

**ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Friday, February 3, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Eastland Suites, 1801 Eastland Drive, Bloomington, IL**  
**Approved MINUTES**

<b>Members Present</b>		<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>DCFS Staff</b>
Donsetta Blakely	Kate Monte	Eddie Baines	June Dorn
Kathy Casey	Elizabeth Richmond	Sue Cianci	Ray Gates
Arthur Davis	Gina Samuels	Patricia Cooper	Bridgette Glickman
Ronald Davis	Gretchen Schulert	Brian Hall	Vanessa James
Mary Debose	Bernadine Spitz	Vance Johnson	Steve Minter
Diane Dominguez	Shannabeth Stein	Susanne Loss	Terry McGlothlin
Gwenn Eyer	Ron Tyler	Joyce Loy	Kim Peck
Jeanne Howard	Kim Wheelock	Marilyn Panichi	Karen Taylor
James Jones	Penelope Ford <i>for</i> Jackie Sharp Akins	Terry Solomon	<b>Guests</b>
Dave Matthews			Cindy Backstein
Krista McCoy			Daniel Spitz

Welcome and Opening Remarks - Elizabeth Richmond

Elizabeth welcomed members and guests. Everyone introduced themselves.

**New Business**

Licensing Issues - Steve Minter

Steve reported the following:

- \*The number of under-utilized homes has decreased because foster parents are surrendering/closing their licenses.
- \*A survey was done to determine why homes are inactive. Legitimate reasons were given, such as remodeling, taking in relatives, recently adopted.
- \*There has been a culture change with licensing workers working with foster parents. Licensing workers engage with foster parents during monitoring visits and make sure they are receiving the services they need.
- \*Licensing workers are using a more thorough assessment process to help carry through to the home study process, and as a bridge to case management staff.
- \*One Church One Child workers are being used to provide additional support for high-end foster parents.
- \*MAP Unit is working with foster parents interested in adoption.
- \*They tried to come up with a legal process to keep homes active without monitoring. The OIG and Child Care Act will not allow it. An inactive status will not be an option.
- \*Family to Family will receive a contract to do recruitment.

Education & Training Vouchers (ETV) Program - Kim Peck

Kim distributed information on the ETV Program, which is federally funded under the Chaffee Act. Youth may apply annually for up to \$5,000 for essential post-secondary education expenses that are not covered by financial aid. Eligibility Criteria is as follows:

\*Youth age 16 to 21 years of age with an open DCFS case or emancipated DCFS youth, 18 through 22 years of age;

OR

\*Youth who have achieved permanency either through subsidized guardianship or adoption at or after the age 16.

\*Youth must attend a community college, public/private four-year university or an accredited vocational training program in or out of state.

Kim distributed copies of the application packet, and referred members to the Peoria office at 309/693-5150 for more information.

#### Updates from June Dorn:

\*Adoption/SG Trend Data - June distributed charts depicting permanency and reunification rates.

#### \*Adoption/Post Adoption Personnel

There will be one post adoption unit in each region to handle post adoption service needs. June has requested a full-time clerical staff for each of the adoption workers.

#### \*Post Adoption/Guardianship Book revision

A JCAR hearing was held 1/18/06 on Rule 342. The rule should be formally issued any day. Procedures will need to be updated, to include a new process to speed up interim payments when an adoptive parent dies, and background studies being completed within five days of notification. Cynthia Moreno and Velma Williams will be meeting to discuss updates.

#### \*Enhanced Adoption/Guardianship Waiver -

-This will go statewide beginning 4/1/06.

-Adopted or SG youth age 14+ will have the same range of services that were available to youth in foster care.

-Web based training will be available to workers in June 2006

-There will be a tip sheet available to caregivers at the Caregiver Training Institutes being held this spring.

-There will be an article in the March *Illinois Families Now & Forever* newsletter.

#### \*The Cradle Resource Directory

Karen Taylor is assisting with the development of new courses. A new online course will be introduced within 30 days called *Preparing Lifebooks*. This course offers 1.5 credit hours. It will offer pages for the lifebook that can be done online. The next course they are working on is on *Adopting Older Children*.

#### Adoption Core Curriculum - Karen Taylor

\*All comments sent in by council members and others have been incorporated into the curriculum.

\*Adoptive parents were involved in developing this curriculum

\*The training is scheduled for roll-out on February 21st for downstate DCFS adoption specialists, and March 20 in Cook, and full roll-out in June, with over 1,000 workers to be trained in small groups.

- \*There will be a Training of Trainers in late April, early May. This will be a 2-3 day commitment, and possibly more later.
- \*Co-training model will be used with someone from the adoption field and someone from the training field.
- \*The training is fourteen days of classroom training.
- \*Web-based training has not yet been developed.
- \*Jean Maher is working on the adoption family training/conversion training modifications. Adoptive parents will co-train for this curriculum. Susanne Loss is on the committee.
- \*Private agencies will be trained on-site.

Report from Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

\*Ray said Jean Maher asked for volunteers to review new resources for the DCFS Lending Library on February 15th. Ron Tyler volunteered.

\*Ray gave an update on the 9 caregiver training institutes being planned for February-May. He said that despite massive marketing efforts, registration is still low. He distributed flyers and asked that council members share the information with other families. He said the training offers five training credits and a continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Ray said childcare would be up to each region and inquiries should start with the caseworker.

\*Ray said that a research component is being developed for the integrated assessment program, gathering data about what has been done, what we propose to do, staff use, and cost. We are seeing a lot of positive results. Ray has been traveling around the state giving IA reports to foster parent groups, and is hearing that IA should be done on all kids in care. This research component will help us move in that direction. Due to budget constraints we had to pare down the size so only new cases are currently being assessed. If we can demonstrate effectiveness it will help us make a numbers argument to request more funding for the program. Last year Director Samuels was successful getting money for IA. Through numbers and hard data he hopes to expand the program so that every child in the system has an IA.

\*Ray reported on the Illinois Post Permanency Study being conducted by the School of Social Work at the University of IL at Urbana-Champaign. Ray said he participated in the survey that was conducted on families that have adopted or obtained legal guardianship. The survey took about 45 minutes. A written update was provided to council members, and Tami Fuller, Project Director for this study, plans to attend the next meeting to provide an overview of their findings. In the meantime any questions about the study can be directed to Tami at 217/244-8615 or 1-800-889-2946.

\*Ray referred members to page 12 of their packets, which was the front page of the Adoptive Families Today newsletter. There was an article thanking Kathy Casey, Founding Member of AFT, for her years of commitment and hard work. Council members applauded Kathy for her work.

\*Ray welcomed new member, Kate Monte to the council. Another new member, Eddie Baines, could not attend today's meeting. Ray said there are still vacancies on the council, and members should send any suggestions to Terry.

\*Ray said that foster parents would get copies of integrated assessment reports for children in their care. The IA report is completed within 45 days after the assessment is completed. Shortly thereafter the parent will get pertinent information. The reports they receive will have the child and birth parent sections redacted by hand. The Deputy Directors, including Jeannie Ortega-Piron, will be meeting to discuss how this is going to be done.

Gretchen said that the law mandates that information be given to adoptive parents in writing. She said that about five years ago Midwest Adoption Center developed a standard format so that it could be given to families. They even trained staff on the protocol, but then it went to Best Practice and was never implemented. There is an adoption disclosure form in place but it is difficult to follow.

***Jeanne Howard made a motion that DCFS provide a report to this committee on the status of the full disclosure protocol and how such information will be coordinated with providing IA reports to adoptive and subsidized guardianship parents. Diane Dominguez seconded. The motion passed.***

Ray Gates and June Dorn will coordinate with Deputies Cynthia Moreno and Velma Williams.

#### Reports on SWFCAC/YAB/CWAC/CIAC/CFS - Bridgette Glickman

Bridgette submitted a written report that was included on page 9 of the member packets.

Ronald Davis volunteered to attend Youth Advisory Board meetings on a regular basis, representing AAC, to keep a connection and share information between the two councils. Terry will check with Leshonda Rogers to see if the YAB approves, and respond to Ronald. Ray said that Andrea Miller represents SWFCAC at YAB meetings, and asked Terry to share Andrea's contact information with Ronald.

#### NACAC Support Groups - Donsetta Blakely

Donsetta reported that the group met January 13th and will meet again in April.

#### 12:00 p.m. Working Lunch - Respite Programs

##### \*Counseling & Family Services - Ron Tyler

Ron gave an overview of the program Project Respite Help, an adoption respite program in Peoria, which serves youth age 7-16 in Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford Counties. Crittendon serves children 0-6 years old in this area. The target population is anyone covered by the adoption assistance or subsidized guardianship program. They have three components. One is a center-based component that operates year-round from 8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. During the school year it is used for youth suspended from school. The school district provides a teacher for four hours a day, and allows academic credit for work being done. This year they began a summer respite program for the same population,

which went better than expected. The third phase is overnight respite. They are having a difficult time finding adoptive parents that are willing to do this. Their main goal is to maintain permanency. Ron said he is willing to provide respite for up to 20 children for parents that want to attend the Caregiver Training Institute.

\*Matthews & Associates - Dave Matthews

Dave said that Matthews & Associates serves the southern 27 counties. They serve any adopted or subsidized guardianship youth from DCFS under the age of 18 with behavior problems that need time away from their parents. Their staff, including Dave himself, provides the respite. They are also identifying providers that can serve as good positive role models to provide activities outside of the home. They hired young men from the SIU Spectrum Program, and three female professionals in the Olney area. They have some areas where they haven't yet identified providers. They will probably reach out to family resources in the areas where they haven't identified anyone yet.

Examples of activities:

- Last year on a Saturday they took the kids out to dinner and a basketball game, which was about a 10-hour day.
- Touch of Nature at SIU has a program called Camp Little Giant, a summer camp, and they have special camps for children with ADD. They are trying to identify 8-10 kids that are high risk and let them spend a week at camp.
- At Christmas time they have an activity for many hours while parents can go shopping.
- Dave & another staff person took six kids to a Globetrotters game, and the Globetrotters worked with them to give the kids some special attention, which gave the parents a Friday night of respite, and the kids really enjoyed themselves.

Jeanne Howard did an evaluation of the respite programs last year. She said that focus groups of parents statewide used words like life saving. These are committed, yet exhausted families. Having predictable respite was very important to them.

## **Old Business**

Approval of Minutes of November 18, 2006 Meeting

***Donsetta made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Kathy Casey seconded. The motion carried.***

Agenda for Next Meeting/Wrap-Up

- Update from Ray Gates on IA reports
- Update from Melinda Lis or designee on UIC report
- Invite two more agencies that provide respite services
- Final Respite report from Deb Kinsey
- Birth Parent Advisory Council - Ray Gates
- Budget information - June Dorn

Adjourn

***Gwenn Eyer made a motion to adjourn. Donsetta Blakely seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.***