

MINUTES
(Subject to approval by the Committee)
Foster Care Study Committee
Friday, September 30, 2016
9:00 A.M.
State Capitol, Room EW 42
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Senator Abby Lee called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m., and a silent roll was taken. Members present: Co-chair Representative Christy Perry and Representatives Lynn Luker, Jason Monks, and Melissa Wintrow; Co-chair Senator Abby Lee and Senators Bart Davis, Mary Souza, Kelly Anthon. Absent and excused: Senator Cherie Buckner-Webb and Representative Mike Moyle. Legislative Services Office (LSO) staff present: Ryan Bush, Jared Tatro, and Ana Lara.

Other attendees: Brian McCauley, Val McCauley, and Arlene McCauley, Foster Care Reform; Miren Unsworth, Michelle Weir, Gary Moore, Sabrina Brown, Amanda Pena, Jamie Naver, and Russ Barron, Dept. of Health and Welfare; Roger Sherman, Idaho Children's Trust Fund; Jamie Christiansen, Family Advocates; Brent King, Office of the Attorney General; Sara Thomas, Idaho Supreme Court; Kristianna Moore, Idaho Foster Youth Advisory Board; Lynda Westwood, Alley DeMint, Alicia Benningfield, and Allison Demarest.

Note: Presentations and handouts provided by presenters/speakers are posted on the Idaho Legislature website: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2016/interim/fostercare>; and copies of those items are on file at the Legislative Services Office located in the State Capitol.

Department of Health and Welfare's Presentation

Co-chair Lee began the meeting by discussing a potential new meeting date in November. After much discussion, the meeting in November was rescheduled to the 28th.

Co-chair Lee called upon Ms. Miren Unsworth, Deputy Division Administrator for the Dept. of Health and Welfare (DHW) to present. Ms. Unsworth began her [presentation](#) by introducing herself and stating that the DHW acknowledges that changes need to be made to their foster care program in an effort to address the improvements that need to be made.

Ms. Unsworth went on to address additional issues that the DHW grapples with which include:

- Providing adequate services across the state;
- Access to substance abuse treatment services, especially in rural areas;
- Timeliness to permanency;
- Early Identifying engagement in the beginning of the process; and
- Staff turnover.

Co-chair Perry inquired if the DHW has looked into whether telehealth services and telepsychiatry services are going to be viable resources for the DHW. Ms. Unsworth answered that telehealth has been used for children in the more rural areas in northern Idaho. She added that she has not seen it applied to parents in terms of substance abuse.

Co-chair Lee called upon Ms. Stephanie Miller, Permanency Program Specialist for DHW, to describe the Placement Selection Committee and the process for placement. Ms. Miller provided historical reference for the placement process by referring to an IDAPA rule that states that all permanency decisions must be made by a committee of at least 3 people. In an effort to have a uniform process throughout the state, the DHW reached out to the National Resource Center for Adoption who provided two national specialists to assist them in developing the process. There have been some changes to the process over the last 6 years as result of various legislation that has passed.

Ms. Miller stated that the number one guiding principle in the placement selection process is that the child's best interest is the primary consideration in the selection of adoptive and guardian placement selections. She went on to state that the standard also outlines a number of state and federal statutes that guide the DHW in their decision making; the standard does need to be updated to integrate the new legislative changes that went into effect July 1, 2016.

Highlights and additional facts from Ms. Miller's presentation include:

- Placement selection is used to identify a permanent placement for a child, and this is done once the child has been in foster care for 6 months.
- Before the committee meeting is held, they first ensure they have a complete understanding of the needs of the child, and second, they consider whether the child and sibling group need to stay together.

Discussion:

Senator Davis inquired about any additional changes that the DHW has made, apart from the statutorily required changes. Ms. Miren offered that the DHW is providing direction to their staff to modify the data management system to ensure that the notices to foster families are provided before the 60 day requirement by statute. They are also looking at implementing a process where their supervisors will contact one foster family from each caseworker's caseload each month, and inquire about how the foster family is doing in order to help develop the relationship with the foster care family. She added that they have also revised their foster parent problem resolution process.

Co-chair Lee asked how the new foster parent resolution process is different from the former process. Ms. Miren explained that it is similar to the former process, but they are marketing the process so that foster parents are aware of this resource and may use it when needed. The process allows for an issue that cannot be resolved between the foster parents and the caseworker to be advanced to a supervisor. At that point, a resource peer mentor may be brought in to support the foster family. If the issue is still unable to be resolved, then it would advance to a program manager. If there is still disagreement, then the issue would be elevated to a central team who would provide a recommendation to a deputy division administrator who would make the decision.

Co-chair Perry inquired about the number of home studies that are done in order to determine placement for a child. Ms. Miller responded that the majority of the time there is one home study done. She explained that it will often depend on the processes of other states if, for example, a family outside of the state is being considered. Other times there might be a minor safety issue (e.g., broken fence) that needs to be resolved, so they may choose to pause the home study until it is resolved. Co-chair Perry asked if the home studies are done by the DHW. Ms. Miller responded that they are primarily done by the DHW, but sometimes adopting parents choose to go through a private agency (adoptive agency). Co-chair Perry followed up by asking if, once a home study provides a negative recommendation for a family, is the family ruled out. She answered that it would depend on the reason behind the negative recommendation.

Representative Luker asked if there are multiple committees throughout the state. Ms. Miller responded that there are different committees throughout the state, and different committees for each placement that is being considered. The [Placement Selection Committee Standard](#) document lists the required or core participants that have to be at every placement selection committee. Representative Luker followed up by asking how a decision is made by the committee. Ms. Miller explained that they aim for consensus, but if the committee cannot achieve consensus, then they have an open vote. Ultimately, the HUB recommendation is made to the HUB manager in order for him to make a decision.

Senator Souza asked who it is that does the actual voting. Ms. Miller replied that everyone participating has the opportunity to state their personal recommendation, and once the nondepartmental participants leave, then the remaining members of the committee attempt to find consensus. If they cannot find consensus, then only the departmental employees participate in an

open vote. Senator Davis asked if there is a next step after the HUB manager has made his decision. Ms. Miller explained that there is an extended placement selection process available for either foster parents or relatives that were considered at the initial selection, but were not chosen, who request a review or an extended consideration. The process can also be found on the [Placement Selection Committee Standard](#) document, page 15.

Representative Monks asked how often HUB managers override the committee's recommendations. Ms. Miller responded that she has personally not seen this happen. Co-chair Perry asked if foster parents and relatives can be considered for placement simultaneously. Ms. Miller responded that the standard was revised some years ago so that relatives must be considered independent and singularly first. The standard is being reviewed at this time given new legislation that has passed this year, and the DHW is reconsidering whether to review both the foster parents and relatives simultaneously.

Regarding the petition to terminate parental rights, Senator Davis asked if it is done after the HUB manager has made his final decision and the time frame has lapsed for the request of an extended selection committee. Ms. Miller responded that the two processes are independent from one another; the termination process is treated separately from the placement selection process. Senator Davis followed up by asking if petitions to terminate parental rights are filed with the courts during the first 6 months - absent egregious circumstances. She responded in the negative. Senator Davis asked if the petition for parental rights is filed before or after the date that the committee was formed. She responded that it depends, and explained that there is a 6 month review hearing 6 months into a child protective case. At the review hearing, the judge considers both the primary permanency goal and the secondary permanency goal. The only time a case would proceed to a placement selection committee is either when the primary or the secondary goal is adoption.

Representative Wintrow inquired about division's staff expertise. Ms. Miller responded that all child welfare social workers are licensed social workers which means that at minimum they have a bachelors degree in social work; several also have master degrees, and some are licensed clinical social workers as well. In the department's education system, staff are educated about trauma, impacts of placement and placement changes on children in foster care, etc.

Co-chair Perry asked at what time in the process does the DHW determines that a relative is 'willing' or 'not willing.' Ms. Miller explained that 'willing' relates to a relative's willingness at the beginning of the case, although they do have to check back with them if a child's current placement is not working. The DHW has struggled to find a clear deadline for relatives to be considered for placement. The DHW ask families at the time the child enters foster care if they would like to be considered as a permanency option and/or as foster parents. Once they have made a permanency selection, they no longer consider any more applicants.

Co-chair Lee asked what the Legislature had done to create policies that have impacted or prohibited the DHW's ability to determine the 'best interest' of a child. Ms. Unsworth responded that the legislative changes provided an opportunity for any party to the case to contest a placement decision, and ultimately have the final decision made by the judiciary. They are also considering whether they should change the involvement of the entities providing recommendations, such as allowing a guardian ad litem to remain in the room when the final recommendation is made. Co-chair Lee asked if the DHW still believes that they are bound to prioritizing 'fit and willing' relatives. Ms. Miller responded that she believes that the DHW has the ability to consider relatives and foster parents side by side for placement, but explained that relatives do carry a preference according to statute. Co-chair Lee followed up by asking if the DHW continues to seek relatives for placement consideration after the initial set of relatives have been ruled out and the potential permanent placement option has fallen through. Ms. Miller explained that they do have the ability to continue seeking relatives well into the process (i.e. 6 months into foster care placement), and often times this is a good thing to do. This is part of their best practice guidelines, and their federal partners require the DHW to seek other relatives when a child's permanent placement has dissolved.

Senator Souza asked if there is an indefinite time frame for a placement selection to be made. Ms. Miller explained that in order to make a placement selection, the DHW will need to have identified relatives and reached out to them first. They proceed to placement selection as early as possible once relatives have been identified and notified. Senator Souza asked if Ms. Miller believed that a time frame should be considered for the discovery of parents or relatives to be considered so to maintain a level of certainty in the process. Ms. Miller responded that there could potentially be a time frame in regard to relatives, but the time frame would need to take into consideration some of the barriers that are outside of the DHW's control.

Co-chair Perry asked if there is something in place in IDAPA or rules that does not allow for a child to be placed in a home that receives financial assistance. Ms. Miller responded that the financial stability of a foster home or an adoptive home is covered in IDAPA, in their childcare licensing rules, as well as the adoption rules for both foster parents and permanent placement. Adoption rules are broad, but essentially a family has to meet all their financial needs; there is nothing in IDAPA that prohibits a family that receives public assistance from becoming a foster family or an adoptive family.

Representative Luker requested more information about the process for identifying fit and willing relatives, and the information regarding the DHW's budget. Representative Wintrow requested information about what resources are needed to assist the DHW in their foster care program.

Preventing Child Abuse in Idaho - Mr. Roger Sherman

Co-chair Lee called upon Mr. Roger Sherman, Executive Director to the Idaho Children's Trust Fund (ICTF), to present next. Mr. Sherman began his [presentation](#) by introducing himself, and provided some background regarding the services that their legislatively created entity provides.

Highlights and additional facts for Mr. Sherman's presentation included:

- Removing a child from their home and placing them in foster care presents a dilemma because:
 - Children do best in their family of origin;
 - Maintaining family and culture connections is best practice; and
 - It is crucially important that children get permanent placement as soon as possible.
- Based on a study by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), foster care children have already experienced significant adverse childhood experiences (ACES). This study details the impact of childhood neglect and abuse over time.
- 77% of cases reported are due to neglect.
- Idaho struggles with the following reported ACES areas:
 - One or no biological parents;
 - Alcohol and drug use;
 - Mental illness; and
 - Economic hardship.
- Protective Factors can mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences. Practitioners can capitalize on their unique relationships with parents to promote the Protective Factors in Families.
- The 5 Protective Factors are:
 - Social and emotional competence;
 - Social connections;
 - Concrete support in times of need;
 - Resilience; and
 - Knowledge of parenting and child development.
- Foster care is a deep-end solution to the underlying problems facing children and families such as:
 - Abuse/neglect;

- Addiction;
 - Parental mental illness;
 - Domestic violence; and
 - Trauma.
- Some of the things Idaho is doing include:
 - Home visiting;
 - Parenting programs;
 - Child sexual abuse prevention education;
 - Helping organizations develop practices that incorporate helping families build protective factors;
 - Creating opportunities for peer support for parents.

Idaho's streamlined benefits process is also a step in the right direction for helping families cope with the stress of losing a job or having a low wage job.

- CDC policies have defined the essentials of childhood as safe, stable nurturing relationships and environments. Some of the support strategies to accomplish include:
 - Increase income and other supports, like quality childcare and affordable health insurance;
 - Prevent child sexual abuse;
 - Increase the availability of parenting programs;
 - Reduce unintended and teen pregnancies;
 - Increase access to treatment for mental illness and substance abuse; and
 - Improve high school completion rates in order to increase incomes.
- "In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always." --Urie Bronfenbrenner

Discussion:

Representative Luker asked if ICTF is involved in discussions with the department [State Department of Education] about educating students grades K-12 about growth, development, and family life. Mr. Sherman responded they have been involved with the family and consumer sciences curriculum. They [State Department of Education] have just built into their adult living classes discussions about ACES and childhood sexual abuse. Representative Luker commented that it might be helpful to hear from the Department of Education regarding how their education component is being addressed.

Representative Wintrow added that it might also be beneficial to hear how students are being educated about unintended pregnancies. She went on to describe how schools could become a resource to potentially assist in identifying potential foster parents. Referring to the majority of incarcerated women who have been victims to some form of abuse in their lives prior to the crime, Representative Wintrow asked Mr. Sherman if he could comment on how this issue is being dealt with. Mr. Sherman explained that the ICTF does work in the women's prisons, and explained that abuse often leads women in the wrong direction in life. He described how he has been witness to some of the life stories belonging to the women, as well as the hope they have after participating in the Strengthening Families course and child sexual abuse prevention education.

Mr. Sherman went on to describe a residential [parenting] program that Washington has where children are allowed to stay with their biological mothers who are incarcerated if they have a short sentence. He added that the trajectory is so much better with this setting.

Co-chair Lee asked if Mr. Sherman could prioritize the list found on slide 13, and provide the list to Mr. Bush in LSO.

The committee convened for lunch at 12:41 p.m.

The committee reconvened at 1:10 p.m.

Overview of Oregon's Relief Nursery Program - Ms. Kathie Collins

Co-chair Lee called upon Ms. Kathie Collins, Executive Director for the Treasure Valley Children's Relief Nursery (TVCRN), to present next. Ms. Collins began her presentation by introducing herself and providing some historical background for the TVCRN.

Highlights and additional facts for Ms. Collin's presentation included:

- TVCRN is located in Ontario, Orgeon. TVCRN is a 501c3 non-profit organization and they work as a child prevention abuse model.
- The relief nursery in Eugene, Oregon began 40 years ago, and it came about in an effort to seek a better approach to keep vulnerable children safe and healthy.
- Poverty is a factor for child abuse and neglect.
- Malheur county has the highest rate of poverty in Oregon. In this county, 100% of TVCRN's clientele are low-income, 90% are in poverty, and about 90% of those in poverty are in abject poverty.
- Their therapeutic classroom instructors work with children (ages 18 months to 5 years) in their relief nursery 45 weeks out of the year, twice a week for 3 hours. The primary focus is to help build children's social-emotional skills in order to build resilience in children.
- Between birth and six years of age is when 90% of brain development occurs, and this is the time to build social-emotional skills.
- The sense of security is vital for people to learn.
- TVCRN's interventionists are working with children in classrooms, and also conducting home visits for each family once a month.
- The home visit is focused on child development, and there is a separate visit for each child in order to provide individual focus.
- They help parents access basic resources in an effort to decrease basic risk factors.
- They are a 501c3 organization and do fund-raising events to raise funds. However, the state of Oregon does allocate a substantial grant to them because they save the state money. A study found that the return on investment was \$4 for every dollar the Legislature gave the TVCRN.
- The relief nursery models have made replications in several counties in Oregon, and outside the state as well.

Representative Wintrow asked how the TVCRN's services integrate with foster care services. Ms. Collins explained that they work to prevent children from entering foster care because once a child enters foster care, they are at a greater risk of becoming homeless, doing drugs, etc. They take referrals from many agencies, including the Dept. of Health Services. She added that their program is willing to continue helping children who have transitioned into foster care in an effort to provide additional stability for the children.

Co-chair Lee asked if Ms. Collins could describe their therapeutic classrooms, as well as the home visits that are conducted. Ms. Collins elaborated that home visits are done by the specific child's teacher (aka interventionist). TVCRN's therapeutic classrooms have a teacher to child ratio of almost one to one. As teachers who conduct monthly visits, they can use information regarding a child's goal and a child's home to develop lesson plans that help achieve the goal. Home visitors use the evidence-based curriculum Parents as Teachers that have lessons geared for each age group. TVCRN work to strengthen families in a nonthreatening manner.

Input from Various Speakers

Linda Westwood

Co-chair Lee called upon Ms. Linda Westwood to begin her presentation. Ms. Westwood described her experience becoming a foster parent, and later an adoptive parent. She explained that someone close to her who had a child was incarcerated in prison, and the mother of the child struggled with

a drug addiction. The foster parents were becoming increasingly uncooperative about visits with the father in prison, and the child was not getting many of the intervention services needed. Ms. Westwood became a foster parent for the child, and was able to get the child the therapy she needed. When the child was not able to reunite with her birth parents, Ms. Westwood adopted the child. The child maintains an important relationship with the father who is currently incarcerated. Before ending her presentation, Ms. Westwood thanked the guardian ad litem who had provided much support to her throughout this journey.

Ms. Kristianna Moore

Co-chair Lee called upon Ms. Kristianna Moore to present next. Ms. Moore introduced herself and began her presentation by describing her experiences in several foster care homes during her tenure as a foster child. She stated that most of her foster home experiences were good, one was bad, and her last home was phenomenal. She explained that what made the last foster home exemplary was that the foster family allowed her to be her authentic self, encouraged participation in activities she was interested in, and treated her as a member of the family.

Ms. Moore described her position as secretary in the Idaho Foster Youth Advisory Board (IFYAB). She is currently researching how successful tuition waivers have been in states such as Texas, California, and Florida. She explained that her greatest passion at this time is foster care reform. Ms. Moore was also able to contribute to the [Idaho Youth in Care Bill of Rights](#) that provide information to foster care children about their rights. She went on to explain that as a foster child, she was not aware of many rights that she had, and it motivated her to join the IFYAB. She also advocated for the ability for siblings in foster care to maintain contact.

Co-chair Perry asked if she could describe the Idaho Foster Youth Advisory Board's composition. Ms. Moore explained that the board is made up of foster care alumni. Representative Wintrow asked Ms. Moore what the committee should know about foster care. Ms. Moore responded that it's important for foster parents to know that each child is different; some have self-esteem issues and most have experienced trauma. She encourages foster parents to be patient and to continue to be dedicated. Ms. Moore emphasized that she would like to remove the stigmas that many foster children experience.

Co-chair Perry asked if Ms. Moore had been placed with relatives or non-relatives during her time in foster care, and if she had been able to communicate with her parents while in foster care. Mr. Moore answered that she was not adopted during foster care, and had been placed with both relatives and non-relatives during her tenure in foster care. She also said that it was deemed unsafe for her to have contact with her parents, and once her siblings were separated she was no longer able to communicate with them.

Ms. Barbara Kingen and Ms. Melissa Heyes

Ms. Barbara Kingen began her presentation by introducing herself and providing some background regarding her 16 years as a foster parent. She described her experience as a foster parent for Ms. Melissa Heyes' children. In PRIDE training they talk about fostering families, not just children, so that families may heal and children can return home.

Ms. Melissa Heyes described the experience of having her children removed by Child Protective Services due to her drug addiction. She explained that she attended parenting classes, participated in counseling, was subject to random urine analysis, looked for employment, and was finally able to create a stable home and regain custody of her children.

Senator Souza asked if Ms. Heyes could describe her recovery process. Ms. Heyes responded that she had relapsed after the first time she had gone through rehab treatment. Ms. Heyes explained that the support that Ms. Kingen has provided, as well as her participation in NA (Narcotics Anonymous), have helped her maintain her sobriety.

Ms. Kingen proceeded to explain that she is trying to start a group with Love Inc. to formalize relationships with the biological parents of foster children. She will be also speaking with PRIDE trainers to incorporate peer mentor training in their training for foster parents. Representative Wintrow asked Ms. Kingen how she had come to use the approach of fostering families. Ms. Kingen explained that she decided to try a different approach of her own that would focus on helping parents as well as children.

Ms. Margaret Zysk

Ms. Margaret Zysk explained that she had been a foster parent for 12 years, but is currently taking a break since her last case was a difficult one. She relayed her family's experience in adopting her grandson through the foster care. She described some of the neglect the child had experienced by his biological parents. Ms. Zysk also described her parent's adoption experience as well. She stated that while her family did not initially intend to adopt, she is grateful that they had the opportunity to proceed with the adoption process. Ms. Zysk emphasized that while child permanency placement was important to establish as soon as possible, it should not be at the expense of potentially placing foster children with relatives.

Written Statement from Idaho Falls/Pocatello - Read by Mr. Roger Sherman

Mr. Roger Sherman read a written statement from a constituent of eastern Idaho. In the statement, the parent described how she had struggled with her drug addiction. She also stated her belief that the foster parents have worked against her reunification with her children. She expressed gratitude to her caseworker who has supported her through this process.

Mr. Brian McCauley

Mr. Brian McCauley began by explaining his family's involvement in the discussion about foster care reform. He expressed gratitude toward the DHW for recognizing that there are problems in the foster care program that need to be addressed. He stated that his own personal experience does not reflect the check and balances that the DHW has described in the committee meetings. He opined that there is a severe lack of accountability within the foster care system. His concern is that while there are good laws and policies in place, there have still been many problems with the foster care system. He explained that their organization is still receiving calls from various foster parents who are expressing concerns about children potentially being placed in unsafe places. Mr. McCauley emphasized that the concern of foster parents is finding what is best for foster care children; the best interest of the child should supersede everything else.

Representative Luker stated that studies, and testimony from foster care children, seem to indicate that placement should be with relatives. He asked how Mr. McCauley balances his own experience and thoughts with what the research indicates about placement with relatives. Mr. McCauley explained that the research that the DHW refers to does not deal with foster care children who have been removed from their home for as long as a year or two. He opined that the DHW has misinterpreted the study, and opined that children who are removed should be returned to relatives as soon as safely possible. He expressed concern for children who are placed with foster parents for a long period of time, forming strong bonds with the foster care families, and then are removed to be placed with relatives who they may not know.

Dept. of Health and Welfare

Ms. Unsworth stated that currently there is a misalignment in terms of notification across different entities (guardians ad litem, parents, and foster families) in IDAPA rules and the statute. She offered for consideration that they might potentially have the same amount of notice.

Ms. Unsworth opined that the new additional court involvement helps with ensuring the DHW's accountability regarding the decisions they make. She emphasized that at times the DHW finds

issues that need to be addressed on a personnel level or policy level, and sometimes the issue is a disagreement among parties.

Senator Anthon asked who the DHW's federal partner is and what the purpose is for involving that federal partner in evaluating the DHW's internal processes. Ms. Unsworth explained that as part of receiving certain federal funding (\$20 million), every state must undergo a Child and Family Services Review. She explained that as of late, the federal government allows for states to use their own quality improvement systems if it meets the federal standards, and also allows them to conduct their own review in tandem with some federal guidance.

Committee Discussion:

Senator Davis asked the DHW to email their responses to the following questions:

- Does the DHW's report and recommendations to the court from the selection committee contain findings of fact and conclusions of law;
- Does the report contain an actual itemization of the participants in the selection process;
- Should the selection committee standards and participants be codified; and
- Should the Legislature identify the process in law.

He stated his belief that the committee should begin drafting at this point, and invited stakeholders to make policy recommendations for the committee to review.

Representative Wintrow expressed her concern about what is not being followed in policy or in practice, and how to create transparency and accountability in any governmental agency.

Representative Luker stated he was astounded to hear that 81% of foster children are removed based on neglect, and would like to explore the area of 'neglect.' He wondered if there is a way to simplify hearings that involve three or four attorneys. He stated that there are definitional concerns regarding 'consideration,' 'neglect,' 'fit,' and 'best interest.' He also expressed concern about the declining availability of foster parents, and would like to find out why the number of foster parents is declining. He stated his interest in clearing up the representation issue regarding who the attorneys represent, and whether prosecutors should be involved in all stages. Representative Luker explained that rural child protection cases seem to need more attention in terms of legal representation. He said he would like to explore whether there is flexibility in the 30 day limit in Code X. He also expressed concern about the initial hearing stage - specifically about how the rules of evidence in discovery do not apply to birth parents.

Co-chair Perry emphasized that committee members should consider ideas for how to prevent children from entering foster care, and how to provide resources to families. She suggested that the committee review the Best Interest parameters. She expressed concern about paternity issues and time lines. She offered that the committee consider changing the definition of 'fictive kin' and remove the words 'prior to.' Representative Perry also expressed concern for the small amount of guardians ad litem available.

Co-chair Lee stated that she is cautious about additional statutory changes, except to say that she welcomes the DHW and other stakeholders to bring their concerns to the committee. Representative Wintrow asked the DHW to report back to the committee what they perceive their departmental culture to be, and how it impacts individual behavior. Representative Luker suggested the committee explore the difference between a willing relative that has had a relationship with the child versus a relative who has not.

Co-chair Lee asked the committee members to send any additional topics they would like to have covered to the Co-chairs and LSO staff. She thanked everyone for their hard work, and stated that the next meeting would be held on October 26.

The committee adjourned at 3:43 p.m.