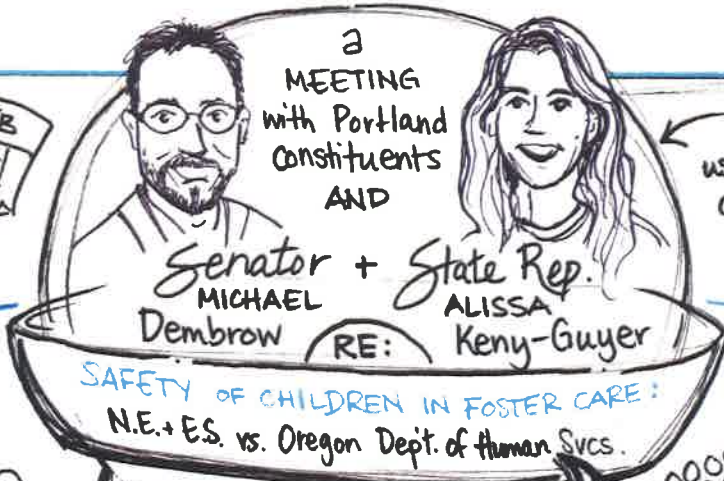


FEB. 28, 2015
5-6:30 PM
@ Caldera
Public House

PORTLAND
OREGON



We asked them to meet w/ us as members of the jury + concerned citizens following a trial in Dec. 2014, where we found DHS vicariously responsible for abuse in a foster home. We awarded the max \$ amount to the kids.

MEETING OVERVIEW

- LS welcome
- Brief overview of the case + trial
- Jurors' insights/concerns
- Open discussion
- Lawyers' insights/concerns
- Questions
- Ideas for tackling the issues

TRIAL BACKGROUND

The state failed to protect these foster kids in state custody...
DHS isn't at fault for the abuse that occurred...
citizens of Multnomah County to hear civil case...
LAWYERS REP. KIDS
LAWYERS REP. ST. OF OR

IN SHORT:

These kids... in this lady's home were abused by a certified OR foster parent
Never should have been certified (+re-certified) → PAST RED FLAG
Over-limit # of kids → "exceptions" made
Multiple calls to abuse hotline go "unfounded" = no investigation
Finally... resulted in invest. → confession eventually charged with a felony in a criminal case
JURY: We find DHS liable for not protecting the kids + award (in total) \$4.1 million in economic + non-econ damages for these 2 kids.



SURPRISING INSIGHTS FROM THE GROUP

Even after 8 calls to the hotline (of various severity), this foster mom was still being considered to be these kids' "adoptive placement" (until the final call that led to an investigation...)
Most kids in this situation (that have been abused) wouldn't typically have a civil trial, but their dependency attorney went beyond to seek legal representation...
AND... DHS never took responsibility (admitted wrong doing) though they eventually "founded" allegations + foster mom pled guilty to felony...
As a mandatory reporter, I've made 15 calls to the hotline with only 1 resulting in an investigation...
We got the call that 'they' had kids in need of placement... (DHS) we only had 4 of 6 weeks of edu. but they made an exception...
The court-apt. attorney for kids aren't responsible for seeking criminal or civil remedies for kids → nobody is...
... unfortunately, there are BIG budget cuts to DHS - (millions!?)
LAWYER
TEACHER
OTHER LAWYER
FOSTER DAD
SENATOR

RECURRING ISSUES

- + DHS Failures
- ▶ Inadequate investigation of calls to the Child Abuse Hotline → too many "closed at screenings"
- ▶ Evaluating foster parents is too lax → desperate times = desperate measures
- ▶ Too many 'exceptions' made to fill over-demand needs
- ▶ Case workers are consistently overloaded → + put into desperate situations, esp. when emergency placements are needed

GROUP IDEAS

- ▶ RESTORE emergency receiving center - make it TRI-COUNTY to save \$
- ▶ ENSURE foster parents have:
 1. Completed the education + prove comprehension
 2. Have access to respite care services
- ▶ PROPOSE budget ↑ for new programs
- ▶ AUDIT past cases + 'at-risk' certifications
- ▶ INCREASE pay for foster parents + certification requirements (treat it like a school teacher role) vs. a 'labor of love'.
- ▶ REDEFINE what it means to be a foster parent! - create outreach programs = ↑ foster homes



In multiple cases, foster parents have been "certified" + re-certified without thorough background checks (police reports, history of mental instability, poor job history, + immigration status, etc)

WE CAN DO BETTER

LOOMING QUESTIONS

- Q. WHAT happens when there is a call to the Child Abuse Hotline?
A. DHS either substantiates claim and opens an investigation → visits reporter -OR- allegations of abuse or neglect are "unfounded" + "closed at screening"
- Q. WHO advocates for the children in cases like this... when they are harmed in foster care?
A. The legislature has never addressed this... in this case, the kid's state-appointed attorney went beyond her obligations to seek legal representation... BUT there's no mandate in place...

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

FOR STARTERS:

- JOIN the MAILING LIST → Stay informed!
- Go To: www.oregonlegislature.gov → ADD YOUR EMAIL ADDY HERE
- /dembrow for Senator Dembrow
- OR /keny-guyer for St. rep. Keny-guyer
- VISIT the OREGON Legislative session
- SHARE your STORY! → In-person testimony helps motivate ACTION!

ALSO - Check out: -budget sub-committee -human services listserve