

Joint Meeting of the Statewide Foster Care & Illinois Adoption Advisory Councils
MINUTES (Approved by SWFCAC 1/14/11 and IAAC 2/4/11)
November 19, 2010, 10 a.m. -2 p.m.
Executive Mansion, Springfield, IL

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	AAC MEMBERS PRESENT	STAFF/GUESTS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	AAC MEMBERS ABSENT
Carlos Argueta	Julie Cebulski	Vince Champagne	Debbie Freke	Julie Fritzler
Mercedes Ball	Claudia Davis	Kent Coffman	Amy Garcia	Nancy Golden
Angela Barber	DeAudrey Davis	June Dorn	Leanne Montgomery	Maripat Oliver
Gladys Boyd	Rosa Dust	Gwenn Eyer		Carol Sheley
Lee Coffman	Karen Faber	Jenny Florent		
Edith Cruz	Tamara Guy	Ray Gates		
Andrew DeLao	Ruth Jajko	Brian Goodwin		
Irma Dixon	Derek Jeske	Eugene Grandberry		
Kelly Green	Betty Johnson	Vanessa James		
Robyn Harvey	James Jones	Shaun Lane		
Birdia Jenkins	Billie Ray Lewis	Renee Mays		
Sheila Jones	Kate Monte	Erwin McEwen		
Kathleen Lutz	Lisa Myles	Terry McGlothlin		
Cathy McCoy	Sarah Phillips	Craig Missel		
Bill Moorehead	Elizabeth Richmond			
Rolinda Robinson	Dawn Saphir			
Heather Schumacher	Karen Taylor			
Michael Simpson	Cathy Villa			
Steve Steinhardt	Karen Wardlaw			
Danny Tolliver	Mark Werner			
	Linda Wolter			

Welcome & Introductions – Elizabeth Richmond

Elizabeth welcomed council members from the Adoption Advisory Council and the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council as well as staff and guest. She asked members all to introduce themselves.

Legislative Update - Dana Yowell

Dana briefly described her background and the responsibilities of her office. The DCFS Legislative Office identifies legislation having an impact on DCFS, childcare or child welfare policy, procedures or statutory code by daily reviewing all bills introduced into the General Assembly (via the General Assembly Web Page at ILGA.GOV). If an introduced bill affects us, the office sends summary and full text of the bill to all DCFS Deputy Directors, Director McEwen, and the DCFS legal and budget offices. They review the proposed bill and provide a written analysis of how the bill impacts their unit and they include their opinion concerning what, if any, position DCFS should take. Once the comments are received, a position paper is drafted by the legislative office and discussed with the Director and Chief of Staff. They then track the bills through the legislative process, also addressing concerns or priorities of legislation with lawmakers before committee hearings. The office also addresses constituent issues from all legislators.

Lawmakers just recently began veto session, and the legislators will be back for a few days after Thanksgiving to finish. Veto Session is a period where legislative activity is conducted prior to the swearing-in of a new executive branch. This makes it a “lame duck” session where those who

are not returning are not compelled to vote a certain way. It is a time when vetoed legislation from the past session may get resolved, unfinished business may be addressed, and new initiatives may become law. Veto Session requires a 3/5 majority to pass or override legislation. Dana predicts a lot of legislation will wait until early January when they need only a simple majority and she noted several areas she thinks will receive attention at that time.

Two reform bipartisan committees were formed Thursday to review Medicaid and Workman's Comp issues. SB 2843 passed the House Thursday and moves to the Senate for debate. This bill calls for the formation of a Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children by educating teachers and parents.

Her office is working on some legislation that will be introduced in the spring, basically technical clean-up bills. She encouraged council members to go to www.ilga.gov and type in a number or key word to pull up legislation or to listen to or watch the actual sessions.

Items to be discussed could include:

Legalize civil unions

Abolish death penalty

Police and fire fighter pension reform

Wrigley renovation

Legalize medical marijuana

Income tax increase and gaming expansion (possibly more casinos) - She noted that our state has a thirteen billion dollar deficit, so new revenue of some form is crucial.

Medicaid Insurance Changes Based on New Laws – Vince Champagne and Brian Goodwin

Vince said the change of greatest significance happened in the spring of 2010 when the US Congress passed far-reaching healthcare reform, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, (Public Law 111-148). One specific provision relating to youth in foster care is expanding Medicaid eligibility until they reach the age of 26. This establishes a new categorical eligibility group. (Disabled youth would be otherwise qualified.) This is to be implemented by January 1, 2014. One key question is whether this will extend to youth who have been adopted from the child welfare system. Current concerns include the following: Will this cover former foster youth who live out of state? Will this cover out-of-state youth living in Illinois? Will it be retroactive? The Illinois Department of Health Care and Family Services have a Medicaid Advisory Board which holds public meetings quarterly. These meetings present an opportunity for council members to influence policies.

Questions/Comments:

- *Could you clarify whether this is means-tested? Does it suggest that continued eligibility is based on income?* Current understanding is that it is not based on income level, but rather creates a new categorical group of eligibility for Medicare extension.
- *Will this apply to subsidized guardianship and adoption?* So far those who were in foster care at or past age 18 are included. Elizabeth reported that the IAAC is strongly advocating for including this population.
- *How do we best advocate for our children?* It would be quite appropriate to be able to discuss your concerns to the committee referenced above. The meeting dates are provided in the handout, and meetings are held simultaneously in Springfield and Chicago via videoconference. *Vince will send the address to Ray, who will distribute to members of

both councils. *The IAAC and the SWFCAC will assign two members to participate. Another suggestion would be to send a joint letter. Volunteers to draft this letter should see the chairs.

- 18-year-old youth who are especially at risk may want to continue supports until age 21, so that they can pick up this program when it is initiated in 2014.
- No one really knows at this time where the funds for this program will come from.
- *Do we have any insight as to how the federal regulations will be promulgated? Is there an opportunity for advocacy here?* One of the places where we can inquire about this is the Administration for Children & Families. The councils may wish to direct a letter to Bryan Samuels.
- It is important to note that this is mandatory for children who became adults while in foster care.

See Handout.

Training Report – Craig Missel

Craig recognized the audience for their work with children and the lives they've impacted. He then recognized Karen Taylor and June Dorn – two people who have given their lifetime careers to supporting children who are in foster care and adoption. He reflected on the support evident in this room – noting that in his early days with this work the support wasn't there. He said, "While we have a hope for tomorrow, our children need us today. Even temporary care has lifetime impact on our children. Adoption has lifelong implications. Substitute care is a journey, not a destination."

Craig reported that we have approximately 16,000 licensed foster parents who within the last year have been in contact with the Office of Training. This office has trained more than 3,000 individual foster parents and provided approximately 67,000 hours of instruction. They have supported these councils in their statewide conference as well as the DCFS Caregiver Training Institutes. Craig recognized those who were involved in the planning of the DCFS/IFAPA Conference, especially the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support.

He noted that we have approximately 6000 caseworkers and 1900 residential care staff, and the scope of their work is vast. Training has supported the institution of the National Youth in Transition database, tracking progress as youth exit care and working to support the emergent needs of older youth. They are updating the PRIDE curriculum, using the 2009 curriculum as the base. They have brought in and plan to continue support staff and foster parent co-training opportunities. There is a new resource center of Permanency and Family Connections at Hunter College in New York (www.hunter.edu). They're working to provide both online and in-line resources including people who can respond to crises on a more immediate basis. Craig is looking at using technology to connect more people to resources. Another focus is to foster connections with regard to birth parents' and foster parents' shared parenting role.

New Federal Grant to Find and Connect Children in care With Kin – June Dorn

June acknowledged that this was a good year for Illinois regarding recognition from the federal government. She noted that in addition to the two federal grants, Adrienne and Jerry Welenc won the *Excellence in Adoption Award* from the Children's Bureau, awarded posthumously to Adrienne. She said that Vanessa did a great job of writing the nomination letter, with support

from Ray, Terry and June's staff. The Welenc family was the only individuals/family to be selected for recognition this year.

Diligent Recruitment Grant – The *Recruitment and Kin Connection Project* is a five-year grant that will receive a total of two million dollars during that term. The money comes directly to DCFS and will flow to Adoptions Unlimited, our listing and information and referral service. The grant will fund development of a comprehensive family-finding program to enhance permanency initiative. It will target children/youth appearing for temporary custody in Cook County and in the third year it will be used in Champaign County. We'll be looking at the best timing of family placement, looking at who might best meet the long-term care needs of each child. The second population will be children 14 and older who perhaps have lost family ties. We will pursue reconnecting them with family members who might be able to provide permanency. The first year is designed to actually do further planning and revising DCFS policy as needed. There will be an advisory body used throughout this process, with more attention during the first (planning) year. The plan is to be able to serve 150 cases in the second year as it rolls out in Cook County. They anticipate serving 25 cases a year in Champaign County in the third year. The second grant-funded program, led by Twana Cosey, targets youth ages 9-12, and advisory bodies for these two grants will share some members. An evaluation will be conducted by Westat and the grant will be monitored by The Children's Bureau. This grant involves DCFS, Juvenile Court, Child Protection, the Cook County Public Guardian, and the Office of the Public Defender.

Adoption Month in Illinois/State of the Department – Director Erwin McEwen

Director McEwen recognized this as his fourth anniversary at DCFS, having just completed a full term as Director. He remembered that he met with these councils on his first day as Acting Director, noting that he never once considered skipping this meeting just because he became Director. He stated that he is very happy to share his (Director) anniversaries with these councils.

The Director referenced the approximately 60,000 parents who've adopted children in Illinois, leaving about 15,000 children in care, and he noted that if in his prior work someone would told him how low the number of children in foster care would be in 2010, he would have never believed them. He stated that the work now is very much directed toward supporting the adoptive families. He said that we will always have children in need of temporary substitute care, but now the focus can be more on supporting adoptive families and struggling birth families. Findings from long-term research are being used to shape this work. The concept now is that when you foster the child you foster the family. We have to review our practice to coordinate work between birth and foster families, to support older youth coming into care, and to support youth with special needs. We have to make some decisions about this work and how we do this work to "foster families".

Parenting is learned generation to generation. The parents of our children in foster care many times were not adequately parented themselves. We need to focus on the protective factors, including social connections with foster parents. We need to work with families as a whole, and "move further and further out into the yard." We need to do more work with families in the community without ever receiving a Hotline call. Strengthening Families is a solid resource for sharing these protective factors community-wide. We have a smaller system now and we have to

vary our approach, using the skill sets we have to meet current needs. Director McEwen referenced the new legislation summarized in the folder. He also stated that we have received \$15-\$20 million in federal demonstration grants, noting that we have received every grant we applied for. He summarized the following areas of focus and initiatives:

Adolescent Foster Care – We are targeting our attention to the 42% of our youth in care over age 13. Thirty-six percent are over 16 years of age. We have to figure out ways to work with these older kids and what we know is that given whatever the problems, kids do better in homes with parents, establishing long-term relationships. We have to do better working with that population in foster care.

Permanency Innovation Initiative - The other key grant is a \$10 million grant to study older wards that are “stuck” in foster care. We need to develop different strategies to use with kids who come into care between the ages of nine and twelve. The other part is to look at the youth who came in at this age and are lingering in care for two years or more. There are many issues – multiple placements, stepped-up residential care, etc.

Performance-Based Contracting and Residential Treatment – We’ve reduced our use of beds in psychiatric hospitals by 3000. We believe that hospitals are for stabilizing kids and trying to develop discharge planning and step down models – not to house children.

Differential Response – As of November 1st, we’re now going in to assess rather than to investigate the 20% of families with low-risk allegations. We have 75 families since November 1, but eight were sent to investigations. If a worker decides the risk is too great they must move the case back to investigations. We plan to serve 3000 families this year.

Questions/Comments

Do you have any plans for foster parent conferences, including a conference in FY11? He noted that we have had two successful conferences during this administration, both were very, very positive. He noted that we included relative caregivers at the most recent conference and he found that they were glad to be there but clearly presented with some unique needs and perspectives.

Caregiver conferences are currently being offered every other year, and the administration’s goal is to eventually offer them annually. He stated that conferences play a valuable role, and he continues to receive many positive comments from care givers and staff. He thanked his deputies who attended as well as the other staff and caregivers who worked long and hard to pull together such successful conferences. He said he is certainly committed to having another conference in two years and would like to have one this year. He’s considering some other funding options including sponsors. He will announce his decision in January or February.

One parent wanted to know if there are ongoing studies regarding reunification. This parent is concerned about what happens when foster parents and parents don’t work cooperatively, noting that the children are the ones who suffer. It is a struggle and it’s important to support the children and youth through this struggle, recognizing that these young people will experience

loss and grief following visits, and their post-visit behaviors might be challenging. Working together is the key.

Why it is that post adoption kids are disconnected from siblings, even if they have had visits with them all along? Adoptive parents have the option to make this decision. The Director acknowledged that safety issues and other criteria sometime influence these decisions. Maintaining the sibling bond is important, and it is something we should do whenever we can.

Are there any plans to teach parents/foster parents to use technology? That is important, and there are programs currently being utilized to teach older Americans to use technology. He hopes to provide technology training for caregivers as soon as the next caregiver conference.

WORKING LUNCH – Discussion / Plans for Councils’ Future Focus, plus Common Issues & Concerns

Deputy Director’s Report, Division of Service Support - Shaun Lane

Budget

Shaun reported that DCFS is in good shape with their budget and enjoyed a level of stability compared to others. Maximizing federal funding streams has yielded significant and important results. We are hoping for a maintenance budget for next year with no major impact on the services we provide and contract for.

PIP

Shaun noted that the DCFS approach to the PIP is different from previous years. This time we are developing the PIP with specific programs to address PIP-identified areas needing improvement. Programs such as differential response and a trauma-informed, strength-based model are part of this approach. Joan Nelson-Philips may want to come to the councils occasionally to update or get input on programs. She may seek advice and counsel from the councils as needs arise.

Report from Office of Caregiver & Parent Support - Ray

New Members

Ray introduced new members from each council and he asked each to give a brief background. From SWFCAC they are Danny Tolliver, Michael Simpson and Kelly Green; and from AAC Cathleen Villa, Karen Faber and Dawn Saphir. Ray welcomed them to the councils and he encouraged them to confer with fellow members and the staff in his office with any questions or concerns they may have.

Ray thanked council members for their volunteer work on committees and on site to make the two recent caregivers conferences the great successes they were. He also thanked the administration for its strong support, and he made special note of the key role played by the DCFS Office of Training, and in particular Brooke Taylor.

Implementation Plans

Ray said plans should be arriving at SWFCAC members’ homes in early December, so they can score them. There will be a scoring meeting on December 7th at 1911 South Indiana from 9am-

1pm if council members in the area would like to score plans in a group setting. See Gwenn Eyer for details.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Approval of SWFCAC Minutes from 10/15/10

Andrew made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Steve seconded. No discussion. Motion unanimously passed.

Approval of IAAC Minutes from 10/01/10

Claudia Dancy-Davis made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Derek Jeske seconded. No discussion. Motion unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS

Elizabeth opened the floor to topics that both councils need to discuss. There were none.

Gladys made a motion to adjourn, Linda seconded. Motion unanimously carried. The council adjourned at 2:00 p.m. to go to the Illinois State Library for the Adoption Day celebration.

Next Meetings:

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council: Friday, January 14, 2011, Aurora – Comfort Suites, 111 N. Broadway

Illinois Adoption Advisory Council: Friday, February 4, 2011, Bloomington - Holiday Inn, 3202 East Empire Street