

**MINUTES OF THE
CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT PANEL**
Wednesday, July 12, 2006 – 2:00 p.m. – Room W020 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Dan R. Eastman, Senate Chair
Rep. Steven R. Mascaró, House Chair
Sen. Gene Davis
Rep. David Litvack
Rep. Paul Ray

Staff Present:

Ms. Allison Morgan, Policy Analyst
Mr. Thomas R. Vaughn, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Wendy L. Bangerter, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Eastman called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

Rep. Mascaró noted a change staff had made to the minutes.

MOTION: Rep. Litvack moved to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2006 meeting, as amended. The motion passed with Sen. Davis and Rep. Ray absent for the vote.

2. Child Welfare and Substance Abuse

Ms. Lisa-Michelle Church, Executive Director, Department of Human Services, showed a film titled "Mother Superior," a documentary examining methamphetamine (meth) use in Utah, especially among women. The film stated that Utah has the third highest rate in the nation of meth use among women. Ms. Church emphasized the biggest challenge Utah caseworkers have is that many of their clients are meth users and are difficult to treat.

Mr. Duane Betournay, Deputy Director, DCFS (Division of Child and Family Services), discussed the problems and challenges that families face in dealing with meth use. He reviewed the safety issues for children from meth homes posed by abuse, pornography, and physical and mental health problems. He reviewed the outcomes when children are placed in foster care.

Ms. Patti Van Wagoner, Deputy Director, DCFS, discussed how meth has impacted the practice of child welfare from a caseworker's perspective. She explained it is much more difficult to engage families in conversation in order to understand their problems and needs, interventions are more intrusive, and there is an increase in safety issues for caseworkers and children. Children of meth users are often removed from their homes. She explained that treatment is long, difficult, and hard for patients to sustain. She noted that DCFS has only 12 months for a child over 3 years old and 8 months for a child under 3 years to work toward reunification of a child with his or her family. Social workers try to create a fully functioning team with the family, bringing together all the resources and support that is needed for that family to function. Treatment programs try to address underlying issues that may have originally led to drug abuse.

Mr. Brent Kelsey, Assistant Director, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, gave an overview of services available in Utah and identified programs he would like to see receive further emphasis and

support. He highlighted two programs that have been especially effective: 1) family drug courts and 2) residential and day treatment programs for women and children. Utah's public substance abuse treatment system currently has the capacity to serve about 18,000 clients every year, but there are about 103,000 in need of services. The most recent trend shows there are more women than men coming in for treatment of meth use. Women need more mental health services and there is also a higher incidence of physical and sexual abuse. He noted that because women usually have custody of their children, daycare needs should be provided so that mothers will avail themselves of treatment. Mr. Kelsey said that drug and alcohol use should be treated as healthcare issues; the level of collaboration between law enforcement, DCFS, the judiciary, and treatment providers should be expanded; more capacity for treating women should be developed; and science-based prevention services in the community should be expanded.

Mr. Betournay reiterated DCFS's goals to take advantage of available treatment and resources, live within reunification time frames, keep families together during treatment, get drug courts to focus on children's as well as parents' needs, include the family voice in kinship issues, and face challenges in case work.

Sen. Davis suggested that the panel continue its discussion of substance abuse and child welfare at the September meeting.

3. Interim Study Schedule

Mr. Tom Vaughn presented the following background materials for this agenda item:

- "Authority and Duties of the Child Welfare Legislative Oversight Panel"
- "Reports Due to the Child Welfare Legislative Oversight Panel"
- "Bills Passed Related to Child Welfare, 2006 Annual General Session and Third Special Session"
- "Bills Not Passed Related to Child Welfare, 2006 Annual General Session and Third Special Session"

MOTION: Sen. Davis moved that the remainder of the annual reports due to the panel for 2006 be submitted in writing. The motion passed unanimously with Rep. Mascaro absent for the vote.

Sen. Eastman indicated that sponsors of upcoming bills regarding child welfare will be invited to present their bills before the Panel in October. The panel members discussed other issues they would like to consider at future meetings.

4. Other Business/Adjournment

MOTION: Sen. Davis moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Rep. Mascaro absent for the vote.

Chair Eastman adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.