also important to explore parent education, mental health, and addiction services. When Dee got rushed for time and this

concept was not clear - it was hard to pick it back up and it changed the planning outcomes. 1 ½ hr is needed for presentation.

- A panel, especially when including a parent who is now doing well, is very compelling.
- If more summits happen in the future, it would be helpful to strengthen the concept of pulling together an array of services in community, with a focus on communication/collaboration between those providers such as sharing case management, etc. It is helpful to integrate systems so families are not burning out the entire community of providers and then falling through the cracks.
- It can be a real challenge to define neglect. It is not as clearly defined as physical abuse or sexual abuse. Variations in community standards affect the community's perception of what is or isn't child neglect.
- Preparing panelists who are sharing their personal stories needs to be planful.
- It was beneficial that the Summit organizers invited their local DHS office to come and talk about the "Oregon Safety Model" to clarify when CPS can (and can not) intervene in a family. Over time these presentations became more as DHS provided us with a written tool regarding OSM.
- It is crucial for the Sponsor of the Summit or someone in a county leadership role to articulate the impact of neglect on the local community and to follow up at the end about how the action plans will make a difference.
- For some counties, limiting the number of invitations by stakeholder group may have lowered the turnout. It can be problematic to invite "the usual suspects." If the current service providers are the only participants, then the solutions tend to be traditional. It is important to invite across all disciplines so that the multitude of community members who come in contact with these families can help develop create and innovative solutions.
- Having the Summits in the summer impacted the number of teachers who could attend, and many other professionals were on vacation.