



Report to the Legislature

Social Worker Workload

Progress Report
July 2008

Department of Social & Health Services
Children's Administration
and
Washington Federation of State Employees

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The 2008 budget bill, ESHB 2687, Chapter 329, Laws of 2008, Section 202 (23), requires the Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration (CA) and the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) to work together to address workload issues.

The legislation states:

“The department shall work with the exclusive bargaining representative for the children's administration social workers to prioritize social worker tasks and devise methods by which to alleviate from the social workers' workload lower priority tasks. Discussions and methods shall include the use of contracting services and home support specialists. The department and the bargaining representative shall jointly report their efforts to the appropriate committees of the legislature by submitting a progress report no later than July 1, 2008, and a final report by November 15, 2008.”

CA and the WFSE are committed to this effort and to working together to help support social workers and other staff as they serve children and families. In October 2007, CA and the Union established an agreement to use statewide ad hoc Union Management Communications Committee (UMCC) meetings to work on critical initiatives for child welfare. When the legislature required CA and WFSE to work on Social Worker workload issues, both parties agreed to use the UMCC framework to complete the work requested by the legislature.

CA and WFSE staff and members have met four days on the Social Worker workload topic as of July 1, 2008, with plans to meet eight more days by November 1, 2008.

Meeting Dates:

- May 21 and 22, 2008 (completed)
- June 3, 2008 (completed)
- June 24, 2008 (completed)
- July 22 & 23, 2008
- August 25 & 26, 2008
- September 10 & 11, 2008
- October 7 & 8, 2008

Progress as of July 1, 2008:

- Agreed on the process to accomplish the legislative direction.
- Agreed on issues that form the context of the discussions and committee recommendations:
 - Child Safety continues as the top priority for everything we do.
 - Increased permanency planning will yield positive child outcomes and help reduce caseloads.

- Recognize the gap between available resources and workload requirements.
- Increased communication with staff is necessary.
- Recognize and respond to new competing external/internal requirements.
- Recognize that workload impacts cannot be efficiently mitigated by efficiencies alone.
- Staff retention and recruitment impacts workload issues.
- Reviewed the efficiencies and streamlining efforts each region has accomplished and has currently underway.
- Reviewed the current tasks performed by social workers in Child and Family Welfare Services, Child Protection Services, and Family Reconciliation Services.
- Began a process to identify those tasks that could be done by non-case carrying staff or by contracting with providers.
- Reviewed task list from the CA Workload Study to validate that identified tasks would save time if moved from social workers workload.
- Developed a process to request comments and input from staff about the UMCCs work on the task lists.
- Prepared the Progress Report to the Legislature.
- Began developing process for prioritizing social worker tasks and making recommendations for the final report.

Next Steps

The ad hoc UMCC will continue meeting through October 2008. A final report will be submitted to the legislature on November 15, 2008 to include recommendations for social worker task prioritization and strategies for workload distribution to other staff or contracted services.

Members of the Ad Hoc UMCC are:

Children's Administration Leadership Team:

Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary

Deborah Purce, Executive Staff Director

Randy Hart, Acting Director, Field Operations

Bernice Morehead, Director, Program and Practice Improvement

Chris Robinson, Clinical Director, Practice Model

Dawn Tatman, Director, Children's Administration Technology Services

Keith Phillips, Director, Finance and Operations Support

Marty Butkovich, Regional Administrator, Region 1

Ken Nichols, Regional Administrator, Region 2

Vacant, Regional Administrator, Region 3

Joel Odimba, Regional Administrator, Region 4

Nancy Sutton, Regional Administrator, Region 5

Myra Casey, Regional Administrator, Region 6

WFSE Staff:

Randy Lorello, Eastern Field Office Supervisor

Jeanine Livingston, Contract Compliance Director

Regional WFSE Members:

Bob Tadlock, Region 1

Ron Smith, Region 2

Faye Anderson, Region 3

Roberta Chiles, Region 4

BaLinda McDonald, Region 5

Bob Mumford, Region 6

Resource Staff:

Children's Administration Headquarters:

Linda Johnson

Ginny Heim

DSHS Labor Relations Office:

Nikki Barnard