

**ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Friday, February 4, 2005, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**227 South 7th Street, 1st Floor Training Room, Springfield, IL**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

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

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Elizabeth Richmond opened the meeting introducing herself and Jim Jones as co-chairs. She asked everyone to introduce themselves because there were new members at today's meeting. Jackie Sharp, Ron Tyler, Shannabeth Stein, and Bernadine Spitz were in attendance as new members.

Ray Gates announced that the meeting would be taped to ensure accurate minutes. He also said that Michael Byrd, who formerly served as the coordinator of the Department's boards and commissions, was recently promoted to Regional Administrator. Michael called Ray this morning and said he could not make it to the meeting, but asked Ray to express his gratitude to the council. Ray read a petition to the council that Michael had written, "adopting" the IL Adoption Advisory Council.

## **New Business**

### **Respite Grant Update - Deb Kinsey/Marcus Hill**

Deb Kinsey, Project Director, and Marcus Hill, Project Coordinator gave an update on the Respite Care Grant Project. The Respite Care Program was a three-year grant for the period of 9/30/02 - 9/29/05. Marcus gave a report on the background of the program, a Year Two Review, and Year Three Activities to date. Details of the report are available in a handout that he distributed at the meeting.

There was discussion about identifying resources to extend this program. June suggested identifying grant writers on the council or within the Department rather than requesting funding.

*Gwenn Eyer made a motion that the council establish a committee to look into the potential of continued funding for this type of program and also examine other grant opportunities. Diane Dominguez seconded the motion. The motion carried.*

Elizabeth asked Debra, Marcus, June, Judy, & Jeanne to provide data and budget estimates to continue funding in the four agencies currently providing these services in FY'06, and what it would cost to offer these services in each of the adoption preservation agencies across the state.

Marcus and Debra will make a final report to the council at the end of the project year.

### **Reports on SWFCAC/YAB/CWAC/CIAC/CFS - Janise Alston**

Janise Alston and Mary Dyer were introduced as the council coordinators replacing Michael Byrd. Janise gave the following updates:

#### **SWFCAC**

- \*Met January 28th.
- \*Diane Jackson introduced herself as the new Deputy Director of Communications, and she gave a presentation on her division and all that it encompasses.
- \*Andrea Ingram gave a comprehensive report on the initiatives of the Lifetime Approach.
- \*Arleen Peterson from Voices for IL Children, presented on a recruitment initiative, and she will make the same presentation today.
- \*Steve Minter & Lynda Petrick from the Office of Licensing gave an update on restructuring foster care licensing.
- \*Diane DeLeonardo spoke about the Family Circle of Support project in Peoria.
- \*The next meeting is scheduled for February 25 in Bloomington.

#### **CIAC**

- \*Met December 9th
- \*Main discussion was on registry bill
- \*Discussed improper motions
- \*Next meeting April 26

#### **CFS**

- \*Met December 5th

\*Discussed Juvenile Justice Committee problems tracking uncentralized youth. Problem has to be addressed through Dept. of Corrections & DCFS.

\*Dr. Latiker discussed programs available through the Office of Education & Transition Services issues.

\*Raising scholarship amounts is under legislation

\*Discussed registering students for tutoring services under the No Child Left Behind Program

\*Educational training vouchers program has been extended

\*Next meeting is March 17

### CYAB

\*Met 1/21-23

\*Focused on leadership and advocacy

\*Teaching them to advocate for all youth in the state

\*Casey Foundation is recruiting Bryan Austin to help develop a youth advisory board in Seattle, Washington.

\*Next meeting will be March 11-13

### CWAC - Mary Dyer

\*Director gave report on the Lifetime Approach to child welfare.

\*SACWIS has been rolled out to the private sector. It is going well in test agencies. SACWIS stands for Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System.

\*Next meeting is 4/8 at Kaleidoscope

**Sibling Rights Story** is available to download at [WBEZ.org](http://WBEZ.org), click on audio library, click on the date of story, (December 24), and access the Sibling Rights story.

### **Task Force for Sibling Rights - Mary Dyer**

Carl Elkin will replace Mario as Youth Advisory Board member, and Krista McCoy will replace Tammy Hay as an AAC member. Once their paperwork is complete, meetings will be scheduled.

### **2005 Adoption Day Event - Gwenn Eyer**

Gwenn attended the last planning meeting for the 2005 Adoption Day Event. She asked that the AAC be more prominent at the next event. She stressed that we need to make this a statewide event, possibly using adult adoptees with success stories. She suggested this be locally promoted at a grass roots level with letters to the editor, letters of proclamation, and promoting a positive story, rather than used as a recruiting tool. Terry Solomon suggested using the Adoption Day Event to kick off other events regionally for Adoption Month. The next meeting is March 15. Elizabeth said that Ray would ask Diane Jackson to come to our next meeting in April to discuss.

### **Bylaws Revision - CWAC Representation - Co-Chairs**

Elizabeth explained that it has been difficult keeping all four joint CWAC membership slots full. Mary Debose was recently appointed to one of the joint slots that will expire on 6/30/05. *Rev. Davis made a motion to reduce the CWAC representatives from four to two. Diane Dominguez seconded the motion. The motion carried.*

### **Nominating Committee**

Diane Dominguez and Krista McCoy were appointed to the Nominating Committee to find candidates to fill vacancies.

### **Enhanced Sub-Guardianship Pilot Committee**

Gwenn Eyer, Elizabeth Richmond and Terry Solomon will represent the council on this committee.

### **Training Committee to Develop Adoption Core Training**

Elizabeth Richmond, Gwenn Eyer, Jeanne Howard, Mary Debose, and Rev. Art Davis volunteered for this committee to work with Karen Taylor to develop the curriculum for the adoption core training.

### **Status Report on Subsidy Forms Training & Subsidies for Non-Wards - June Dorn**

June reported that there were 16 one-day trainings held throughout the state between January 21-31. There were 2 in Southern region, 4 in Central region, 2 in Northern region, and 8 in the 3 Cook regions. One additional training is scheduled for March 16th and will be held at the Cook South Regional Office at 6201 S. Emerald. There may be additional trainings scheduled, based on need. The trainings indicated a strong need for the adoption core training - which is planned to be ready in July 2005.

Non-ward subsidies: Federal intent is to make adoption assistance available to otherwise eligible children without the need for a judicial determination of abuse, neglect or dependency. These are not intended for international adoptions - as it would be difficult for these to meet the state's special needs criteria. There are four ways that non-wards may be eligible:

- 1) Child is SSI eligible at the time the adoption proceedings are initiated and the child meets the state's special needs criteria;
- 2) Subsequent adoption of a child that was previously receiving a subsidy but is the subject of a new adoption due to death or incapacitation of the original adoptive parent; (this category is not new)
- 3) Child of a IV-E ward minor parent when both are placed together in foster care;
- 4) Child is AFDC eligible at the time of removal from their home and a judicial determination has been made that remaining in the home would be contrary to the child's welfare and there is a determination made by the state that the child meets the state's special needs criteria.

### **Working Lunch - Workgroup Reports:**

Reports were given from the three workgroups, Post Adoption, Training, and Expanding Community Services. The chairs asked each of the workgroups to reconvene to compile their recommendations into a paragraph or two for a memo to the Director highlighting priorities for the council. They asked that this be completed within two weeks. A list

was sent around to add new members to the workgroup that they would like to be involved in. Elizabeth and Jim will use the workgroup recommendations to compile a memo to the Director outlining the council's priorities.

**NACAC Adoptive Parent Support Groups Update - Diane Dominguez/Donsetta Blakely**

Donsetta reported that they have started four new workgroups in the Chicago area, and rejuvenated four workgroups in the area. The start-up groups get \$1,000 each, and the rejuvenated groups get \$500 each. Vanessa asked members to send her information about support groups in their areas and she would put updated information in the Illinois Families Now & Forever newsletter.

Diane reported that she went to Metropolitan Family Services to see if she could access information about her children. She secured all of the paperwork that she requested and was impressed by their responsiveness.

**Midwest Adoption Center Closed File Information & Search Program - Gretchen Schulert**

Gretchen wrote a summary of what MAC does regarding sibling connection. A handout was available in member's packets that gave a summary of what they do for DCFS. Sibling connection can come up after a person has aged out or been adopted. Programs are in place to provide the opportunity for sibling connection. The person makes a request to MAC and they will do an outreach and try to make that connection. There is no fee. They usually find the person they are looking for and in most instances it results in an agreement for ongoing contact. The problem area is while the individual is still a ward - those kids that want a connection with a sibling that has probably been adopted. That does not fall within the MAC program plan. The child's worker needs to be doing that for the child. Sometimes the worker doesn't know how to do it, doesn't know they can do it or doesn't agree that they should do it.

It was suggested that the council consider educating workers and caregivers on the importance of this issue, how to handle the conversations, navigating all the parties involved, etc.

Janise said she would email everyone on the council a copy of the Sibling Rights resolution.

There will be a teleconference to begin discussions on recommendations to the council's representatives on the Sibling Rights Task Force. Terry will send an email everyone, and whoever wants to participate is welcome to do so.

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

Ray said he was asked at the last meeting to find out if potential adoptive parents would receive the child's integrated assessment report. Disclosure of information about the child to adoptive parents is addressed in three different DCFS policies. None of those policies suggest that the adoptive parents would not receive the information in the integrated assessment report. However, since this is a new process, and it is not

addressed in the policy, the Department is not prepared to answer the question. Ray said that if adoptive parents did receive information from the integrated assessment report it would be the information about the child, which the adoptive parents should receive anyway. He will report back more detail when he receives a response from management.

Gretchen said this conversation has been going on for at least the past five years since the Midwest Adoption Center staff developed a format. They trained staff on this format, and then it went to Best Practice and was never seen again.

### **Family Support America/Voices Project - Arleen Peterson**

Arleen is working for Voices for Illinois Children to create a core-marketing tool to be used to support the targeted recruitment of more families to become involved in foster care. Her job is to do the outreach to the communities and to the agencies. Focus Groups will be convened to work on this project on the following dates:

April 12 - Grand Boulevard/Bronzeville

April 13 - Humboldt Park

April 14 - Barrington/Carpenterville

April 26 - Marion/Mt. Vernon

April 28 - Peoria

Arleen would appreciate input regarding volunteers for these groups. A small stipend will be available to participants. Materials will be available statewide to DCFS and POS. Arleen said she would send the site information to Terry to send out to the group.

### **Old Business**

#### **Minutes of December 3, 2004 Meeting - Co-Chairs**

*Terry Solomon made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Kathy Casey seconded. The motion passed.*

#### **Next Meeting/Wrap Up - Co-Chairs**

Members were asked to get with their three workgroups before leaving and come up with a date for a conference call to complete their work on priority items for the Director.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 1st at 160 N. LaSalle, Room N505, Chicago.

#### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.