



INTERFACING WITH CHILD WELFARE: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

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CHILD WELFARE IN OREGON

- ❖ Brief review on the prevalence of child abuse/neglect in our communities
- ❖ Gain clearer understanding of child welfare process and current climate at
DHS
- ❖ Learn strategies on how to best partner with your local child welfare offices
- ❖ Explore ethical dilemmas as a school social worker

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN OREGON

- ❖ 76,668 reports of abuse and neglect were received.
- ❖ A total of 37,320 investigations were completed.
- ❖ Of all completed investigations, 7,677 were founded for abuse or neglect and involved 11,843 victims.
- ❖ A total of 11,191 children spent at least one day in some kind of foster care.
- ❖ Neglect was the most frequently identified form of maltreatment.
- ❖ Drug and alcohol issues represented the largest single family stress factor.

(Oregon Child Welfare Data Book, 2016)

FACT OR FICTION

- ❖ Child welfare workers often remove when they go out on an immediate response.
- ❖ Foster parents receive substantial funds in foster care payments.
- ❖ DHS workers make the ultimate decision about whether a child is taken into custody/placed in substitute care.
- ❖ Neglect cases are often the easiest to prove.
- ❖ Caseworkers are trained social workers.
- ❖ Foster parents serve as educational surrogates.
- ❖ DHS uses trauma-informed practices.

Report made to child welfare hotline

- Closed at screening or is assigned as a 5 day/24 hour response
- Caseworker is assigned

Protective Services Assessment

- Protective services worker gathers information to make a determination.
- Assessment closed within 30-90 days or moves to permanency for ongoing case planning.

Permanency Planning

- In-home vs. out-of-home care
- Caseworker works with family towards reunification
- ASFA timelines
- Concurrent

Termination of parental rights/Adoption

- Child cannot be reunified and adoption or alternative plan is pursued
- Adolescents - APPLA

REPORTING/SCREENING

- When in doubt, call the hotline.
- Screener makes a decision about whether or not to assign the case to a protective services worker or to close it, (closed at screening).
- Screener may make collateral calls to aid in making a decision, ex. pediatrician, school, other community partner.
- Screener may call reporting source back with clarifying questions.
- Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, Clackamas and Washington county are routed through Multnomah County hotline after hours.

Helpful tip - Provide as much information as you can without conducting your own investigation. If a child has an injury, it is absolutely appropriate to ask clarifying questions. Open ended questions. Ex. Tell me more about that?

PROTECTIVE SERVICES ASSESSMENT

Oregon Safety Model –Adopted in 2007 to drive decision making process; very prescriptive model that works to eliminate bias.

Interviews are conducted, sometimes with LEA.

Parents are notified that their child has been interviewed, home environment is viewed, collateral contacts are made (school, pediatrician, family members).

- **Safety Threshold Criteria** – All 5 must be met for a child to be deemed unsafe.
 - Serious
 - Observable and specific
 - Out of control
 - Vulnerable child
 - Imminent

- **Helpful tip** – Remind our schools that all of these must be met for a child to be unsafe. Senate Bill 101 – Prohibits schools from notifying parents of assessment.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES FROM ASSESSMENT

- ❖ **Protective Action** – time limited for 10 days while further information is gathered
- ❖ **In-home plan** – Usually involves safety service providers and close monitoring of the home environment. Schools are often safety service providers as well
- ❖ **Out-of-home plan** – Substitute care, ideally with a relative provider
- ❖ **Assessment closed** – no safety concerns or not enough to warrant an open case

ONGOING CASE/PERMANENCY

Shelter/review/permanency hearings

In-home vs out-of-home care

Termination of parental rights and adoption

Helpful tip – Permanency plan is always reunification with a concurrent plan. Termination of parents rights is a long process and typical length of a case to reach TPR is 18 months.

PARTNERING WITH FOSTER PARENTS/RELATIVE CAREGIVERS

- *Foster parents are appointed as the educational surrogate for children in substitute care.
- *Foster parents may look to the school to help fill in the gaps when a child is newly placed into their home.
- *Foster parents need your support, particularly relative caregivers
 - *IEP's/504
 - *Navigating school supports
 - *Accessing community resources for after school care
 - *Arranging transportation to maintain them in their home school
 - *Senate Bill 20

ADOLESCENTS - INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS

ILP services help youths in foster care:

- * Make the transition to self-sufficiency as adults;
- * Receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment;
- * Attain academic and/or vocational education and prepare for post-secondary training and education; and
- * Obtain personal and emotional support and promote healthy interactions with dedicated adults.



COMMON BARRIERS

Communication/confidentiality

Inaction

Unclear expectations

Lack of resources

Role confusion

SO MANY NEW PEOPLE!

Caseworker/Supervisor

Foster parent

SSA – facilitates visits

C.A.S.A. - court appointed special advocate

Child's attorney

Helpful tip – Ask the child's caseworker for all of these people's information at the start of the case to avoid confusion. Many of these people often come to see kids at school.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

- ❖ Coach school staff on reporting and best practices
- ❖ Support safety through relationship with student
- ❖ Liaison between DHS and school
- ❖ Advocate for students being underserved by DHS/foster parent
- ❖ Support school stabilization after DHS involvement
- ❖ Identify potential placement resources for children coming into care

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

- ❖ Promote destigmatization of DHS involved students/families to school staff
- ❖ Strengthen relationship with DHS in the hopes of creating safety for children
- ❖ Coach families on how best to work with DHS.
- ❖ Explore preventative/upstream resources to avoid DHS involvement

CURRENT CLIMATE AT DHS

Secretary of State's Audit on Child Welfare
Published January 2018

Key Findings:

- ❖ Child welfare system, which includes the foster care program, is disorganized, inconsistent, and high risk for the children it serves.
- ❖ DHS has spent \$39 million on legal payouts since 2006 because the agency couldn't "consistently keep children in their care safe from abuse and neglect."
- ❖ Agency leaders haven't reversed high staff turnover and caseload rates that put children in danger.
- ❖ Agency managers have not addressed recruitment and retention of high-quality foster parents.

CURRENT CLIMATE AT DHS



EMBRACE OREGON

BY STANDING IN THE GAP FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

IN

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.



CHANGE IS ON THE WAY

- *Community forums/listening sessions
- *New leadership interested in connecting with communities
- *Allocation of funds for more caseworkers
- * STAR positions – can help connect schools to workers

REMEMBER . . .

Child safety is a community responsibility. It is not a problem for a single agency to successfully solve alone.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

- ❖ Student seeking treatment but doesn't want to disclose abuse
- ❖ Colleagues disclosing to you about a relative
- ❖ Transparency with families