

**ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Friday, December 3, 2004, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Hawthorne Suites, 1 Lyon Court, Bloomington, IL**  
**MINUTES (Approved as Written February 4, 2005)**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>DCFS Staff</b>
Donsetta Blakely	Dr. Felicia Blasingame	Janise Alston
Kathy Casey	Patricia Cooper	Michael Byrd
Sue Cianci	Ronald Davis	June Dorn
Arthur Davis	Gwenn Eyer	Ray Gates
Mary Debose	Brian Hall	Vanessa James
Diane Dominguez	Tammy Hay	Terry McGlothlin
Vance Johnson	Jeanne Howard	Judy Pence
James C. Jones	Barbara Jones-Green	
Marianne Kelm	Susanne Loss	
Joyce Loy	Bernadine Spitz	<b>Guests</b>
Dave Matthews	Shannabeth Stein	Cindy Backstein
Krista McCoy	Cleo Terry	
Gina Miranda		
Marilyn Panichi		
Elizabeth Richmond		
Gretchen Schulert		
Terry Solomon		
Kim Wheelock		
Melinda Woods Lis		

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Elizabeth Richmond & James Jones, Co-Chairs, opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Elizabeth asked that each of the new members introduce themselves. New members present were Kathy Casey, Sue Cianci, Marianne Kelm, Joyce Loy, and Gina Miranda.

Marilyn Panichi announced that AICI nominated Diane Dominguez' family for a 2004 Adoption Excellence Award and they won.

**Reports on SWFCAC/YAB/CWAC - Michael Byrd**

Michael announced that he would now be reporting on two other committees - the Confidential Intermediary Advisory Council (CIAC), and the Child & Family Services Advisory Council (CFS).

**SWFCAC**

Michael reported that the SWFCAC met November 19th in Chicago. The Adoption Advisory Council joined the meeting from 8:30-10:00. Rolando Palacios from the Center for Economic Progress talked to the group about the Adoption Tax Credit. Questions on the Adoption Tax Credit can be addressed to:

Rolando Palacios, Assistant Director, Midwest Tax Clinic, Center for Economic Progress, 29 E. Madison Street, Suite 910, Chicago, Illinois 60602  
Direct Line (312) 630-0284; Phone (312) 252-0280 Ext.284; Fax (312) 252-0285  
E-mail rpalacios@centerforprogress.org; Web www.centerforprogress.org

### CIAC

Michael said that a Confidential Intermediary is a person who by order of the IL court has access to various adoption related records and other confidential information not generally available to the public in order to identify and locate the birth relative of someone petitioning to make this contact. If the sought after relative is located, the CI facilitates the mutually desired communication or contact as provided by statute, while maintaining the confidentiality of all parties. Each CI is an independent contractor. Midwest Adoption Center does the training and oversight of the program. The group's goal will be to meet only twice a year. Gretchen said the Confidential Intermediary provision was added to Illinois law in 1990.

### YAB

The youth met November 12-14. They reviewed purpose/objectives of the board officers, provided board officer training, and set their goals. They are working on recommendations to the Department, for example, because of concerns regarding caseworkers' lack of knowledge about services and special programs available to youth in care, they identified a need for ongoing training on this issue. Issues that will be focused on will include education, employment, policy, and Driver's License/State IDs. When these recommendations are drafted they will be shared with the other councils.

Dr. Sharon Latiker presented on several programs sponsored by DETS. She reported that raising the scholarship amount is under legislation. Now is the time to go and register youth for free tutoring services under the No Child Left Behind Act. The Educational Training Voucher (ETV) worth \$5,000 for 16-23 year olds has currently been extended. Norman Brown presented on the Residential monitoring unit. Outreach to solicit youth membership from around the state continues in every region. The Northern regional YAB is preparing to work on the nominations for the Advocate of the Year Award and the Foster Parent of the Year Awards.

### CWAC

They met on November 17th and the Director gave a report on a conceptual framework for service reform around the Department. He mentioned the Lifetime Approach Plan, which came from the PIP plan and areas that Chapin Hall documented around the needs of older wards. Terry McGlothlin said she would send a copy of the DCFS website report to council members.

There was discussion on the Children with Sexual Behavior Problems (CSBP) training. The draft curriculum and policy is complete and more information will be forthcoming.

The Public Education subcommittee is looking to get some supportive messaging and help private agencies engender community support to recruit homes but also to tell the

community that there are ways to help other than being a foster parent. Their goal is to raise community awareness about child welfare needs.

### **CFS**

They are one of four groups under the Citizen's Review Panel. The Child & Family Services Advisory Council will be meeting on December 9th with presentations on DCFS Education Programs and Independent Living Initiatives by Dr. Sharon Latiker. They plan to do some work on juvenile justice issues with youth in care, and also want to look into post adoption issues.

### **Report from Chief of Office of F.P. Support Services - Ray Gates**

Integrated Assessment - In October of this year IA was rolled out. The Director and some of his management team have been going around the state to DCFS offices and meeting with management staff from the private sector to inform them about the impending rollout of integrated assessment statewide, which is slated to begin January 1. DCFS has been working diligently with community partners who are charged with interviewing, selecting and hiring clinical screeners who are going to be doing the work on the project. Significant progress has been made over the past month. Approximately 15 screeners have been identified for downstate regions through SIU School of Social Work. More are needed in the Champaign and Bloomington areas. Ray said council members who know Licensed Psychologists or Licensed Clinical Social Workers who may be interested to contact Brenda Owen for downstate or Jennifer O'Brien for Cook County at 312/814-4153.

Ray explained that the Integrated Assessment is a process whereby the qualified clinical screener does an in-depth bio-psycho-social assessment to children that have come into care and their parents during their first 45 days in care. They have developed a very lengthy and detailed template that they use to structure the integrated assessment report. They have also developed interview guides to use to interview the children, birth parents and substitute caregivers. The process works as follows: A case is assigned to the screener and the coordinator sends him/her all paper they have on the case. The screener and assigned caseworker meet and set up a time to interview the children, parents and substitute caregiver. The clinical screener conducts the interview, following the interview protocol. The screener then writes the integrated assessment report. It covers all domains in the child's life and the parent's life including extensive histories on the parents going clear back to their childhood. The report also contains a prognosis for the family that the clinical screener develops in conversation with the caseworker and caseworker supervisor as well as very specific recommendations. The screener, caseworker and supervisor have to agree on the report and then it is submitted for approval. One of the immediate objectives is to identify needed services for the child and get those services in place as soon as possible. A long-term objective is to conduct research by looking at the recommendations that are made and then 18 months later check to see if those recommendations were followed, and if not, why not. This can identify the need for resources.

There were questions about who has access to the Integrated Assessment Report. Ray said he would check to see if adoptive parents and post adoption service providers could receive the reports.

Diane Dominguez said she would go to Metropolitan Family Services and ask if she can access the information they have and the services they have provided to her. She will report back at the next meeting.

***Terry Solomon made a motion that CWAC address the issue of adoptive families not being able to get the information they need from the agency and DCFS, and that regular meetings be instituted with case managers to address concerns on an ongoing basis. Dave Matthews seconded the motion. The motion passed.***

### **Channel 5 Report**

Melinda Woods-Lis said that Channel 5 did an investigative report on 1 family that said they adopted a child that started fires. The family said they did not know the child was abused and neglected when placed in their home. Melinda felt that it misrepresented child welfare adoption and she would like to do a response to balance the information. She asked if anyone was interested in working on a response that they talk to her. This will not be an issue the AAC will address.

### **Ethics Training**

Michael Byrd distributed Ethics packages to council members. They were given time to review the packets. Packets and signed forms were returned to Michael. He will handle distributing and collecting remaining packets to council members that were not present.

### **Working Lunch - Sibling Rights Report & CBS News Report on Sibling Rights**

Jim Jones introduced Linda Paul, from Chicago Public Radio, who would be recording this portion of the meeting, to be used only as background noise. Ms. Paul will let Michael know when the broadcast will be on the air and he will let council members know.

Michael gave an update on the Sibling Rights Resolution. The Governor's Joint Task Force on Sibling Rights has been established. Senate President Emil Jones has appointed Senator Mattie Hunter, Vice Chair, Health & Human Services Committee with Representative Annazette Collins appointed by the House to co-chair the Task Force. A minority leader of both the Senate and House will also be appointed. Members are as follows:

**Youth Board Members:** Bryan Austin (Cook South), Samantha Barkus (DS Northern), Luvenia Sims (Central Region), Karina Lopez (Cook Central), Mario O'Neil (DS Southern), Melissa Perez (Cook North). (Melissa is on the Task Force in name only because she has had to pull out because of school commitments.) Jeremy Harvey has been recommended to take Melissa place.

**Youth Board Alumnus:** April Curtis, Children and Family Research Center

Youth Board Coordinators: Kareem Pender (DCFS) and Leslie Welch (CAP)

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council: Andrea Miller, Geraldine Wilson, Gladys Boyd

IL Adoption Advisory Council: Tammy Hay, Elizabeth Richmond, Vance Johnson

Director's Designee: Richard Echevarria, DCFS Investigator/former ward

DCFS Sibling Rights Task Force Coordinator: Michael Byrd

SYAB members Sibling Rights Task Force conference call is scheduled for Sunday, December 12th at 9 a.m. Task Force members can join the call if they want to.

Michael showed a video of Chicago's Channel 2 news report on sibling rights.

Michael said the Task Force is assigned to identify the issues and report back to the legislature and Governor. They will be having public hearings in communities around the state to talk through concerns and to seek solutions.

#### **Criminal Bars Subcommittee Update**

June Dorn said that she consulted with Randy Wells and he does not think DCFS can take on this issue in the current political climate.

#### **University of Texas Study**

Judy Pence brought information on a study being conducted at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work by Ruth G. McRoy, Principal Investigator. They are looking for families to participate in the following studies:

1. Families Who Have Applied to Adopt But Have Discontinued
2. Families Applying to Adopt
3. Adoptive Families

Information sheets were available to anyone interested. Anyone interested in participating or learning more about the study should call the Project Office at 866/471-7372.

#### **Minutes of October 1, 2004 Meeting**

*Rev. Art Davis made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Dave Matthews seconded the motion. The motion carried.*

#### **Enhanced SG Waiver Extension**

June passed out an Enhanced Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Extension Fact Sheet and said it is a draft not to be shared outside the group. The Office of Communications is preparing a formal version. This program is part of the Subsidized Guardianship Waiver. The waiver was continued through 2008 and as part of that continuum an agreement to allow us to try it in three locations that would bring a package of benefits to children who are adopted or in subsidized guardianship after age 14. These benefits were formerly

only available to youth that remained in care. These benefits include Youth In College, Youth In Employment, Education & Training vouchers, life skills training and housing cash assistance. The enhanced package does not include transitional or independent living placement programs. This is a small demonstration program and will only happen in three locations, Cook Central, East St. Louis Subregion and Peoria Subregion. The pilot will be rolling out early summer 2005 and go through 2008, and they expect to include approximately 1500 youth.

### **Update - Subsidy Rules/Procedure/Training - June Dorn**

Training was supposed to start in December; however DCFS has agreed with Region V DHSS to adjust our rule and procedure around the non-ward population for adoption subsidy. For some years a judicial determination had to be made for non-wards to receive an adoption subsidy. Our agreement is that we will remove that language, which will have a significant impact on agencies doing private adoptions. This new piece will have to be integrated into the training. The plan now is to begin the training as early as January if possible.

There were a lot of questions and concerns around the budget impact this would have on the subsidy program.

Jim Jones asked that we invite Liz Yore or her staff attend the next meeting to talk about this agreement and answer questions.

### **Work on Top 3 Priorities for Director**

Jim Jones said that the original agenda for the co-chairs meeting with the Director is on page 3 of the member's packets, and then Melinda outlined the issues that the council had come up with at their last meeting and those on page 7. The co-chairs hope to get enough feedback to send to the Director and get his reaction before the next meeting on February 4th.

Melinda facilitated discussion about the priorities for the co-chairs to take back to the Director.

#### **I. Educate and build capacity of local mental health providers**

\*Refers to children pre and post adoption

\*Yes, we do want to emphasize the need to get appropriate mental health services in place prior to adoption.

\*Donsetta and Claudia Davis are involved with the SASS committee and addressing these issues already. The council can make recommendations and have Claudia and Donsetta take the information back to the SASS Committee. May want to focus on training for mental health providers on foster/adoption issues around mental health.

#### **II. Educate DCFS and POS Staff**

\*Michael reminded the council that the overarching approach is to broaden the General Assembly's understanding of the needs of families post adoption.

- \*Donsetta made a recommendation that the council consider amending Rule 340 to include language about the rights and responsibilities of adoptive parents.
- \*Consider developing an Adoptive Parent Bill of Rights
- \*June said adoption core training is supposed to take place in the Spring.

### III. Educate Parents

- \*Referring to pre-adoptive and post-adoptive parents
- \*Training in all forms - booklets, conferences, etc.
- \*Make additional modules available for adoptive families
- \*Include written training material in with checks or tie into check in some way
- \*Train specific workers to do adoption work
- \*Find a way to motivate adoptive parents to come to training
- \*Recommend adoption sensitive training to adoption workers is main concern

### IV. Restructure Post Adoption Services in Illinois

- \*Who do post-adoptive parents call downstate?
- \*Center for Adoption Studies did survey of over 1,000 adoptive parents identifying issues/needs.
- \*Outreach to adoptive families
- \*Jim asked if Melinda or June know of any other states where they have special waivers, grants or other resources in post adoption areas. June will make an initial call to consult with Birdell Fry, and Ray will set up a conference call before the February meeting and then information can be brought back to the meeting. The following members volunteered to participate on the call: Jim Jones, Mary Debose, Melinda Woods-Lis, Gretchen Schultert, Joyce Loy, Gina Miranda, June Dorn, Marilyn Panichi and Elizabeth Richmond.
- \*Krista, Marilyn & Gretchen will identify current post adoption resources/services such as Midwest Adoption Center, AICI, resources listed on DCFS website, AICI website.

### V. Expand Community Based Level Services Including Educational Advocacy, Support Groups, and Respite Care

- \*Educate workers and reinstate core training main concern.

Melinda will pull information together and send to Terry. Terry will send to council members for feedback by a set date. Elizabeth and Jim will send to Director when final.

Members want to take a very active role in accomplishing some of these things.

Terry will follow up with Joan Langan regarding a group reviewing the existing Adoption Core Training. The following individuals volunteered to participate: Krista, Melinda, Marianne, Kim, Elizabeth, Judy, Marilyn, Dave, Mary, Gretchen, Rev. Davis, Kathy.

The Council will break into groups at the next meeting. Melinda will work with the Post Adoption Group, Elizabeth with Expanding Community Services and Jim with Training.

### **Agenda for Next Meeting/Wrap-Up**

- \*Liz Yore - non-ward subsidy issue
- \*Discuss developing an Adoptive Parent Bill of Rights - Report from Jim & Elizabeth's conversation with the Director, including whether to add adoptive parents to Foster Parent Law via Rule 340.
- \*Diane Dominguez on request for information from Metropolitan
- \*Respite Grant Update
- \*Feedback from conference call to identify potential resources for post adoption
- \*Develop positions for representatives to take to Sibling Rights Task Force
- \*Adoption Core Training - Joan Langan

### **Items to Discuss With Director**

- \*Consider adding score criteria to Rule 340 to address foster parents being trained on mental health needs of foster children pre-adopt.
- \*Can we send training info via letters stuffed with board and subsidy checks
- \*Review Adoption Core Training in January.
- \*Ask management team to send all policy, training, etc. through this council before hand
- \*Look at state of art adoption training vs. what we do.
- \*Adoption Opportunity Grants and other opportunities

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 4th from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at 227 South 7th Street, Springfield.