

Adoption Advisory Council
Approved Minutes
October 5, 2007, 10:00 am-3:00 pm
Eastland Suites, 1801 Eastland Drive, Springfield, IL

MEMBERS PRESENT		MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF PRESENT
Donsetta Blakely	Dorothy McGhee	Patricia Cooper	Ray Gates
Dr. Robert Bloom	Kate Monte	Mary Debose	Vanessa James
Kathy Casey	Lisa Myles	Gwenn Eyer	Terry McGlothlin
DeAudrey Davis	Elizabeth Richmond	Joyce Loy	
Diane Dominguez	Penelope Ford for Jackie Sharp Akins	Judy Pence	
Betty Johnson	Karen Wardlaw	Gina Samuels	
James Jones	Mark Werner	Michele Seidl	
Patricia Kelso		Gretchen Schulert	GUESTS
Susanne Loss		Carol Sheley	Carol Lichtensteiger
Alan Marcus		Ron Tyler	Ramon McCray
Dave Matthews		Kim Wheelock	Marilyn Panichi
Krista McCoy		Linda Wolter	

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. New members in attendance were Dr. Robert Bloom and DeAudrey Davis.

NEW BUSINESS

Report from Office of Service Intervention - June Dorn

June joined the meeting via conference call. She gave an update on the new program, Maintaining Adoptive Connections, and the agencies (Kaleidoscope, Kids Hope United and Center for Family Services) doing outreach to the families that have 13-16 year olds that are being called the Adoption Preservation Assessment and Linkage Services (APALS). She said they met last Wednesday to get feedback from them, and other providers that are becoming active this month joined the meeting later. The providers are enthusiastic and family response is mostly receptive. There have been a number of situations where the families are saying the children do not know that they are adopted, and are declining the services. Four or five have gone back to the Cook Post Adoption Unit for subsidy related services. All of the programs reported at the meeting and submitted dot point documents about their programs. They all indicated that they should be up and running by October 15th. They are using a series of forms to review what services families have used. They will all meet again November 14th for more feedback. She said she did receive a proposal from Farm Resource Center to serve the southern region. She is looking into that and should have more details by next meeting. Dave Matthews and Susanne Loss agreed to discuss this with June. June said that additional training will be offered to the providers each month. Karen Taylor is in the middle of doing Core Training and offered to invite these providers to the training for the two days when they will be covering post adoption issues. In November respite providers will come to the meeting so the agencies can become familiar with them.

The evaluation tool that is being used is a series of forms and tables that UIC constructed, similar to the kind of chart used when UIC did their prior survey, asking what involvement families have had with a variety of services and how that went, and to evaluate the current needs and issues that need to

be addressed. Those programs can link to community services, the post adoption unit, the new MAC programs or adoption preservation. June will bring some of these forms and the dot point sheet to a future meeting.

Dave Matthews asked if there is anything to provide services to older caregivers in areas other than Cook County. He said there are a couple cases in Southern Illinois of terminally ill parents and no resources. June said Family Matters serves primarily Cook County. The OIG's office provided training on older caregiver issues, and Barb Sittler from OIG continues to go to regions offering training around that, but there is no current program or funding to create similar program models statewide. June will talk to Dana Corman regarding the cases in Southern Region to see if she can assist with those situations, and will contact Dave.

Report from Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

Annual Ethics Training for Council - Ray asked council members to review the Ethics training material in their packets, and to sign and return the acknowledgement page to Terry. Council members will be given time over the lunch hour to complete this.

2008 Caregiver Trainings - Ray said the committee has planned the agenda for the institutes, similar to the way it has been done in the past from 9am-3pm. The institutes are tentatively scheduled for Chicago, Peoria, Champaign and Sterling/Rock Falls. They are also working on the program for the 2-day conferences, one in Lisle and the other in Fairview Heights. The conferences will open at 1pm Friday and finish mid afternoon Saturday. There will be 3-4 blocks of five workshops, serving up to 250 caregivers. There will be a Save the Date article in Volume 6 of the Illinois Families Now & Forever that comes out in November, and then registration material in Volume 1 in January 2008. Kate Monte and Susanne Loss serve on the planning committee as representatives of the AAC.

Adoption Month Materials – Ray asked council members to look at page 10 of their packets, which was a copy of the poster that was used last year for Adoption Month. The poster will be updated for use this year. Council members decided to revise the wording on the poster, and a committee formed over the lunch hour to rewrite it.

Partnering With Parents Initiative – Ray said this initiative is in response to a federal review that found that DCFS failed to effectively involve parents. Parent advisory councils and parent information fairs have been created around the state. There are currently three councils in Cook County, councils in Rockford, Peoria, and St. Clair County, and plans to begin one in Champaign. The councils are formed directly from information fairs that are held in these communities. An information fair is currently being planned for Springfield on November 9th, with a council soon formed from that group as well. Administrative staff work together to plan these events. The Information Fairs host 35-50 staffed exhibits including agency providers, community providers and organizations that serve our parents. Presentations are given by parents, social workers, psychologists, and therapists. The parent panels tell stories about their experience, with messages of hope. The panelists are typically reunified, in process of reunification, or from intact families.

Committee Reports:

Post Adoption Workgroup - Mark Werner

Mark reported that they met and discussed issues including adoption preservation and the new services offered by SOC providers. He summarized their discussion:

*Elizabeth wrote a letter to the Director to request adoption specific training for the SOC providers because most were used to working with foster rather than adoptive families. Mark said that Director McEwen did assure us that would be done at the last meeting when he attended.

*Make sure adoption preservation stays on the Director's radar. Since there has not been a study on adoption preservation lately, Elizabeth will write a letter asking that adoption preservation programs be included in their research.

*Committee suggested a story be done in the newsletter for Adoption Month to give the adoption preservation program some exposure. Vanessa has not yet connected with a family and asked that anyone who is aware of a successful adoption story where adoption preservation services made an impact on their lives, to contact her. The family would have to be willing to be featured in the newsletter. Kathy Casey suggested contacting the adoption preservation agencies. June Dorn said she recently saw an email that looked like a positive story and she will get it to Vanessa.

Respite Coalition - Written Report

Gwenn could not attend today's meeting, but submitted a written report in member packets, which summarizes the national event that was held in Alabama.

Membership Committee - Mark Werner

Mark said the committee has had difficulty recruiting adoptees from specific regions. In response, the committee recommended, and a motion was made at the last meeting, that six adoptees be appointed, 3 from Cook County and 3 from outside Cook County. ***Diane Dominguez made a motion to accept the committee's recommendation to amend the bylaws to reflect the change. Kathy Casey seconded. The motion carried.*** Alan Marcus will draft the language for the bylaws change.

Mark said the committee has identified two adoptees, Derek Jeske and Roman McCray, and needs to identify two more. He said the council also needs an adoptive parent from Cook Central, preferably an African American male since we lost Ronald Davis and Rev. Art Davis in July.

Adoption Month Planning - Marilyn Panichi

Marilyn said plans with the movie, *Martian Child*, did not work out. Brian Hall worked with New Line Cinema, but they determined that there was content in the film that would not be appropriate for our purpose. Marilyn said she received an email about another movie called *Bella*, with an adoption theme. It is an independent film that won an award at the Toronto Film Festival a couple weeks ago. Brian is working on getting a copy of the movie to preview. The proposal includes screening the movie at a downtown Chicago theatre and recognizing the studio and actors for portraying adoption. The National Council on Adoption already gave them an Excellence in Media award in April. We would need to fill the theatre with adoptive families, ask DCFS Communications Office to handle press releases, supply a local celebrity to host the event and invite dignitaries to attend. Marilyn suggested that we reach out to the Hispanic Community for their involvement.

Ray asked if the council wants the Director at the joint meeting, and if we plan to do anything on that day. His office has reserved two rooms on the 5th floor of 160 N. LaSalle. Elizabeth said that she and Uli Senz, Chair of SWFCAC, had already discussed that they do want the Director to attend.

It was suggested that the Governor and/or Director be invited to the joint meeting to present the proclamation and recognize adoptive parents on the council.

Working Lunch

Council members had a choice to review and sign their Ethics Training during lunch, work with Alan Marcus to draft by law revisions, or work in a group on the language for the adoption month materials.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes of August 3, 2007 Meeting

Mark Werner made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Kate Monte seconded. The motion carried.

Education Benefit for Adopted Youth

Vanessa distributed a copy of new legislation (HR2669) The College Cost Reduction Act of 2007, which affects a student's status when applying for financial aid. This new legislation changed the language on the FAFSA form, so that if the student was an orphan, in foster care or a ward of the court at any time the individual was 13 years of age or older, they can apply as an independent student. This does not go into effect until 2009. There will be an article in Volume VI, the adoption pages, of the IL Families Now & Forever.

Elizabeth suggested that we ask Cynthia Moreno to address this at the joint meeting.

Bylaws Revisions

Alan presented the following proposed revisions to the bylaws:

Article II – Membership

(d) Delete “Adults who were adopted as children. There shall be at least one from each DCFS administrative region.” Replace with: “Adults who were adopted as children; 3 of whom shall be appointed from Cook County and 3 of whom shall be appointed from counties other than Cook.”

Article V – Quorum

(1) After “All business of the AAC meetings and its subcommittees shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order”, add “The Chair(s) of the council may, at their discretion and with approval of the council, appoint a parliamentarian, who shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate compliance.”

Kathy Casey made a motion to accept these bylaws revision that Alan drafted. Kate Monte seconded. The motion carried.

Adoption Month Materials Revision

Kathy Casey presented the following revised language for the Adoption Month poster:

“Thousands of families and individuals have chosen to create new families through adoption. Please join us this month and all year long as we celebrate and support adoptive families. Schools, faith organizations, community groups and you can make a difference in the life of a child by offering encouragement and support to adoptive families”.

Plan Agenda/Speakers for Next and Future Meetings

- * Kathy said the lunch group came up with Plan B as the Director coming to the meeting and have cake to celebrate Adoption Month.
- * June will give update on new programs
- * Ask one of the new providers to come and report on what they are doing.
- * Rule 401 follow up

- * Rough draft of Vanessa's article regarding the education benefit/financial aid form
- * Case rotation – Krista said that agencies are taking cases so they don't get a hit, but they don't have homes for them and the children are sitting in shelters until they come up with a home for them. There are also a huge case of Burgos cases, that require Spanish Speaking foster parents, and they are also sitting in shelters for weeks. She said we need to go back to matching based on the needs of the children and the abilities of the foster parents. She also said when an IA reports that a family prognosis is poor or extremely guarded for reunification, concurrent planning should be considered immediately. Jim reminded the council that this was done in response to deficiencies in the federal review process in the area of reunification and keeping children in their communities and schools. Jim Jones suggested we bring in someone to address these issues before taking to the Director.
 - How many kids are in a shelter and what is their length of stay?
 - What is the functionality of the child?
 - What are the special educational needs of the children, and are they being met?
- * Training Update/Where are we on rolling out the formal reunification training for foster parents

Marilyn received notice from Brian Hall that he was faxing a confidentiality form back to the movie company and would be receiving a DVD to review. Marilyn will send out information on when the movie would be shown. Marilyn said after viewing the movie they would pursue finding community partners and determine what could be done.

Kate Monte made a motion to adjourn. Mark Werner seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.