

Running Head: CASE STUDY ON OKLAHOMA DHS PINNACLE PLAN

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Case Study on Oklahoma DHS Pinnacle Plan

Student’s Name:

Institution:

Date:

Abstract

Oklahoma DHS Pinnacle Plan's main purpose is to enhance the child welfare system. The Plan has faced myriad of challenges in offering children the right welfare child. Thus, the case study is aimed at establishing some of these challenges which include abuse of children, since they were placed in an overcrowded as well as understaffed accommodation. The Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan also faces some challenges which include staff turnover thus necessitating other recruitment and training process which costs Oklahoma heavily and the remaining staffs are overloaded leading to a low morale. The method used in the study is a critical review of materials relating to the Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan and the focus of the study is on Point 3 of the DHS Pinnacle Plan. The Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan 3 aims at providing staffs with training and development in order to make employees more effective. Competent staffs are offered support through coordination of training hence enabling them to deliver the best service. The case study found out that Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan has numerous initiatives that are aimed at improving the condition of child welfare.

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Oklahoma DHS Pinnacle Plan

Oklahoma finalized its historic plan that aimed at transforming its child welfare system and since then it has been experienced significant changes. However, there have been some obstacles that have been experienced. The ultimate success of the Pinnacle plan relies on hard work, financial resources, shared commitment as well as institutional creativity. Back in 2012, the Oklahoma Department of Human services (DHS) proposed the pinnacle plan to transform the welfare services of the child (Oklahoma& Oklahoma Child Care Services, 2012). The plan was as a result of a settlement arrangement that was reached in a federal class action process.

The system that existed before was faulted due to causing abuse of children through placing them in overcrowded as well as short- staffed accommodations. The system further failed to provide secure as well as long term placements amongst other concerns. As a result of this the settlement agreements led to appointment of three independent experts who were given official authority to approve the plan of the agency as well as monitor its execution (Oklahoma& Oklahoma Child Care Services, 2012). The approved pinnacle plan sets out five year roadmap of important obligations. Despite the agency efforts to improve the welfare system of the child there is still an increase in the number of abused as well as neglected children under the DHS. The case study will mainly focus on the pinnacle point three.

Challenges of the Pinnacle Plan

For the past years, the turnover of staffs has been recorded at a higher rate with most people describing it as a disaster. The higher rate of turnover has led to increase in caseload and workload for the remaining staffs. More time is also wasted in posting a vacant position, recruiting a competent person and also much time as well as resources is consumed while training a fresh child welfare staff. Remaining staffs face unreasonable assignments and higher

caseloads. For example, with 1,100 child welfare experts in the state at the end of 2012 and only 500 fresh experts being trained raises a concern on their efficiency (Oklahoma. Dept. of Human Services, 2012). The child welfare specialists that agreed to participate in a survey indicated that their supervisors are supportive as well as rewarding however they indicated that work demands as unreasonable, that they are being underpaid hence low morale and this has contributed greatly to some of them leaving. Some would return to OKDHS if the above working conditions are changed.

Methods

The method adopted involved a critical review of the content relating to the Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan. Critical analysis was used to consider the claims of various scholars. The methods provided ideas for what to look for as well as how to apply the information, and to determine what to be incorporated in the case study report. Various articles were visited to gather information relevant to the case study. The identified articles were analyzed to get the required results for the study.

Results of the Case Study

The pinnacle point three aimed at increasing the number of workforce, minimize turnover as well as continue to enhance experience level. This further aimed at making sure that all staffs are responsible enough for the daily work of child well-being cases. In order to attain progressive results for children's well-being as well as families it was important to hire qualified, trained and resourced workforce that was approved by the society and overseen by the agency. A hundred fresh staff positions were created in November/December 2013 and filled (Oklahoma.

Dept. of Human Services, 2012). It was found necessary to accelerate training and hiring of fresh workers for the purpose of meeting the timeline for caseload standards.

The conducted analysis indicated the need to employ as well as train 78 staffs per every month for the next ten months so that they can receive the training and be in a position to perform their duties by the next summer (Oklahoma, 2013). This covered the number of staffs who are lost every month due to regular turnover and also covers staffs fresh vacancies that had to be allocated. Starting 25th February, 2013, thirty more staff vacancies were announced after every two weeks till an additional of 100 fresh staff vacancies were posted as well as filled. Moreover, to fresh staff positions 60 fresh supervisor vacancies were posted for the purpose of attaining the 1:5 supervisor/ worker ratio as well as extra supervisor vacancies were announced to maintain the extra staff vacancies.

Additionally, 126 Child Welfare Assistant vacancies were announced. The above vacancies played a great role in minimizing the administrative burden on child welfare staffs. By the start of July 2013, there was an additional 95 vacancies that were posted. It has recorded an increase in the rate of applications for the posted positions which was promising (Oklahoma. Dept. of Human Services, 2012). The creation of fresh positions was important in meeting the standards and in enhancing hiring and also retention of the staffs. There are several initiatives that are ongoing that include evaluating the present turnover trends as well as creation of a targeted hiring campaign for child Welfare experts.

A hand on Testing (HOT) was implemented in September 2012 for the entire fresh graduates. It was necessary for them to pass the assessment before a caseload task could be allocated to them. Most of them have passed however, 9 staffs have failed in completing the assessment even after being under remedial training as well as extra testing chances hence they

did not get retained as employees (Oklahoma, 2013). There were four additional trainers who got recruited to help with basic training in order to allow the increase of fresh staffs.

There was introduction of new smart phones for the child welfare staffs as well as their supervisors back in June 2013 (Oklahoma, 2013). The smart phones were found to be of great help to the field staffs for instance, for accessing emails, taking pictures and accessing internet. This has been very helpful to the child welfare staffs as well as supervisors since most of their assignments are performed in the field. In 2012, the salaries for child welfare staffs were revised and adjusted accordingly.

Providing support to a proficient and committed workforce

OKDHS aimed at becoming more effective in hiring and selection process for fresh staffs, evaluating caseload standards as well as providing professional support for the current child welfare workforce (Oklahoma, 2013). OKDHS has become more committed when it comes to training and on-boarding of fresh employees. They further aim to become more effective in coordination of all child welfare training in order to make it consistent as well as rationalized in the entire state. Moreover, it is critical to provide support for employees at risk of secondary trauma connected with child welfare assignments.

Training and workforce development

Fresh child welfare experts are required to complete the training that is regarded as CORE. Training academies that offer this training are 14 of them that were scheduled in 2013 which lasts for three and half weeks. However, a child welfare expert is first put under experience for about four weeks on task contributing as well as pre- CORE obligations.

Whenever there are no delays child welfare expert is expected to graduate within ten weeks of their recruitment date (Oklahoma, 2013).

After completion of the skills test fresh experts are assigned a percentage of the caseload standard in the following criteria; 25% is upon successful completion of CORE as well as complete skills test, the second being 50% half a year of effective work and finally 100% after nine months of positive work. The graduated task of caseload depends on approval of the co-neutral. OKDHS monitors CORE and the whole of its pre-service as well as in-service training program to make sure that training is in line with Pinnacle Plan Commitments (Oklahoma. Dept. of Human Services, 2012). OKDHS aims at reviewing its supervisory training program and make sure its assimilation of Pinnacle Plan Commitments. The improved training supervisory program will be established upon the endorsement of the Co-Neutrals and applied in the entire state.

Initiatives for Pinnacle point 3

Some of the standards for caseloads that are assigned to the general public as well as private agency child welfare workforce include performing child welfare task which OKDHS oblige to attain by 2014 and maintain for the life of the developed plan (Marian, n.d). The Co-Neutrals will be responsible for setting benchmarks that are used to implement these particular standards following the endorsement of the plan. For example there will be no more than 12 open inquiries or assessment per staff.

OKDHS will improve practice with trauma- informed initiatives which will need 5 years prior its implementation. The first year will involve initiatives that focus on secondary trauma of the child welfare employee (Marian, n.d). These particular supports are presently being verified at six lab sites to establish the most appropriate approaches prior implementing nationwide. OKDHS will aim at recruiting graduates who possesses social work as well related degrees.

Some of the initiative to ensure that more people take courses in master of social work will be to present advantages of possessing it this will done through welfare supervisor's conference (Oklahoma. Dept. of Human Services, 2012). They will utilize university staff to present individual staffs with information regarding the course admission criteria as well as process of application, and a similar effort will be undertaken the entire year in order to ensure that existing employees advances their level of education to make them more efficient.

OKDHS will join hand with Community Work Experience (CWEP) to explain to the nationwide potential degree holders and masters students from all the universities about the task of an OKDHS child welfare expert and recruit a membership in CWEP (Marian, n.d). Another important imitative for Pinnacle plan point 3 is that in 1st September, 2012 OKDHS developed a tracking system to record all assignments allocated, employee experience, turnover, as well as complexity of cases. Co- Neutrals was responsible for reviewing and approving the tracking system (Oklahoma, 2013). On the basis of the internal assignment analysis OKDHS requested 100 extra child welfare experts' vacancies within the first year and might decide to allocate employee vacancies as well as resources.

The division director of child welfare focuses on recruitment as well as on- boarding plans for child welfare specialists. OKDHS further continues to refine the Computerized Applicant Management System that helps in streamlining work flow as well as guaranteeing user- friendly tracking of operation. By September 1, 2012 OKDHS training for fresh experts in child welfare field required positive accomplishment of a performance capability assessment before to caseload task (Oklahoma& Oklahoma Child Care Services, 2012).

From 2012 there was a proposal for fresh administrative support to the experts in this field of child welfare. From 1st January, 2013 OKDHS ceased the use of secondary assignments

in counties that are considered contiguous as well as other districts where sufficient resources are available (Marian, n.d). These exceptions for secondary tasks were meant to be rare and could be allowed on a case by case basis if only a strong relationship exists between the welfare expert and child would be harmful if terminated.

July 1st 2013 OKDHS improved processes for choosing the experts in field of child welfare and supervisors through incorporation of genuine profession previews and selection aspects that are supported by workforce research. By 1st January OKDHS eliminated the use of secondary tasks nationwide except in rare as well as unusual scenarios for example, children located outside the state (Oklahoma, 2013). By September 2014 OKDHS will make the number of available slots double for child welfare employees that are from 24 to 48 for those one to attend the interdisciplinary training program in child abuse and neglect. For the past years Oklahoma has found some difficulties in attracting staffs due to low salaries but there has been a projection of increase of salaries for coming years as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Projected increase of child welfare specialist salaries

Job Title	SFY 2012	SFY 2013	SFY 2014	SFY 2015	SFY 2016	SFY 2017
CWS II	\$2,624.33	\$2,821.15	\$2,990.42	\$3,124.99	\$3,218.74	\$3,307.26
CWS III	\$2,894.18	\$3,111.24	\$3,336.81	\$3,570.39	\$3,802.46	\$4,040.11
CWS IV	\$3,466.10	\$3,726.06	\$3,986.88	\$4,226.09	\$4,437.40	\$4,603.80

Source: Marian (n.d).

Conclusion

From the case study above it is evident that the Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan has been faced with numerous challenges which include high rate of employee turnover due to overloads as well as the remaining staffs are allocated unreasonable assignments to accomplish. The turnover costs the Oklahoma DHS in the sense that they need to hire other staffs which takes to time to recruit and train them in order to perform their duties effectively. The Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan point 3 aims at increasing the number of staffs and minimize rate of turnover.

Positions have been posted over the years to ensure that enough workforces are attained. Oklahoma DHS has provided support to a talented and committed workforce and they further offer training and development to the child welfare specialists. There are numerous initiatives that have been brought about by the Oklahoma DHS pinnacle plan point three which includes; explaining to the degree holder as well as masters holders in social work the benefits of child welfare, another initiative includes development of a tracking system that records all assignments allocated, employee experience, turnover, as well as complexity of cases, enhanced process of selecting experts in the field of child welfare among other initiatives.

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