

TO: Juvenile Welfare Board Members
FROM: James E. Mills, Executive Director
Browning Spence, Director, Strategic & Community Planning *HBS*

Requested Action

The Board is requested to adopt a policy concerning public expression of advocacy positions by the Community Councils, Children Services Committee and any other affiliated groups.

Options

1. Establish policy that requires Board approval of all public communication by affiliated group.
2. Establish policy that requires Council/Committee notification of Board of intent to release public communication that has met prior approval by the affiliated group and notification of staff.
3. Establish policy that public comments require approval by a Council/Committee majority vote as reflected in their minutes and request for staff to review position as it relates to current Board policy.
4. Do not add public policy communication statement.
5. Any other action the Board decides.

Recommended Action

1. Adopt recommended policy:
 - a. Councils, Committees or Task Forces affiliated with JWB may express a collective opinion using their JWB committee affiliation to the media as long as it clearly and accurately reflect a previously adopted position of the particular affiliated Committee/Council in their minutes. Communications shall be subject to prior review by The Executive Director (or his designee) concerning consistency with JWB policy. Any circumstance, which is determined to not meet this standard or otherwise create a potential for misunderstanding, shall be referred to the Board for its approval prior to release.
 - b. In the absence of Board approval, members would be free to express their opinions as individuals.

Source of JWB Funds

Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact

None

Narrative

At the June 2001 meeting the Board expressed concerns regarding the public expression of advocacy positions by the Community Councils and Children's Service Committees. The Board members' concerns were related to how the general public could discern between the statements of the affiliated groups from a statement by the full Board. Staff conducted an extensive policy review and found no policy that directly addresses this concern. Staff submitted proposed policy in the July 2001 meeting. Following Board review and discussion of the suggested policy, Staff was asked to present the proposed policy to the JWB Children's Services Committees and Community Councils for input. After the July 2001 meeting, the following steps were taken:

- The Executive Director communicated with all members of the JWB Community Councils and Children's Services Committees requesting their participation in developing a policy for communication that assures that the policies and positions of the Board are clearly and accurately stated and communicated to the public.
- Staff communicated with the Committees and Councils requesting them to include discussion of the proposed communication policy as an agenda item in their July and /or August meeting.
- Staff facilitated a meeting with officers and designated representatives of the Children's Services Committees and Community Councils to allow for open dialogue and to gather information in order to develop recommendations to the Board.
- Minutes of discussion from the Combined Children's Service Committee/Community Council Executive Committee meeting and minutes from the meetings of the respective community involvement groups were reviewed.
- Staff recommended that action on this item be scheduled for the October 2001 Board meeting to provide an opportunity for participation in this planning process by all of the impacted affiliated groups.

Following the above-mentioned steps staff reached the following conclusions:

1. There was not a unanimous consensus among the affiliated groups regarding a position.
2. Of the proposed policy options presented at the July Board meeting (attachment #2), representatives from several committees suggested a more positive version of Proposed Policy 5.8-1 Public Statements Option

4.

Where there was some agreement among representatives of the affiliated groups regarding option 4, modification includes: (a.) media only application (b) language that was more positive in tone and (c) the affiliated groups went further than proposed policy related to Board approval by requiring council/committee approval.

3. Representatives also agreed that a disclaimer included in selected communications could enable the general public to discern between the statements of the groups while a disclaimer on all items produced by the committees would indicate disavowal of community involvement in the planning and advocacy process at JWB. Any such disclaimer should be a positive statement and reflect the Board's valuing of its volunteers.
4. Committees suggested that any change to existing practice should be respectful of First Amendment rights.

This memo includes two attachments. Attachment 1 is the recommended policy change; Attachment 2 is the list of options contained in the July Board Memo. The Community Councils and Childrens Service Committees reviewed these options for discussion and input prior to developing the proposed policy that is submitted in this memo. The proposed policy would be located in Section 5, Policies and Procedures for JWB Committees.

Staff Resource Person: Dorothy J. Whitlock

PROPOSED POLICY

5.8 As a public body the Juvenile Welfare Board must assure that there is a clear public understanding of the policies of the Board and positions that may be taken by its affiliated bodies.

5.8-1 Public Statements:

Councils, Committees or Task Forces affiliated with JWB may express a Collective opinion using their JWB committee affiliation to the media as long as it clearly and accurately reflects a previously adopted position of the particular affiliated Committee/Council in their minutes. Communications shall be subject to prior review by The Executive Director (or his designee) concerning consistency with JWB policy. Any circumstance, which is determined to not meet this standard or otherwise create a potential for misunderstanding, shall be referred to the Board for its approval prior to release.

5.8-2 In the absence of Board approval, members would be free to express their opinions as individuals.

5.8-3 This section is applicable only to those affiliated bodies created under this Board policy.

PROPOSED POLICY

5.8 As a public body the Juvenile Welfare Board must assure that there is a clear public understanding of the policies of the Board and positions that may be taken by its affiliated bodies.

5.8-1 Public Statements:

OPTIONS:

1. No Council, Committee or Task Force affiliated with the Juvenile Welfare Board may express a collective opinion using their JWB affiliation to any agency or media without prior approval of the Board. OR
2. No Council, Committee or Task Force affiliated with the Juvenile Welfare Board may express a collective opinion using their JWB affiliation to any media without prior approval of the Board. (Limits prior approval to media only.) OR
3. No Council, Committee or Task Force affiliated with the Juvenile Welfare Board may express a collective opinion using their JWB affiliation to any agency or media unless that opinion clearly and accurately reflects a previously adopted policy of the JWB. Any communications not meeting this test shall be subject to prior review by staff. Any circumstance, which is determined to not meet this standard or otherwise create a potential for misunderstanding, shall be referred to the Board for its approval prior to release. OR
4. No Council, Committee or Task Force affiliated with the Juvenile Welfare Board may express a collective opinion using their JWB affiliation to the media unless that opinion clearly and accurately reflects a previously adopted policy of the JWB. Any communications not meeting this test shall be subject to prior review by staff. Any circumstance, which is determined to not meet this standard or otherwise create a potential for misunderstanding, shall be referred to the Board for its approval prior to release. (Limits prior approval to media only.)

5.8-2 Any letterheads, flyers or other communications shall carry the following disclaimer:

"Unless otherwise stated, the individual or collective statements by JWB affiliated bodies does not constitute an endorsement of the activities or opinions by the Juvenile Welfare Board."

ATTACHMENT 2 (from July 12, 2001 Board Meeting Item II.F.)

5.8-3

This section is applicable only to those affiliated bodies created under this Board policy.