



Department of Human Resources Stakeholders' Forum

**Work Group Brainstorming Sessions
Discussion Questions and Input from Stakeholders
August 23, 2007**

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The Department of Human Resources asked community stakeholders to participate in a conversation on ways the department and the community could work together to improve the lives of the children and families who rely on the department for help and support. Approximately 100 persons responded by participating in the department's three-hour Stakeholders' Forum in Annapolis on August 23, 2007.

Stakeholders' from around the State, including the Maryland Foster Parents Association, chairpersons of county boards of social services, Maryland State Legislators, child welfare advocates, homeless advocates, university scholars involved with social service issues and Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert M. Bell, broke up into five working groups to enable input into the department's key priorities. Participants were encouraged to raise their concerns and other challenges for DHR. The groups were asked three questions relating to the department's five top priorities. The questions and abbreviated bulleted responses reported back to the whole group are provided below by group.

What are the potential opportunities and challenges around key issues discussed by the DHR Administrations?

Focus on Critical Service Delivery Issues: Child Support

- Arrears Management for Non-custodial Parents (NCPs)
- Project Fresh Start -- provides previously incarcerated NCPs employment, modification and services program
- Continuity of front-end modifications for NCPs going to prison
- Knowledge of programs and policies
 - Training
 - Ombudsperson – state and local subsidiaries

Focus on Critical Service Delivery Issues: Adult Services

- Homeless Management Information System (H.M.I.S) Connectivity issues
- Meet Adult Service needs of the aged.
- Government's interest is important. There is a need for more federal dollars
- How do we institutionalize change?
 - Get boards involved
 - Marketing plan
 - Tell the story
- No adult service data system
- Redefine adult services (It is not just aging)
- Centrality of domestic violence to other issues; i.e., child welfare
- Affordability and availability of resources
- Growing immigrant population

Investment in DHR's Infrastructure

Challenges:

- Bandwidth
- CHESSIE
- Salaries – Studies show disparities
- Other barriers to workforce retention
 - Equal quality of supervisor training
 - Definition of Academy – take it beyond classroom to transfer of learning in the field
 - On the job training
- Job Freeze impacts Family Investment Administration (FIA), Child Support (CS) and Adult Services (AS)
- Service integration for various benefits and for benefits and service
- Clashing eligibility requirements
- Energy assistance – only 30% (varies by locality)

Opportunities:

- MD Access Points
 - Call point
 - HMIS
 - Software – service appointments
 - Can fill out all applications
- Services Access & Information Link (SAIL) – online applications -
- Partners in FIA
 - Waiting room (e.g., Emergency Assistance vendor)
 - Translators

- Budget Review
- Expand Training Academy
- CHESSIE

Focus on Critical Service Delivery Issues: Welfare Reform II

Challenges:

- Go beyond self-sufficiency
- Families have other needs
- Staff to do their jobs, so families get timely benefits
- Process for getting exceptions to hire is hindering service to clients (assessments, other services)
- No defined caseloads/workloads
- Fragmented service delivery
i.e., OHEP, TCA, EAFC
- engaging invisible non-traditional communities
- hard to serve population needs
- service integration needs

Opportunities:

- Use data to show effect of vacancies
- Standard intake for energy needs, TCA, FS, etc.
- Systems that talk to one another
- Work with energy companies on collaboration
- No wrong doors–
- One stops
- More wholistic approach to families
- Provider access to systems
- Family planning education/referral/with flexible funds (maybe TANF)

Place Matters

Challenges

- Inertia of staff and families
- Lowered expectations
- Resistance to change
- L.J. v Massinga Lawsuit
- Need thoughtful plan for transition from deep end to front end use of services – avoid unnecessary disruption
- Need to treat foster parents as professionals – they’re not “places” they are “partners” – upgrade

- DHR plan is conceptually sound, but when and how will it be implemented – e.g., operationalized?
- Children are living in unhealthy communities and they need more than just to “be there” – we need an investment in community development
- Communities with a growing immigration “residency status” requirements in placements is a problem when trying to keep their kids in families
- Lack of prompt enrollment of foster care youth in schools – delays in getting records – “receiving schools” don’t want foster kids – hassle them

Opportunities

- The vision of Place Matters is sound
- Opportunity to tie in Place Matters with community resources and link with MST
- Utilize grant program to encourage resource development where it’s needed
- Opportunity to bring children back to their communities whether they are in foster homes or group care
- Set standards for group homes and outcome measures

Other

- Outcome standards should be broader than just group homes
- We ought to enable private agencies to recruit and maintain regular foster homes
- Youth in informal kinship care get no child welfare assistance from State – look at TANF and waivers to support insurance
- We should look at “right to stay in home school” when kids enter care rather than requiring them to re-enroll
- Lack of attention to foster children’s academic achievement by the systems – not on the table
- Need an up-front investment of funds and government participation
- Need consistent global support for resources in local departments to carry out the plan

What partnerships would influence and strengthen the achievement of the initiatives outlined?

Child Support

- Example: Adams’s House – service oriented
Medically based social service
Prince George’s County Health Department

Corrections, Parole and Probation, States Attorney, child Support
DHR (PGC), Other County Agencies

- Procedural Incarceration Modifications
 - Alternative Directions
 - Judiciary Acceptance/Uniformity
 - Department of Corrections, Parole and Probation
 - Legal Aid Bureau

Adult Services

- County Governments
- Community-based organizations
- Department of Aging
- Federal Legislature
- National Organizations
- Vendors
- Public Relations
- Universities
- Domestic Violence Best Practices (Research)
- Business
- Advocates
- Customers

Investment in DHR's Infrastructure

- University of Maryland -- Training technology systems for continuity
- Service partners in Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS)
- Disabled community (models)
- Department of Aging
- Faith community (saved Ann Arundel county \$150K in homeless??)
- In energy – need to focus on interagency partnerships
- Intra agency – Coordinate in DHR/LDSS
- Advocates
- State/Local DHR/LDSS/Department of Budget Management (DBM) and Governor for Bandwidth

Focus on Critical Service Delivery Issues: Welfare Reform II

- Bring in underserved communities (foreign born: Asian, African, Latino)
- Partnerships with:
 - workforce development
 - other state agencies (Department of Education (MSDE), DHMH, DLLR, Housing, etc.)

- universities and community college
- Business communities
- Dental services

Matters Place

- Need a flood of letters to the Governor and members of the General Assembly – partnerships with advocates to the general public to push back
- Partnership with domestic violence programs to identify children who have experienced violence
- MSDE needs to be better partners
- Local departments need to let communities know that they are there for vulnerable children and families (non-traditional partners-businesses, chambers of commerce)
- Families and children themselves should be partners in planning and decision

What are the key issues that may require policy, practice or resource considerations and follow-up for the upcoming legislative and budget session?

Child Support

- Uniformity in implanting support modifications and arrears forgiveness
- Required educating of staff and customers
- Quality Assurance

Adult Services

- All of the ones identified in the question number one above
- Funding for 10-year homeless plan
- Telling Story in terms of costs
- Not in my back yard (NIMBY)
- Public Policy

Investment in DHR's Infrastructure

- Simplify eligibility requirements
- Place Matters
- State grants should be constructed to promote partnership (e.g. rent sharing)
- Reconsider vendors vs. university support

Focus on Critical Service Delivery Issues: Welfare Reform II

- Informal kinship care
- Other flexible uses of funding
- Co-pays for Purchase of Care is too high
- Medical Assistance Dental providers.

Place Matters

- Team decision making with families
- Divert kids from foster care - need to make sure this can be sustained over time
- Need to decide what are the indicators of success for kids in both in-home care and out-of-home care
- Improve access to services through other State agencies (for example children with disabilities)
- Improve access to health and dental health services for foster children – foster parents need to travel cross county or another county to get medical
- Need an agreement between State agencies to put all of our resources together in a flexible manner, to turn the curve on these issues
- Look at legislation for Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement in instances where there has been a previous history of abuse.
- DHR has been under-funded for a long time – this is the most exciting agenda for children we've had in a long time – but without sufficient resources it makes no sense.
- “Place Matters is not new” – we need sustained political will – “no hiring freeze”