



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

Yakima
Public Meeting
June 24, 2006

Roll Call:

Commissioners present: Ruben Baca, Victor Chacon, Yvonne López-Morton, Félix L. Negrón, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, Gabriel Portugal, Graciela Villanueva-Lopez, and Rebecca Villareal

Commissioners absent: Faviola Contreras and Tim Lopez

Staff Present: Uriel Iñiguez, Alicia Luna, Rogelio Burgos, and Caitlin Simmons

Meeting called to order at 9:32 AM

Chair Lopez-Morton welcomed all attendees and asked Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez to do the introductions.

The meeting continued with acknowledgement of Oscar Cerda from the Governor's office and introduction of the CHA Commissioners that were present, the Director, staff and volunteers.

Director Iñiguez explained the purpose of the meeting which was to partner with DSHS and to increase community awareness of their programs. He acknowledged Blake Chard, DSHS Deputy Director's presence, his commitment to the partnership and introduced him to the attendees.

Blake Chard affirmed that this was the first time of such a partnership and a great opportunity for all to assist in bridging the communication gap and work together towards a successful partnership. He also affirmed that they would work towards meeting the needs of the most vulnerable citizens of the state of Washington.

DSHS member's present and participating panelists included:

- ❖ Blake Chard, Deputy Secretary
- ❖ Deb Marley, Assistant Secretary - Economic Services Administration
- ❖ Ken Nichols, DSHS Region 2 Manager for Children Services
- ❖ Robert Tournquist, Director - Division of Licensing Resources

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- ❖ Sekou Shabaka, DSHS Assistant Secretary Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration
- ❖ Robert Gutierrez, Region 2 Community Services Outreach Administrator
- ❖ Lynnae Rutledge, Director - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- ❖ Steve Wickmark, Director – Field Operations, Children’s Administration

GUEST SPEAKERS

Ken Nichols, DSHS Regional Administrator for Children Services stated that his area (Region 2) serves about 11% of the people of Washington with a small budget and a poverty rate that exceeds 26% in Yakima. He made a comparison between King County and Yakima County pointing out that King County has 95,000 Hispanics while Yakima County has 80,000 Hispanics with little or no resources. He, however, said that DSHS offers an immense amount of services to Yakima County’s residents.

Ken read their mission statement which is to protect abused and neglected children, support the efforts of families to care for and parent their own children safely, and to provide quality care and permanent families for children. Ken also talked about the different services that are offered by Children Services such as:

- ❖ Child Welfare service such as Foster Care
- ❖ Family Reconciliation services which involves counseling services for parents and teenagers
- ❖ Adoption Program for extreme children needs- Medical and financial services are provided to assist children with special needs
- ❖ Crisis services for teenagers who run away from home
- ❖ Independent Living and Transitional Living services for kids that are 18 to 20 to assist them in going to college, votech, or into the job stream.

He reinforced the fact that DSHS needs to improve services to the poor families of our state, needs employees who have the language and cultural skills, and for everyone in the community working in this endeavor. His final comment was that we **do not** need more paperwork, hoops to jump through, or fences between us.

Robert Gutierrez, Region 2 Community Services Outreach Coordinator stated that they have eight offices in Region 2 and that Child Protective Services provides 24 hours, seven days a week intake, screening, and investigative services for reports of alleged child abuse and neglect. The response time depends on whether it is an emergent or non-emergent referral. He added that the Investigator has to do a face to face investigation within 24 hours on an emergent referral and within 72 hours on a non-emergent referral. Once the contact is made the necessary services are provided to assist in addressing the issue.

Leticia Saenz, Family Reconciliation Program, gave a brief overview of the services provided by the Family Reconciliation program. It is a voluntary service devoted to maintaining the family as a unit and preventing the out of home placement of adolescents. She said that this program offers families crisis stabilization services and crisis counseling.

Robert Tournquist, Statewide Administrator for the Division of Licensing - Foster Care or Group Care Licensing, stated that his division monitors family foster homes, residential group care facilities adoption agencies, etc for any abuse or violation. In

addition to monitoring they also license and support these entities. He said that there are not enough foster homes for the kids in Washington State due to the significant increase in the number of kids and the decline in number of foster parents. Washington State is in a crisis mode so if anyone is interested in being a foster parent please contact the local DSHS, Division of Children and Family services for additional information on foster parenting.

Lorenzo Lopez and Brian Hynden, Foster Care Licensing – Mr. Hynden informed the Commission that there are eight foster care licensers and four child protective services investigators for licensing care facilities and childcare. He added that Region 2 which extends from Ellensburg to Walla Walla has 701 foster homes; 477 are non-minority and the remainder minority (83Hispanic); however, there is a huge need in this region and statewide.

Mr. Hynden also gave an overview of the pre-requisites of becoming a foster parent. These can be found on the DSHS website.

Mr. Lopez went over the licensing process. He informed the Commission that there is two bilingual and bi-cultural staff available to assist in the licensing process. He added that some of the requirements include a 27-hour training course which is offered in the Yakima office. Orientation and training is also offered in the Tri-Cities, White Salmon, and Goldendale. Mr. Lopez is also working with school districts and looking forward to working with the Commissioners from Walla Walla and Yakima areas on this endeavor. He asked the attendees to visit the resource table and pick up the literature that was available in English and Spanish.

Mr. Chard affirmed that Community Service offices have personnel who are trained on the different programs that are offered through DSHS. He added that Washington is very progressive in helping its people and that State dollars are allocated for various programs. DSHS personnel at the Community Service offices will take a clients history and tailor a program to address people's needs; however, be aware that perhaps not all needs will be addressed or met. He added that there are other programs that can supplement depending on eligibility. In regards to Medicare, Mr. Chard said that yes documentation of citizenship will be necessary. He stated that requirements have not changed but what has changed is the level of prove of citizenship. This new ruling goes into effect on July 1st; however, it does not mean that services will stop on that date. DSHS wants to make sure that all those that are eligible are getting the services; therefore, they will work with folks to assist them in getting the necessary proof of citizenship.

Noemi Ortega, Washington State Migrant Council, informed Mr. Blake that for those folks who have lost their citizenship papers, a court order and a fee is required and that it will take up to a year to receive their papers.

Sekou Shabaka, DSHS Assistant Secretary Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration acknowledged the DSHS Staff, CHA Executive Director Uriel Iñiguez and Frances Carr. In addition he acknowledged Lorenzo Lopez, recipient of the recent 2005 Performance Award.

Mr. Shabaka informed the Commission of the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration's initiatives and grants that will help support early prevention measures designed to keep

youth and their families out of the juvenile justice system. He said that eleven urban areas were identified; however, Tacoma and Spokane were the communities selected for community symposiums. These communities will be involved in the design of their programs beginning with Tacoma in October 2006 and Spokane sometime after that.

Mr. Shabaka asked the Commission and attendees for assistance in identifying Hispanics/Latinos, Asians and Native Americans with clinical psychology backgrounds who might be interested in attending these symposiums.

Vicki Ybarra, Yakima Migrant Clinic thanked DSHS for the local CSO's work and acknowledged the importance of their work. She also acknowledged the Commission for partnering with DSHS and bringing this meeting to the Yakima area. She asked Deputy Secretary Blake Chard for his perspective on existing services and whether these services would be converted into more evidence based programs.

Mr. Chard responded by saying that they have been in that process already. He stated that they have more evidence based programs and that the emphasis is on these programs. He added that they are not necessarily going to stop existing services and shift to the evidence based services; however, if they see savings in this type of programs they will be shifting monies to them.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar asked Mr. Shabaka if the October Juvenile Rehabilitation symposium in Tacoma was open to the public.

Mr. Shabaka informed the Commission that only 150 slots were available for the Tacoma symposium and that mostly government entities, service providers, and children and parents of those impacted would be attending. Gabe Jensen on 360-902-7804 is the contact person for further information on the symposium.

Commissioner Baca asked Mr. Shabaka why Tacoma and Spokane had been selected for the symposiums.

Mr. Shabaka stated that Tacoma and Spokane had been selected based on the ratio of kids going to jail and density of both cities. He added that Bellingham had the density but not the population.

Jesus Sosa who attended the meeting expressed his concerns and suggestions to the DSHS staff. Mr. Sosa stated that the main problem in accessing DSHS services was due to the language barrier and not being aware of the services that were available. He also stated that there was much room for improvement on information sharing, cultural awareness, communication, and customer service but most important was access to the services. He also expressed his frustration regarding his contact with the local DSHS office and the fact that they never gave him the opportunity to ask his question.

Mr. Nichols apologized and acknowledged the fact that they need to be on the forefront asking for ideas/suggestions on how they can do a better job in the services that they provide.

Vice-Chair Portugal asked Mr. Chard for the number Latinos that were in Policy making.

Mr. Chard stated that DSHS keeps track of the number of Latinos that are in policy making, however, he did not have the numbers readily available. He added that they also track all Veterans, the disabled, Asians, etc. but that they unfortunately did not have good representation in comparison to the population.

Frances Carr stated that DSHS was serious about increasing the number of minorities in the state workforce and that they had embarked in a “Turn it Up!” on diversity campaign to ensure the department is recruiting talented people to work with their clients. She added that they needed everyone’s help in this endeavor.

Naomi Ortega from the Tri-Cities stated that we all had plenty of work ahead of us. She apologized for the Latino community not being present at the meeting; not because of lack of interest but due to fact that it was the peak of the cherry crop season. Mrs. Ortega suggested that perhaps the meeting should have been held at a different time to accommodate the working folks. She added that currently Latino representation in the state workforce was at 4.5 and that we needed to bring it up to 8.6. She also stated that Latinos have applied for Commission positions but unfortunately are not being appointed thus the lack of Latino representation. She asked Mr. Blake if there was a plan to hire more Latinos in state agencies.

Norman Moore, DSHS Recruiter, informed Mrs. Ortega that the administration has a succession plan that included diversity in the workplace and that as baby boomers retire there will be more opportunities for Hispanics, Asians, etc to enter the workforce. He added that Javier Perez had recently been promoted to Director. Mr. Moore is committed in assisting with the employment application process, completing resumes, mentoring for success, etc.

Commissioner Negron stated that Aberdeen School District was looking for Latino teachers yet these teachers were moving out of the state because they were not being hired in Washington State. He stated that there must be a disconnection when searching or recruiting minority employees.

Commissioner Villanueva Lopez stated that the resume process and interview styles are not necessarily culturally sensitive and that agencies are uncomfortable with institutional racism.

Maria Verdin, thanked the Commission and DSHS for their presence in the Yakima community. She stated that young couples that are forming their lives and working hard to raise their children are the most important. They, however, don’t always have access to programs such as childcare. Mrs. Verdin is continually advocating and assisting them in getting services that are initially being denied to them.

She suggested to the Commission and DSHS that perhaps they could hold the public meetings in the afternoon and not during the peak of the cherry crop season. She added that she had invited several people to the meeting but unfortunately were unable to attend because of work.

Vice-Chair Portugal stated that the Commission was looking at ways in which to increase attendance of our meetings and that we would be implementing changes and trialing new protocols so as to better serve our communities.

Chair Lopez Morton acknowledged and thanked Frances Carr and Commissioner Villanueva Lopez for their great work in setting up the Yakima public meeting.

CHA Official Business

Official business commenced at 1:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Lopez Morton confirmed that there was a quorum and asked if there was any discussion on the Mattawa Public Meeting minutes.

No discussion on minutes

Commissioner Villanueva Lopez made a motion to approve the Mattawa Public Meeting minutes. Commissioner Negrón seconded the motion.

A vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Commissioner Baca made a motion to draft a letter to the Governor expressing the need to be more involved in the organization and promotion of events such as Fox's visit. Commissioner Portugal seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion: a vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Commissioner Baca made a motion for the Commission to endorse the National Board Certification Training for Certified Teachers (NBCT) which will hold a conference on October 21, 2006 in Sea-Tac. Commissioner Portugal seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion: a vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Commissioner Chacón made a motion to increase the Executive Assistant's salary by 5%. Commissioner Villareal seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion; a vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Commissioner Chacón made a motion recommending that we trial a change in meeting protocol by holding public meetings on Friday afternoons and study session meetings on Saturday beginning with the October 20-21, 2006 South Park meetings. Commissioner Villanueva Lopez seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion; a vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Commissioner Negrón made a motion to accept Commissioner Villanueva Lopez's resignation from the Commission. Commissioner Portugal seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion; a vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Commissioner Negrón made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Portugal.

There was no discussion on the motion; a vote was taken with all in favor. The motion was carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:18 PM.