

Adoption Advisory Council Minutes
June 1, 2007, 10:00 am-3:00 pm
(Approved as amended at the August 3, 2007 meeting)
Comfort Suites - Schiller Park, IL

MEMBERS PRESENT		MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF PRESENT
Donsetta Blakely	Krista McCoy	Kathy Casey	Gerald Austin
Patricia Cooper	Kate Monte	Mary Debose	June Dorn
Arthur Davis	Marilyn Panichi	Diane Dominguez	Ray Gates
Ronald Davis	Elizabeth Richmond	Betty Johnson	Treva Hamilton
Gwenn Eyer	Gina Samuels	Joyce Loy	Vanessa James
Brian Hall	Michele Seidl	Dorothy McGhee	Terry McGlothlin
Jeanne Howard	Gretchen Schulert	Jackie Sharp Akins	Judy Pence
James Jones	Terry Solomon	Shannabeth Stein	
Susanne Loss	Mark Werner	Ron Tyler	
Alan Marcus	Kim Wheelock		
David Matthews			

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Post Permanency Forum – Chris Bruhn

Chris Bruhn attended to give a summation of the Post Permanency Forum held on Thursday, May 31st, titled "Preserving Stability After Foster Care: Meeting the Challenges of a Post-Permanency World". Director McEwen gave opening remarks and also made a longer presentation later in the day. There were several panels, and then closing remarks and questions. Chris said there was general consensus at the meeting that they wanted these discussions to continue.

Refer to Powerpoint presentation distributed at meeting for detailed comments. Questions can be directed to Christina Bruhn, bruhn@uiuc.edu

Comments:

- *Good that the discussion of policy and procedures is going on
- *Distressed that money is going to SOC, rather than adoption preservation agencies.
- *Impressed by the participants that were there.
- *There seems to be a real understanding that there needs to be parity.
- *It gave opportunity for policy folks and practitioners to hear some of the realities of dealing with kids.
- *Public Awareness is important. The average person would not understand the post-adoption perspective.
- *AAC has been talking about this for years.
- *Hearing from the youth and the families was powerful.
- *There is an old perception that when the system is done with youth they are on their own.
- *Legislators need to be helped to understand that these children will have these problems for the rest of their lives.

Jeanne suggested addressing the following concerns:

- *How do we expand capacity of service providers to meet the needs of adoptive parents after adoption if they are not struggling to the point of needing adoption preservation services?
- *SOC providers need to understand trauma, loss, and adoption. How can we expect them to have this expertise? How do we build that capacity so that they can do this work?

June said she feels that things are moving in the right direction. The Director is committed to improving the post adoption staffing issue, and there is recognition that more services are needed for post adoption.

Elizabeth said she has concerns about the SOC services, but for the first time as an adoptive parent someone at DCFS, Director McEwen, said personally and publicly that DCFS has an obligation to you and your family for the life of your children. She said this was a different and important message for families.

Judy Pence said IL had one of the first adoption preservation programs when other states had no services at all in 1991, and have added to it every year. In the last four years they also added respite services.

Follow-Up to Meeting With Director – Co-Chairs

Jim said the Director is starting to operationalize some of the things that they discussed with him. His focus is a little different in terms of putting more emphasis on post adoption. He is putting more impact on contracting with other providers to provide post adopt services. He also shared some of his research on this subject. The Director plans to keep the university, practitioners and caregivers all in the same tent. Jim said the private agencies would need to embrace this.

Elizabeth said Director McEwen is committed, and that the council needs to be prepared with research and evidence based practice for any conversations they want to have with him. Jim said the knowledge base is in this room, and the council should position itself to take the lead on this.

Mark Werner made a motion that the subcommittee moves forward to further define what is important on our agenda, expand the committee's focus on research, and come back for a follow up meeting.

Discussion on Revisions to Rule 401

Alan Marcus said he spoke with Christina Schneider regarding practice changes that implement Rule 401. The issue is that DCFS is considering procedural changes to Rule 401. She is reviewing the comments to this procedure that came in late.

Gretchen asked what the process is when comments are made. Ray said that internal staff get together to review the comments and they make appropriate changes when accepted. The Policy Office is required to keep a record of all comments. The result of today's meeting will be another draft coming out.

Gretchen Schulert said there is a short section about the mandate to provide certain non-identifying information to adoptive parents. It does not say it is to be given in writing, although the law is clear that it has to be in writing. Secondly, it says in the procedures that the information is to be given to adoptive parents with the approval of the birth parents. Ray suggested Gretchen call Christina.

Elizabeth asked Gretchen and Alan to co-chair a committee to follow up with Christina and report back to the next meeting.

Presentation to Departing Council Members - Co-Chairs

Jim Jones thanked council members that were going off the council. He said a lot of work goes on behind the scenes and council members go beyond the call of duty. Those presented with certificates of appreciation were Rev. Arthur Davis, Ronald Davis, Brian Hall, Jeanne Howard, Marilyn Panichi, and Terry Solomon

Set Calendar for FY08

The FY'08 meeting calendar was set as follows:

August 3 - Bloomington
October 5 - Springfield
November 16 - Chicago (unless Adoption Celebration date changes)
February 1 - Bloomington
April 4 - Springfield
June 6 - Chicago

Alan Marcus made a motion to accept the calendar. Dave Matthews seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Appoint Membership Committee

Co-Chairs asked Mark Werner and Joyce Loy to co-chair a membership committee. Ronald Davis said we are losing two African American males, and that it is important to maintain diverse representation on the council.

Committee Reports:

Adoption Month Planning - Marilyn Panichi

Brian Hall said he sent a letter to New Line Cinema regarding putting something together for the Chicago event around a movie that is coming out in October called "Martian Child". A clip of the movie was shown. Brian said the timing might be perfect since it comes out right before the event. The movie would have to be reviewed first. One suggestion was that an award could be given to the Chicago based actors that are in the movie, John & Joan Cusack, for putting adoption in a great light. As soon as Brian hears back from them he will let everyone know. There would also need to be a backup plan in case this doesn't work out. There was a suggestion that Gayle Sayers be invited.

Typically in November, the AAC meets jointly with the SWFCAC on the day of the event. The date could possibly be changed to work with the movie release. Ray stressed that Nancy would need to know of a date change as soon as possible so that she could secure a site and lodging.

Meet the Robinsons - Alan Marcus

Alan said that he drafted a letter to Adam Pertman, Executive Director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, in support of his request for a meeting to discuss the insensitive portrayal of adoption-related issues in the recently released film, "Meet the Robinsons." The letter was picked up by some papers but the Sun Times did not print it. If the movie is released on video Alan will send the letter in again.

Respite Coalition - Gwenn Eyer

Gwenn reported that the Respite Summit was held in April. There were approximately 75 attendees, including a busload that Donsetta organized. The Respite Coalition will continue to meet monthly and plan to have a summit again next year.

Report from Office of Service Intervention - June Dorn

June distributed the latest permanency reports.

June said increases were requested for adoption preservation service agencies where waiting lists exist. The agencies should be able to hire an additional staff person with this increase.

Post Adoption Staffing Issues - June said she has requested to hire additional teams of Child Welfare Specialists and Office Associates in downstate regions, and supervisory staff for each of the three downstate regions, plus an additional supervisor for Cook County Post Adopt. She hopes to make the

downstate post-adoption staffing structure look closer to what they have in Cook County. The DCFS personnel office has the information and is working on it.

Master Adoptive Parents - Susanne Loss asked about recreating the Master Adoptive Parents. June said she hasn't heard any other feedback on that. Elizabeth and Jim will follow up at their next meeting with the Director.

Enhanced Waiver – June said she went to the waiver meeting in Washington, DC. This is critical to get to the congress people to get their support. She will get this information to other states as well. Elizabeth asked for the HB or SB numbers. June will send the information to Terry and she will send it to council members.

June said that two years ago Elizabeth & Gwenn volunteered to represent the council on the Enhanced Waiver Committee. The committee has never met, but they have their first meeting scheduled for August 1st. Mark Werner will represent Cook, and Terry Solomon will also be welcome to be at the table, pending Cynthia Moreno's approval. Peggy Slater is reconfirming the SWFCAC member's participation.

June said that Melinda Lis sent June an email about training that was being sponsored called "Beyond Consequences". June attend the May 19th one-day session, and read the book. They are also having a one-day training June 21st in Bloomington for Adoption Preservation providers. More information can be found on their website, www.beyondconsequences.com.

Report from Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

Caregiver Institutes – The last institute was held on April 14th in Kankakee, completing nine Saturday events around the state. Kate Monte and Susanne Loss served on the planning committee and presented at some of the sites. Ronald Davis will be on the FY'08 planning committee, along with Susanne and Kate. A comprehensive evaluation report was created and overwhelmingly positive. Many caregivers were already doing reunification, while for others it was a new concept. There was a lot of exchange between the trainers and the trainees. The DCFS Training Office has developed a reunification training model and it will roll out in the near future.

Two very eloquent parent speakers from the Chicago Birth Parent Council had a very positive message for caregivers, explaining what parents need from caregivers. Both have their children back and have been very successful. They made a video and showed it in the 7 institutes outside of Cook County.

Chapin Hall conducted focus groups at downstate institutes to examine why downstate youth leave care earlier than Cook youth. Information will be compiled into a report and will be shared with council members when it is complete.

The Chair of the SWFCAC and Ray met with the Director about a training model for FY'08. He entertained the idea of having two overnight conferences – one in Cook and the other downstate, in addition to four caregiver institutes. The Deputy Director has the proposed model and budget and we are waiting for a decision.

Birth Parent Council – Ray said another administrator in the Division of Clinical Services now oversees the Cook County Birth Parent Council.

A Rockford birth parent group now meets monthly from noon to 2:00. An information fair was held November 4th in Peoria. Staff from private agencies, DCFS management staff, and community agencies that serve parents were present. Presentations from parents, therapists and other experts focused on the

kinds of services that parents need. A parent council in Peoria formed from there. Two more Birth Parent Information Fairs are scheduled for June 21st in Fairview Heights and June 28th in Champaign. The information fairs will hopefully develop parent councils to start a couple months later. Ray will work with the Regional Administrators to grow what they already have. Bob Blackwell and Debbie Palmer Thomas already have ideas. Debbie wants to link the parent council and foster parent council.

Program Improvement Plan (PIP) - Director McEwen has been speaking around the state about the status of the PIP. He's committed to spreading the word. He gives credit to previous directors who built foundations before him and says we need to build on what they have done, look at what is working and enhance it.

Bed Hold Policy - The SWFCAC had a meeting in May and Cook South foster parents gave a presentation on the department eliminating bed hold payments for foster parents. It was done in a policy transmittal without comments. The SWFCAC chair discussed this in his meeting with the Director. The Director pointed out that this change had been made by the previous administration but he would look into making it more acceptable to foster parents. He checked into it and announced at the last SWFCAC meeting that it was revised. If a child leaves a foster home to go as an inpatient to a hospital or residential care, the foster parent remains involved, and the plan is for the child to return, foster parents are paid for 30 days to hold the bed open for that child.

Working Lunch – Update on Catholic Charities Case Transfers – Treva Hamilton

Treva gave an update on how the transfer of cases from Catholic Charities Chicago was being handled since they closed. She said they started out with a spreadsheet with the name, ID# and address of the foster home, and then matched foster homes with the nearest agency, keeping kids in proximity of siblings. They also tried to keep siblings within one agency. Cases were transferred in increments beginning on May 11th. The majority of cases were transferred this week. Next week they will focus on correcting any errors. In some cases the child's ID number was different than the parent. If there are any specific questions, they can call Treva's office.

Treva said a job fair for Catholic Charities employees was held on May 3rd. There was also a foster parent fair on May 18th with 30+ agencies present. Foster parents without placements were invited so they could make a decision where to transfer their license. There are still over 200 undecided. Calls are being made this week to have a conversation with foster parents and help them make a decision. Catholic Charities' contract ends June 30th so those foster parents need to be transferred by then. A letter went out to foster parents to let them know their board payment should not be disrupted. The receiving agency has been asked to contact the foster parent within 5 days. If they have not been contacted they can contact Treva's office to find out where the license went. Questions can be directed to Treva at 312/793-8527.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes of April 13, 2007 Meeting

Alan said that on page 4 the reference should be made to Stars of David rather than Star of David. *Alan moved to approve minutes with this correction. Donsetta seconded. The motion carried.*

Plan Agenda/Speakers for Next Meeting

Training Update

Budget Update

Committee Reports

Update on PIP review-Joan Nelson Phillips (may need to be later – fall)

Residential Attachment Program – Kim

Donsetta Blakely made a motion to adjourn. Terry Solomon seconded. The motion carried.