

**Harney County Commission on Children and Families**  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
October 9, 2007

**Attending:** Dan Nichols, Ann Vloedman; Debbie Ausmus; Michelle Bradach; Sonni Svejcar; Patty Dorroh, Director; Maryanne Lovell, Assistant

**Absent:** Lou Davies, Jean Hurst, Ramona Hofman, Joyce Moser

**Guests:** Chad Karges, David Cummings, Terri Hellbusch, Claudia J. Wilcox, Elvira S. Ramirez, Kelly Poe, Dana Brooks, Donna Schnitker, Lisa Fast, Steve Bull, Colleen Smerski, Angie Temple, Eva Jackson, Susan Faw, Christine Phillips, Wendy Hill

**Call to Order.** Dan Nichols called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m., and requested that everyone make self-introductions.

**Comments on the Comprehensive Plan .** None were offered.

**Reconnecting Foster Children to Families.** Patty introduced Eva Jackson from the State Commission staff, who has worked with Sue, Colleen and Lisa on Reconnecting Foster Children with Their Families. This effort began in Oregon in 2006. Harney, Grant, and Malheur DHS staff have received training and begun to work as a region in an effort to implement this effort at the local levels. The purpose of the presentation was to make the local commissions aware of this effort and ask for their support. The local DHS offices have the lead on implementation at the community level.

**Program Background and Overview:** Sue presented a power point presentation on Reconnecting Children and Families for Harney, Grant and Malheur Counties, which included the following information. The biological need to connect with family roots is innate. Sustained connection is important. We all need help piecing together puzzle pieces of our lives so we have sustained connection. Some children only have ten connections in their lives, thus having no idea of where they fit. There are agencies that recognize this. Red Cross promotes family connections. The LDS Church has access to genealogical records and helps the public with requests. The segment "The Loneliest People" from 60 Minutes was shown, illustrating children taken away from their families and moved from foster homes to group homes. Family Findings is attempting to track kids' parents to see if they can go home again. Is there at least an aunt or uncle with whom the child can be safe? Eva stated that in their initial effort, with 20 such kids across Oregon, 200+ relatives were found. When the kids age out of foster care, they should have somewhere to go. David stated looking through each child's file is time intensive and costs \$75-\$100 for the computer search which is just one part of the search. Sometimes the file itself has information on relatives. A relative may provide more information than the computer. Everyone should be brought to the table to discuss planning for the child's future. Volunteers will require training.

## **Director's Report**

### **Staff Update:**

- - Sept 16-20 (National Prevention Network Conference in Portland): Sponsored by HCCCF, Patty, Gwen Haigh, Jane Parks, and Thad Labhart attended all or portions of this conference. It was excellent. Thad, Gwen, and Patty stayed to attend the training forum for Drug Free Community (DFC) grantees in Washington and Oregon state.
- - Oct 3-5 (3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Northeast Prevention Conference in Enterprise): Eight Harney County people were planning to attend this conference; however it was cancelled. HCCCF was going to sponsor five participants.
- Oct 17<sup>th</sup> in Bend: OCCF will provide training on the new database that will be used to input the comprehensive plan information. Patty will attend.

### **Grants**

- Parent Education Series: Harney Partners voted to take the lead for guiding the Parent Education Series we received a grant to implement. The next step will be to advertise for and select local trainers for the various curricula, and arrange for their training.
- Drug Free Community (DFC) Grant Work: The DFC Committee is continuing to meet and refine the logic model process to develop appropriate prevention strategies for Harney County's efforts to reduce and prevent underage substance abuse.

### **Comprehensive Plan on Children and Families**

Things keep shifting regarding how and when the comprehensive plan can be worked into the new database format OCCF has prescribed. The latest plan is for Patty to receive the training on Oct 17<sup>th</sup>, complete the draft of the plan by early November, and distribute it to HCCCF members prior to the Nov 13th meeting.

### **Next Few Months Outlook:**

- **November:** The comprehensive plan will be reviewed, and approved pending any recommended changes.
- **December:** We'll meet if necessary; the plan will go to the County Court for approval.

November 13, 2007 is the Commission's next meeting. Ann stated she will not be here. With no further business, the meeting was then adjourned at 4:00 p.m. by Dan.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maryanne Lovell