

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
February 4, 2005
2nd Floor Courtroom, Borah Office Building
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Representative Margaret Henbest called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. Attending the meeting were Senators Shawn Keough and Bert Marley, and Representatives Maxine Bell, Debbie Field, and Donna Boe. Senators John Andreason and Kate Kelly joined the meeting shortly after it started. Also present were staff members Rakesh Mohan, Director, and Margaret Campbell, Administrative Coordinator, and all other OPE staff.

Co-chair Henbest welcomed those in attendance, and acknowledged Senators Hal Bunderson, Joyce Broadsword, and Tim Corder, and Representatives Kathie Garrett, Jana Kemp, Russ Mathews, and Pete Nielsen. Also in the audience were Ray Ineck, Legislative Audits, Cathy Holland-Smith, Budget and Policy Analysis, Sara Nye and Randy Tilley, Division of Financial Management, and Keith Johnson and Tim Wendland, Office of the State Controller.

MINUTES

Senator Marley moved to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2005, meeting. Senator Keough seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.

COMMITTEE RULES

Representative Field moved to approve Committee Rules for the 2005–2006 legislative session. Representative Bell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.

REPORT RELEASE: *CHILD WELFARE CASELOAD MANAGEMENT*

Representative Boe moved to receive the report on child welfare caseload management. Representative Field seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Rakesh Mohan, Director, thanked the following agencies for providing assistance to OPE in conducting the study: Department of Health and Welfare, Governor's Office, Division of Financial Management, Budget and Policy Analysis, and Legislative Audit. He also thanked case workers and managers in the field for providing valuable input.

Mr. Mohan said the main message of the report was the department did not have adequate caseload and workload information. This information was needed for accountability and to make staffing and budget decisions. There were seven recommendations for improvement and OPE believed most could be addressed with existing agency resources. Mr. Ned Parrish, Principal Performance Evaluator, and Brook Smith, Performance Evaluator, presented a summary of the report findings and recommendations.

Senator Marley said the report indicated the state could save \$350,000 annually from correcting language in initial court orders issued for foster care cases. He asked how much the state could

save if 12-month permanency reviews were consistently held. Ms. Smith said the department's data had been inadequate to determine savings.

Representative Bell asked if needed changes could be implemented with the department's current resources or whether the department needed budgetary adjustments. Mr. Parrish said the recommendations were directed to management and most of these changes could be made with current department resources. The report did not provide staffing level recommendations. Parrish said additional staffing may be warranted because of workload increases, but could not determine the number of staff needed because caseload and workload data was inadequate.

Co-chair Henbest said case workers performed a valuable job with some of the most vulnerable members of our society. She asked if there were computer technological efficiencies to maximize case worker time in the field rather than time spent with FOCUS. Parrish said the system could be improved and the department had made and would continue to make modifications.

In response to Senator Kelly's question about the Any Door Initiative, Mr. Parrish said the initiative was operating in one region. Case workers had transferred into the initiative program, leaving fewer staff for child protection. He said the department hoped the initiative would better serve clients through the integration of services, and result in less referrals for child protection (other provided services could possibly reduce the risk factors leading to abuse or neglect).

Co-chair Henbest called on Karl Kurtz, Director, Department of Health and Welfare, to address the Committee. Mr. Kurtz said FOCUS was built with federal money for one purpose—to fill out a federal form. He said there was very little management information that could be extracted from FOCUS, and they were currently developing a "data warehouse" that would pull management information from FOCUS. He said it was difficult to assess workload in the child welfare program because cases were complex and required different skill sets. The program was also complicated by requirements to interface with the court system.

Senator Andreason said the report described several instances where management had fallen short. He asked why management needed a program evaluation to resolve problems. As an example, he pointed to the development of the data warehouse, which had been a work in progress since 1999, but not completed.

Co-chair Henbest called on Ken Diebert, Administrator, Division of Family and Community Services, to address the Committee. Mr. Diebert said FOCUS was a rigid program designed to comply specifically with federal reporting requirements, although the department had expanded it to provide for accounting of payments to foster parents and to pay for residential treatment. He said the department had been working more than two years to transition the daily elements from FOCUS into the data warehouse. He estimated it would take about six more months to complete. After the department completed the transition, he said they will have more flexibility in analyzing information.

Senator Marley said it had cost \$32 million to develop FOCUS, which included \$13 million of state funds, and yet the department had a program that did not provide needed management

information. He asked why the department did not consider state reporting needs when building the program. Mr. Diebert said the department's priority in developing FOCUS was to maintain federal funding by meeting federal reporting requirements.

Co-chair Henbest called on Sara Nye, Analyst, Division of Financial Management, to address the Committee. Ms. Nye said the Governor was aware of the issues brought up by the report and his budget recommendations had tried to address those issues. She said case workers faced many challenges—not necessarily specific to Idaho. Nationally, there were personnel turnover issues and cases complicated by substance abuse.

Senator Keough moved to review progress toward implementation of the report's recommendations in six months. Representative Bell seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously by voice vote.

Co-chair Henbest asked OPE to forward a copy of the report to the court improvement project for on-going dialogue between the department and the courts on timely implementation of issues.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT LEGISLATION

Mr. Mohan briefed the Committee on their request for strategic planning and performance measurement legislation at the December 3, 2004, meeting. He said OPE had worked with Budget and Policy Analysis and the Division of Financial Management to incorporate all of the report's recommendations, except one (recommendation for legislative staff to assess the quality of information) into the draft legislation. He said the draft legislation was built upon existing legislation in terms of goals and legislative intent. However, because of substantial changes to the existing process, he suggested the current statute be repealed and replaced with the new statute.

The Committee agreed the co-chairs of JLOC should carry the legislation.

Representative Field moved to carry the draft performance measurement legislation forward, with JLOC co-chairs assuming responsibility for introducing proposed legislation. Representative Bell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by voice vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Mohan said OPE was currently working on a federal mandate review, requested by the chair of the House Transportation Committee, related to the use of social security numbers when obtaining a driver's license. He said the office was also working on a follow-up of data management at the Department of Correction and the Commission of Pardons and Parole, which also included a request by Legislative Council to assess whether the department had data needed to conduct a recidivism study.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.