

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting
Approved MINUTES
July 20, 2007
Eastland Suites – Bloomington, Illinois
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Members Present	Members Absent	DCFS Staff	Guests
Mercedes Ball Angela Barber Donsetta Blakely Gladys Boyd Tonya Duke Debbie Freke Cecil "CR" Garner Robyn Harvey Ruth Jajko Birdia Jenkins Vicky Kline Ramon Nieves Rolinda Robinson Heather Schumacher Uli Senz Patricia Welander Adrienne Welenc Mary White Debra Wilson	Nancy Lauffenberger Leanne Montgomery Antionette Walker Geraldine Wilson	Gwenn Eyer Ray Gates Kathy Herrick Vanessa James Terry McGlothlin	Tina Frier Alexis Smith Tanzella Harris Cindy Backstein

Welcome and Introductions

Uli Senz, SWFCAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. He welcomed everyone, announcing that the meeting would be recorded to assure accurate minutes. He noted that our newly appointed Hospitality Chair, Leanne Montgomery, was not present due to the recent death of her husband. He also shared news that Jerry Welenc was hospitalized en route to the meeting. Adrienne stated that Jerry is undergoing tests and thanked SWFCAC members for their assistance. Uli asked members to introduce themselves, with special attention given to new member introductions.

NEW MEMBERS:

Central Region, Debra Wilson

Debra has been a foster parent for four years and says children have always been a very important part of her life. She is also a Foster Parent Support Specialist in the Central Region. She considers being on the council as another step in her journey of caring for kids and being another voice for foster parents across the state.

Cook Central, Rolinda Robinson

Rolinda has been a licensed foster parent for fifteen years. She is a single adoptive, foster and birth parent of four children ranging in age from 1-15 years. She has fostered teens and medically complex infants. She is currently employed as a licensing representative for Jewish Child & Family Services, and she has also worked as a caseworker and licensing representative at other private agencies in the Chicago area.

Cook South, Angela Barber

Angela Barber has been a Foster Parent for five years. She states that initially she was content with her day-to-day responsibilities as a foster parent, but that the longer she was a foster parent the more her eyes were opened to the problems surrounding the child welfare system. She became proactive and made phone calls and wrote letters to publicize her concerns but the responses she received were less than satisfactory. She became involved on the Cook South Advisory Council and the Statewide Advisory Council because she wants to make a difference for not only her own children, but also for the children of Illinois.

NEW BUSINESS

SWFCAC Service Recognition

Ray presented an award to Vicky Kline for her six years of dedicated service to the SWFCAC.

Report from the Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

Special Service Fees for Foster Parents Doing Reunification Work

**Handouts attached*

Ray suggested that members take the handouts home to review and possibly discuss at a future meeting. He acknowledged Peggy Slater who has been instrumental in promoting and crafting this program.

Conflict of Interest for FY'08 – Signature forms were distributed for members to complete. Ray described the requirement, and Terry collected forms from the members who are required to sign them.

Caregiver Training Institutes/Conferences FY'08 - The first planning meeting was held on Monday, July 16th with representatives from this council (Uli & Adrienne), AAC, APT, each of the regional offices and private agencies. Plans are underway for four caregiver institutes tentatively scheduled in Cook South, Aurora, Fairview Heights and Peoria; and two 2-day conferences - one in Cook County and one downstate. If the budget does not come through as planned, decisions will be made based on the amount that we have to work with

Birth Parent Advisory Councils are now up and running in East St. Louis, Peoria, and Rockford. Champaign will start planning its parent group in August.

Grievance Committee Initiative

Discussion surrounded the involvement of the SWFCAC in overseeing Foster Parent Law grievances. Triplicate grievance forms were suggested, with the first page to be completed by the foster parent and submitted to the agency/region. The second page would be submitted to the Office of Foster Parent Support Services – this page would not list the actual grievance, but it would show that a grievance has been filed. The third page would show the resolution. Ray reminded all that the Council has no statutory or other explicit authority to undertake this work, and he advised against it.

MOTION: Angela Barber moved that the Council consider becoming involved in the development of the initiative outlined by Uli Sens. Seconded by Gladys Boyd, the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes from May 18, 2007 SWFCAC Meeting

Uli asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the April 20th meeting. There were none, and there was no discussion.

MOTION: Ramon Nieves made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Donsetta Blakely seconded. The minutes were approved.

Final Reports to the Director:

There were no final reports to the Director.

The Chair's June and July monthly reports to the Director were included in the packet, and Council members were also copied via mail.

Reunification Initiative (standing agenda item)

Ray stated that the training of trainers for caregiver reunification training had been ready to roll out, but then it was pulled back to add information to the curriculum regarding payment for additional services caregivers provide, the reunification special service fee. Ray noted that this Council has had input into the curriculum.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Cook North, Cecil Garner

No report on the July meeting. They're developing meeting plans to offer training credit to participants. June 12th meeting minutes were included in the packet.

Cook Central, Birdia Jenkins

Jerry Welenc discussed the status of bills pending in the state legislature. Elaine and Edwin Rhodes from the Chicago Area project gave a presentation on the Rites of Passage program, demonstrating ways the program teaches basic life skills. Angela Foster from the Educational Transition Unit provided information about the Statewide Youth Advisory Board, its benefits, and how youth may become involved. Gwen Rodez, Senior Director of the Brown Eyed Girl project talked about their program and how it benefits girls in the Austin, Lawndale, Oak Park, Forest Park and Maywood areas.

Cook South, Angela Barber

Their last meeting addressed their implementation plan. Angela noted that Ray Gates would speak at their August meeting to address some of the concerns the council has about their plan.

Northern Region, Robyn Harvey

The Northern Region council met May 22nd in DeKalb. After a summer break, their meetings will possibly resume in September.

Southern Region, Vicky Kline

A Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner was held for families from the Alton, Edwardsville, and Granite City areas. DCFS has supported the work of two professors from SIU who were doing focus groups with lawyers, judges, foster parents, caseworkers, birth parents, etc. where they have been examining service delivery. Vicky was unsure about any outcomes of these studies.

Central Region, Mary White

The Quincy office offered a Foster Parent Appreciation pizza party, which included a trip to the Children's Museum.

DISCUSSION OF REGIONAL ISSUES

- One of the issues being addressed in Central Region is CAPU and parents not receiving 906's in a timely manner. Slow delivery of the 906 restricts access to many other resources and programs.
- It's taking several months to get licenses cleared
- Some POS foster parents do not know that they received the 3% COLA increase. May need to clarify understanding that the increase is reflected across the board.
- School Credits (\$50 vouchers) aren't being distributed to foster parents.
- Respite Care is an issue within some POS agencies.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/Call for Members & Chairs

Uli lead the discussion, asking members to volunteer for open chairs and asking members to volunteer for committees.

Updated Committee List

The current committee list is on page 23 in the packet. Uli reminded new members that the expectation is that they will participate on at least one committee. Members clarified the question of Council membership requirements that attach to committee membership and how the current lists reflect such.

Nominations Committee – Vicky Kline

This committee works hard for a short period around council elections. The model has been established and will be easy to follow. Tonya Duke volunteered to chair this committee.

Policy Committee – Heather Schumacher

Typically meets bimonthly or monthly at the DCFS Office on Division, with opportunity to participate toll free by phone. The 07/16/07 meeting notes were distributed and included in the packet.

MOTION: Patricia Welander moved to accept the committee report. Tonya Duke seconded and the motion carried.

Committee Recommendation: When plans have been scored, agencies and regions will be notified that their plans are "Acceptable," "Somewhat Acceptable" or "Unacceptable." Actual point scores will not be listed in the letter. The recommendation carried by majority vote.

Committee Recommendation: The score breakdown will be "Acceptable," 94-100, "Somewhat Acceptable," 76-93, and "Not Acceptable," 75 and under. The recommendation carried by majority vote.

Committee Recommendation: Recognition certificates will be mailed to agencies/regions with acceptable plans. The recommendation carried by majority vote.

Discussion ensued re how many special awards to give each year and for what accomplishments special awards should be given.

MOTION: Vicky Kline made a motion to base awards on two or three identified criteria rather than on a lottery basis. Cecil Garner seconded. After discussion, the motion and second were withdrawn.

MOTION: Robyn Harvey moved that the council not consider a lottery for the Council awards. Gladys Boyd seconded the motion. Following discussion, the motion carried by majority vote.

MOTION: Vicky Kline moved to provide three special awards based on established criteria to be determined by special committee on an annual basis. Robyn Harvey seconded. The motion was voted down.

MOTION: Tonya Duke moved to send the awards issue back to the Policy Committee to have the committee establish the award standards and criteria. Patricia Welander seconded and the motion carried.

TASK: Add to score sheet: "If this plan stands out for some reason, check here," show lines and say, "Please describe."

- Extraordinary implementation
- Creativity
- Organization

Adolescent Issues/ Statewide Youth Advisory Board Liaison – Robyn Harvey

This committee meets twice a year. Typically contact is conducted via Email. Robyn indicated that she is not receiving regular updates from the SYAB, so she does not have a substantial report. She did note that this council would meet jointly with the SYAB in September.

Legislation – Ruth Jajko

The Legislative Committee meets ad hoc, typically via conference call, circulating Email to promote ongoing contact.

The committee is tracking the following:

- The budget issue still hangs in the balance. They've passed a one-month budget and will need to make another decision by the end of July. Foster parents should not be directly impacted by the failure to enact a budget. Various media have reported that the Essential Services provision kicks in so that board payments would still go out. Members noted that POS agencies often have lines of credit that could be utilized to fund operations without getting any payments from the state.

Resource Family Subcommittee – Ruth Jajko

Ruth indicated that Ray's report addressed this since their major achievement is to provide expense payment to caregivers supporting reunification. She acknowledged the work of some Council members, the committee members, and especially Peggy Slater for crafting this plan.

Training – Debbie Freke

This committee meets via teleconference as needed to ensure that foster parents' needs are being met by training.

The transition from colleges to DCFS is complete now. However, it has not been as seamless as had been predicted.

- Colleges were asked to provide detailed reports to substantiate training locations and times, but the current schedule does not reflect past experience in the regions.
- Schedules were made out for classes to be held two nights a week, putting pressure on trainers to present twice a week.
- Travel distance for trainers is a big concern.
- Most of the Foster/Adopt PRIDE trainings currently scheduled will not be presented under the co-trainer model.
- The expectation is that training will be presented even with five or six participants, which prevents certain group activities from being held or, if they are held, from being as valuable as they would be if the prescribed 12-15 trainees were present.
- People who are not on the registration list show up for training
- Confirmation letters disagree with scheduled start times so people arrive at different times.
- Training will cease in January when trainers reach the caps in their funding.

TASK: The Training Committee Chair will contact Judy Zaleski directly to address these concerns.

Foster Parent Support Specialists – Vicky Kline

Vicky Kline, immediate past chair, reported that the committee is still gathering statistics to submit to the Director. This committee meets as needed, working to stay on top of the support services offered in support of child welfare services. Most communication is via teleconference. They recognize the need to focus on providing support data when addressing issues with the Director. Debra Wilson volunteered to chair this committee.

Archives

The committee will be responsible for organizing the archives. Once the compilation work is completed, ongoing work should be of a maintenance nature, adding materials on an annual basis. Patricia Welander volunteered to chair this committee.

Future Policy and Practice Committee – Robyn Harvey

Robyn provided a written report.

Adoption Day Celebration – Ramon Nieves

We are targeting an October or November celebration with the possibility of pegging to the release of a film, “The Martian Child.” The event is tentatively scheduled for our joint meeting November 16th.

WORKING LUNCH

Advocacy Office -Kathy Herrick

Kathy introduced herself and described the development of the Advocacy Office. She stated that the Ombuds Office opened in 1973, with a staff of one. In 1991 it became an “office” with added staff. It has operated under both the Director’s Office and the Office of the State Guardian, where it currently resides. The current staff includes nine advocates, two supervisors and the administrator, and all are social workers. Spanish speaking advocates are also available.

Response is mandated within 2 business days, and workers are required to make 3 attempts to reach the initial caller for immediate follow up. Each case is targeted for resolution within 30 days, with mandated follow up/status reports every 30 days following until resolved. She noted that callers are typically asked to follow the standard chain of command prior to action by the Advocacy Office. She stated that she needs to be notified if/when service standards are not being met. She also indicated that she plans to establish clear caller identification categories to include the following: foster parent, adoptive parent, and parent.

Handouts include the general Advocacy Office informational brochure and a handout showing statistical information for FY '05-'06. She said that if callers do not reach resolution, they need to call again to follow up. She also noted that her Email address is Kathy.Herrick@illinois.gov.

Agenda for the Next Meeting

There was discussion. Terry will find someone to address the licensing issue regarding the backlog on fingerprint clearances/background checks for new foster parents and those renewing their licenses.

Adjourn

MOTION: Adrienne Welenc made the motion for adjournment and Donsetta Blakely seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 7th at 3:00 p.m. at the Pere Marquette in Peoria. This will be the joint meeting with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board.