

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Holiday Inn Hotel, 226 17th Street, Rock Island, Illinois
March 20, 2009 ~ 9:00am – 3:00 pm
Approved Minutes

PRESENT		ABSENT	DCFS STAFF
Mercedes Ball	Debra McGee	Ronald Davis	Holly Bitner
Angela Barber	Leanne Montgomery	Cecil Garner	Robert Blackwell
Gladys Boyd	Kim Perez	Ramon Nieves	Gwenn Eyer
Royann Garcia	Rolinda Robinson	Patti Welander	Ray Gates
Vallerie Gill-Taylor	Heather Schumacher		Yolanda Green
Robyn Harvey	Uli Senz	GUESTS	Vanessa James
Birdia Jenkins	Steve Steinhardt	Amy Garcia	Joan Langan
Sheila Jones		Yolanda Green Rogers	Midge Marlot
		Joyce Loy	Terry McGlothlin
		Tim Veman	Larry Small
			Keith Stille

Hospitality

Leanne Montgomery, Hospitality Chair, welcomed council members and guests to the meeting and stated that the meeting would be taped to ensure accurate minutes. She advised that if people need to take a call or have a side conversation, they should step out into the hall so that the meeting can continue without interruption.

Welcome & Introductions

SWFCAC Chair Robyn Harvey opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and asking members and guests to introduce themselves.

PRESENTATIONS

Illinois Child and Family Services Review – Yolanda Green Rogers

Yolanda’s program is partnering with DCFS as they prepare to complete round two of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The CFSR is a comprehensive review process developed and implemented by the Federal government to assess and monitor the performance of state child welfare programs and systems.

The reviews examine outcomes and systemic factors in each state's child and family service program, using a process that consists of two major phases: the statewide assessment and the onsite review.

Outcomes include the following:

Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families.

Family and Child Well-Being

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

The Review Process

Each CFSR is a two-stage process consisting of a Statewide Assessment and an onsite review of child and family service outcomes and program systems. After the Statewide Assessment, an onsite review of the State child welfare program is conducted by a joint Federal-State team. The onsite portion of the

review includes: (1) case record reviews; (2) interviews with children and families engaged in services; and (3) interviews with community stakeholders, such as the courts and community agencies, foster families, caseworkers and service providers.

At the end of the onsite review, states determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in all the areas assessed are required to develop and implement Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) addressing the areas of nonconformity.

The council participated in the Statewide Assessment portion of the review during their meeting.

During the August review, 62 cases from throughout the state will be examined. Federal reviewers will be matched with trained reviewers from Illinois. Stakeholder interviews will be conducted during this process as well. Information will be compiled and the state will be scored to meet benchmarks (substantial conformity). Any areas of deficiency will be addressed through a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). This is a continuous process rather than a pass/fail test.

Proposed Changes to Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) - Dr. Larry Small

Dr. Small introduced his presentation by stating that it was nice to hear some of the positives from the council during the focus group. He went on to report that the Clinical Division took the lead on the Reunification Initiative, indicating that it was good to hear the positive comments about that, as well.

One Clinical Division goal is to bring out all the information about the child and the child's family in order to develop a service and treatment plan. This will assist foster parents in identifying the child's strengths and needs and help build a team to best meet the needs of the child. Caseworkers are going to start doing the CANS in about a month or so, in conjunction with the development of the service plan.

Dr. Small distributed a handout, *The Domains of Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)*. Strengthening Families protective factors have been embedded in the caregiver section in preparation for reunification. Independent Living Skills have also been added. Please see handout, page 2 and note that there is a Commitment to Permanency Plan Goal designed for the caregivers, only. The entire manual will be posted online soon, if it is not already.

Readiness for Reunification Worksheet discussion– Caseworkers are asked to sit with the parents after family meetings to discuss their commitment to the birth parent(s). Completing that tool will help focus everyone on the case goals, closing the case faster.

All kids will get CANS. The CANS keeps a little map of the child's needs in the Statewide Provider Database. The goal is to have one done every six months. Caseworkers will be doing them along with the Integrated Assessment, and in conjunction with the ACR. CANS for parents will be done every three months at the family meeting.

Psychiatric clinics are being developed in Cook County and the long-range goal is to also develop these downstate. Tele-psychiatry is still an option, with 17 sites throughout the state.

The Department is working to try to expand their Medicaid reimbursement procedure. Due to claiming, it maximizes our dollars. The Department is also working on links with other statewide providers, sharing dollars to tap into resources that already exist.

The Integrated Assessment template has been revised. Questions are related to the child's needs, your understanding of the child's needs, your commitment to meeting the child's needs and your willingness to commit to reunification. Licensing tools include these questions, but strategies need to be developed to determine how to address the questions with caseworkers. Dr. Small referenced a caregiver questionnaire and welcomed input from council members. He also stated that he would return to the council to do a focus group, if requested.

DISCUSSION – Suggestions for disseminating this information:

1. Add a CANS class to the upcoming conference.
2. Add as a PRIDE training module.
3. Dr. Small travel to present at regional meetings.
4. Foster parents attend staff training
5. Learning Collaborative for Foster Parents – Affinity groups based on specialties, providers, adoptive parents, foster parents. Stakeholders meet as small groups.

The Department is very conscious of, and concerned about, the need to keep checks and balances. They are working on a new approach to service planning where all of the assessments are being pulled into the process. They are working toward bringing everything together, reviewing every 90 days, with oversight being managed electronically. The other good thing about the CANS is that it pulls in the strengths.

Concern was expressed around the time this will now require, and what areas will be reduced in order to have time to do this process. At the outset, it will probably take at least 45 minutes.

SWFCAC volunteers to provide feedback: Angela Barber and Debra McGee.

Recruitment / LANS – Judy Rehder

Judy stated that the Department is doing serious recruitment. The recruitment effort is locally based and is based on the School Minder system. Recruitment Councils are up and running and Ottawa is incorporating community leaders on their council. They are still waiting for the new brochures to be printed for distribution. The leadership is addressing Spanish-speaking recruitment around the state. One issue to be addressed is whether foster parents should be required to be bilingual in order to serve more families than families with just one language.

A council member asked about offering training/courses in Spanish. Judy suggested that it might be possible to offer a class in the basics, but it seems more appropriate to just identify Spanish speaking families. Kim Perez referenced the Burgos Decree and the potential inability to really become fluent in the second language in order to meet those requirements.

On another note, LANS are finalizing the FY'10 contracts for Family Centered Services. The Educational Initiative has been in place for four years, and they're trying to get referrals that come from our wards. Judy indicated that many foster parents don't realize that educational supports are available. This program has been funded for this year, so if foster parents have children with educational issues, services are available. Call the LANS liaison for direction. (You can identify the LANS liaison by calling your regional field office.) These services come with limited flex funds, consistent with kids who would be eligible on educational issues. Services are being funded to fill in the gaps for kids.

LANS, CANS, CAYIT, Family to Family all work together to address issues that are barriers to a child's success. LAN liaisons may provide assistance with behavioral issues or service intervention. Anyone can take a case to the LANS. Caregivers may just go to a meeting, express the need, and request support services.

Judy will email a directory of the co-conveners, LANS agencies, etc. They are working on updating their web site.

LAN liaisons also provide support for the summer Youth Summits and they may assist with locating transportation, etc.

The following council members will participate on the Recruitment Committee: Valerie Gill-Taylor, Leanne Montgomery, Angela Barber, Uli Senz, Steven Steinhardt.

Judy handed out LAN directories at the end of the meeting.

Service Intervention – Holly Bitner Duck, Northern Transition Manager

Holly distributed a packet including the following:

- Office of Education and Transition Services Event calendar.
- DCFS Scholarship Applications – Holly stated that her division is willing to help assist with applications. She stated that incomplete applications will not be accepted, nor will they be returned for further work. Deadlines are non-negotiable.
- Regional Youth Advisory Board applications and meeting schedule

Chicago Park District programs accept our youth at no charge. The application process is cumbersome, but the upcoming *Illinois Families Now & Forever* newsletter will provide additional details. The newsletter also describes the City of Chicago Employment Program and other job opportunities and internships for youth. Other park district camps and resources may be available to our youth. Contact Laverie Jefferson at 312/814-6823 for more information.

DCFS Youth Summits are being held across the state this summer and dates are in the calendar handout. The Youth Summit and Graduation Celebration are being combined in Northern Region. The summits are open to youth between the ages of 14 and 21. The theme and workshops are currently being developed by a committee that includes a number of youth. Transportation will be provided in the Northern Region.

The DCFS Scholarship Celebration will be held in Chicago in July.

Holly noted that once a youth attends a regional YAB meeting they can plan to have transportation from CAP for future meetings.

The Stimulus Bill may provide additional support for transition services. The Division is exploring ways to obtain and utilize these funds.

Holly distributed a survey to be completed and summarized for their Five Year Chafee report. It may be completed on behalf of a youth or from the caregiver's perspective.

When asked about funding for college, Holly encouraged families to apply online for financial aid. She stated that the process has many steps and regional education advisors are available to assist. She also indicated that OETS Transition Managers, high school guidance counselors and caseworkers should be able to provide support. Students should apply early in the year for financial aid, because the money spends out quickly. Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is a great resource. Vanessa James pointed out that after July 2009 youth adopted as older youth may apply for scholarships without consideration of parental finances.

NOTE: The FAFSA for the 2009-2010 school year includes several changes of note. Youth who were adopted or under guardianship at age 13 or older can now claim independent status and not have to report their parents' income toward determining their financial aid awards. The 2009-2010 FAFSA was available for completion and submission as of January 1, 2009 and youth should have completed it by now or should do so in the very near future as some funding is available on a first come, first served basis.

Training – Joan Langan

Joan stated that Training is dealing with budget issues, too, and they are still working on the training schedule for the remainder of the year.

There are five managers and field liaisons for a total of 12 people working on the foster parent training program. Six are full-time. Joan is working with Steven Minter to utilize a Family Development Plan format to develop a training plan for individual foster parents for four years of licensure. She noted that this would be a much more effective method for determining course offerings. They will work to strategize ways to mutually assess training needs.

The regional training managers in the Central and Southern regions have been trying to meet with the recruiters in those regions in order to plan trainings as needed for new foster parents. Managers in Cook and Northern Regions have been working to develop locations to serve as training sites instead of exclusively utilizing DCFS offices in Cook County. Northern Region has been identifying training sites at no cost to the state.

Class size has been an ongoing issue of council concern. Twelve is a good target class size for PRIDE pre-service. Due to funding concerns, and because of the Advisory Council's recommendation that we not have small classes in order to do justice to the activities in the pre-service curriculum, the managers have attempted to make sure there is a minimum of 10 people enrolled in every class. Managers have been consolidating classes with fewer than 10 people enrolled. In some cases classes have been cancelled, but participants are then rescheduled to other classes. If licensing workers expressed a need for a class with fewer than 10 people enrolled, exceptions were granted to continue the training with fewer participants.

The Virtual Training Center documents training and will be accessible to workers during the mutual assessment process. People who do not have Internet access may call their regional training manager to obtain this information.

PRIDE trainers are being encouraged to meet with workers to discuss the assessments that are completed during the PRIDE pre-service training.

Foundation Training spends half a day discussing what foster parents learn in PRIDE pre-service training. In the future they are going to be looking a little bit at the differences in what is applicable for relative caregivers and for foster parents.

The digital PRIDE in-service module DVD's are terrific for corrective action plans and are even more effective when staff accompany foster parents as they watch them. Joan indicated that people may call 217/785-5689 for digital training DVD's.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes from 11/21/08 Meeting

Steve Steinhardt made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Sheila Jones seconded. Motion carried.

Final Reports to the Director

There were no final reports to the Director. Council members received the monthly Director's Report via Email.

The chair stated that another Parent Café will be held the night before the next meeting, on 4/16/from 6-9 pm in Springfield. Terry will send an announcement for people to register.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Policy Committee

Implementation plan award ballots were distributed and the outcome will be announced at the next meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: Change the number of implementation plan scorers from three to two. The council approved the change. Ray will take this up with the Policy Office, to amend R. 340.

Question to the Policy Committee: Consider reviewing and possibly revising the bylaws to state that immediate past chair retains position when current chair is reelected.

Adolescent Issues/Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) – Robyn Harvey

Robyn said she has not been invited to participate in any recent meetings, stating that she's kind of "out of the loop" at this time.

Archives – Patti Welander – Robyn stated that Patti is still working diligently on the archives.

Legislation – Sheila Jones

Tuesday Governor Pat Quinn presented his first Illinois budget. He noted that we are facing an \$11 billion deficit for fiscal years 2009 and 2010, stating that this gap is too large to be addressed with any one single measure. DCFS anticipates a 2.2% increase in children in care and there is a 6.59% increase in funding for this line. DCFS anticipates a 7.5% increase in the Intact Family caseload. The budget according to DCFS is based on current projected levels of service. At this level, the budget would increase by 2.3%. However, the total for this line is 3% below last years' appropriations level.

Pending bills which caregivers may want to call and support:

HB 3632 Provides that federal funds paid to DCFS for certain child welfare mental health services shall be deposited in the DCFS Children's Services Fund. This will generate \$5-\$6 million in new federal funds for DCFS.

HB 83 Appropriates \$24 million to DCFS to fund an increase in the cost of care reimbursement for foster parents.

SB 1576 Requires DCFS to develop methodology of setting foster parents cost-of-care reimbursement rates.

Sheila recommended that council members schedule an appointment to visit their senator and representative when they are in the home district. Legislators will have a two-week break during the weeks of April 6 and April 13. They are generally more available on Saturdays or Mondays during the legislative session. Council members should talk to legislators only as individual citizens or foster parents, not as representatives of DCFS or of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council.

She announced that the Child Care Association's Advocacy Day will be May 7th in Springfield. This one-day event concentrates on working the legislature on their legislative agenda and on the human services budget. The group session will be held in the State Library.

Training – Robyn Harvey – Due to Debbie's resignation from the council Mercedes Ball has been appointed to serve as chair.

Public Relations – Leanne Montgomery

They have not had a recent meeting.

Nominations Committee – Robyn asked for a chair and committee to serve on the Nominations Committee. Rolinda Robinson was appointed chair. Birdia will sit on the committee.

The following council members have resigned due to personal and work obligations: Debbie Freke and Tonya Duke. Terry is working with the regions to fill council vacancies.

Central Region Report – Robert Blackwell, RA

Bob stated that this region will work on the CANS and try to get this work accelerated through this region, collaborating with existing programs and partnerships. Central Region has been really trying to maintain regular contact in their local areas, meeting every other month in different parts of the region. They've been going to the sites every other month and holding teleconferences in between. They recognize that face-to-face meetings are most effective, but time and money are tight, so they're going to keep this schedule for the time being.

They are doing a lot of work with permanency enhancement, using Local Action Teams. They are really working to engage their community. There are a number of Family Advocacy Centers in the Central Region. These centers work directly with open cases to really help accelerate families through the system, providing them tools for court participation, etc. (There is outflow from the PIP.)

As part of the Permanency Initiative, the Central Region is working on the issue of disproportionality. Recruitment of Spanish-speaking families in the Rock Island community is an offshoot of this project. They are examining racism and the impact on child welfare. They are developing a strategic plan to build race-informed child welfare services.

Mr. Blackwell suggested that he would like to return to this council to speak very specifically about these issues.

REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS/COMMITTEES

IFAPA – Gladys Boyd, IFAPA President, reported that the conference planning committee will meet March 23rd. She stated her desire to get the POS agencies more involved. She is looking at a larger location and anticipates attendance of 600. She's hoping that POS will come in and do training. This conference is being planned for August, 2011. Gladys has selected a conference site in a resort and plans to cease programming at 5pm in order to provide free time for foster parents. She plans to offer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and CPI (crisis intervention) training. Her potential theme is: *Knowledge is Power: Going Back to Basics*. The SWFCAC chair appointed Uli Senz and Leanne Montgomery to sit on the IFAPA Conference planning committee.

National Governor's Association (NGA) Youth Policy Task Force – No report.

Update on Agency Reviews - Members reported that reviews are moving along. The deadline for completion is April 23rd. Please turn in your packets as soon as you complete them.

Caregiver Institutes – Leanne Montgomery stated that the Jacksonville Institute was very good. She indicated that Dr. Moore did an exceptional job stating that the program was entertaining and informational and there was a lot of interaction between foster parents.

Birdia stated that the Cook County institute was very interesting, too. She stated that they had three stages of life experience reflected in the youth involved in the panel presentation. One of the youth discussed the impact that Michael Byrd had on his life. Another young man came out of gangs and had to fight his way through the system. He went on to do better, working at Tiffany's jewelry department, and now is a mentor for youth. Another young man came up in Maryville, and faced many struggles there. When he had the opportunity to go into a foster home, it turned out that he wanted to return to Maryville. Robyn stated that the Cook County panel was older young men who had made it through the child welfare system and could speak to past experience rather than speaking from their current life experiences. One young man continually drove home the commitment that foster parents demonstrated in his life. Comments indicated that presenters were very skilled and content was very well received by foster parents.

Based on institute comments, Mr. Blackwell suggested that we consider including teen youth in the audience along with their caregivers during the youth panel.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

REGIONAL REPORTS – The chair requested written reports in advance of the meetings.

Cook North – Cecil Garner, Royann Garcia

Recent policy transmittals were distributed and changes were discussed at their March 10th meeting. They also discussed the results of the follow-up survey regarding foster parent training. They agreed that

efforts would be made to offer evening trainings in Skokie in April, in addition to the daytime training. A list of training topics was identified through the survey results. The March training, "Permanency – Foster Parents' Perspective," will be held March 26th.

Cook South – Angela Barber, Valerie Gill-Taylor

Angela stated that a big portion of their meeting was spent in discussion around the smoking law. The concern is that the law references foster homes as "a public place." They are going to their other support groups to see if this is a shared issue. They are also reviewing their bylaws for possible revisions.

Cook Central – Birdia Jenkins, Rolinda Robinson – Rolinda stated they discussed their implementation plan and Diana Davies discussed children and railroad safety.

Northern – Robyn Harvey

This council will meet April 14th in Joliet. Ray Gates will speak about advocacy from the foster parent perspective.

Southern – Ronald Davis – no report

Central – Patty Welander, Leanne Montgomery – Leanne stated that they will hold a teleconference in March and will meet in Danville in April.

Foster Parent Appreciation Month – Larry Chasey

Larry reported that regions are working on their local celebrations. The budget and division of funds are still a concern and decisions are forthcoming.

Larry also commended Robyn and the council for the work they do, stating that the council does inform the Department's work.

Next Meeting

Next Meeting:

Parent Café – Thursday, April 16, 6pm – 9pm

SWFCAC Meeting – Friday, April 27, 2009, 9:00 a.m.

Ramada Ltd. North, Springfield, Illinois

Members must attend the entire meeting in order to have their lodging provided and transportation expenses reimbursed. Any exceptions requested must be approved by Ray, and approval must be given in advance.

Adjourn

Birdia Jenkins made a motion to adjourn. Debra McGee seconded. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:25p.m.