

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting**  
**MINUTES**  
**January 19, 2007**  
**Eastland Suites, Bloomington, IL**  
**9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Approved as Written at 2/23/07 SWFCAC Meeting**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>DCFS Staff</b>	<b>Guests</b>
Mercedes Ball Donsetta Blakely Gladys Boyd Tonya Duke Sylvia Flory Debbie Freke Cecil Garner Robyn Harvey Nancy Hughes Ruth Jajko Birdia Jenkins Vicky Kline Ramon Nieves Andre Robinson Heather Schumacher Uli Senz Adrienne Welenc Patricia Welander Mary White	Leanne Montgomery Antionette Walker Geraldine Wilson	Gwenn Eyer Ray Gates Vanessa James Terry McGlothlin Jean Maher Judy Zaleski	Cindy Backstein

**Hospitality**

Mary White welcomed members and guests, announcing that the meeting would be recorded to assure accurate minutes.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Uli Senz, SWFCAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 p.m. He welcomed everyone and asked members to offer brief introductions.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Minutes from September 8, 2006 Meeting**

Uli asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the November 17<sup>th</sup> joint meeting. There were none.

**MOTION: Mary White made the motion to accept the minutes as presented. Sylvia Flory seconded and the motion carried.**

**Approving the Agenda**

Uli stated that participants have draft agendas and asked for any additions or changes.

- Uli indicated that whenever members represent the Council on other committees they should plan to provide reports of their committee work at the next Council meeting, indicating that he would ask for reports from Donsetta Blakely, Family Review with Peggy Slater, and Ramon Nieves, Adoption Day Celebration.
- Adrienne Welenc expressed concern on behalf of some members of the Policy Committee that they should be included on the front end before revising any forms or preparing training. (These concerns had not been shared with the committee chair prior to the Council meeting.) Ray clarified the background of the recent work that has been done and the rationale for doing the training today. In addition, policy committee members were given a week to review the materials for use today. He indicated that if committee members still believe there is a need for a training delay, we would provide the training next month. After discussion, it was determined that we should proceed with the training, and the Policy Committee will meet to review the score breakouts.

### **Implementation Review Training**

Heather Schumacher and Ray Gates presented training for members conducting agency reviews. Following discussion, the following issues were referred to the Policy Committee:

- (1) Will reviews be conducted if only one SWFCAC is able to attend and participate?
- (2) When we draft Velma's letter to exec Director regarding Agency Review – we will request that the Foster Parent Law Liaison for the agency/region be present for the review.
- (3) In-person interviews only – no phone interviews
- (4) Review the mathematical computations in the Final Results

### **REGIONAL REPORTS**

#### *Cook Central - Birdia Jenkins*

Birdia stated that they held their last meeting in November. Millie Cardona announced at the meeting that the 2007 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan had been submitted, and thanked participants. Dr. Janet Chandler did a presentation on mental health and drug abuse issues and their impact on birth and foster families. Adrienne Welenc reported that Cook Central had hosted recent trainings, including CPR training, and an upcoming training will address Internet safety.

#### *Cook South - Donsetta Blakely*

Cook South met January 17<sup>th</sup>. This group is still going through some reorganization. They are currently working on developing working committees.

#### *Northern Region - Robyn Harvey*

Robyn stated that their council recently met and that 14 foster parents attended. Their ARA spoke on *Myths Surrounding Reunification*. They are planning to alternate meeting sites between three field office locations: Joliet, DeKalb and Rockford, with joint meetings to be held in Aurora. Although they have been meeting with Youth Advisory Council, the youth are breaking away because the foster parents want to move their meetings to various locations to accommodate their schedules.

*Southern Region - Vicky Kline*

Vicky reported that their next meeting would be held January 23<sup>rd</sup> in Mt. Vernon. Bruce Hirsch may be the presenter, addressing *Foster Parent Reimbursement*. Although they typically host satellite meetings, the January meeting is a joint meeting and they anticipate good participation.

*Central Region - Mary White*

Mary referenced her report, which is on page 14 of the packet.

*Cook North - Cecil Garner*

Cecil stated that a meeting was held where they discussed and began preliminary plans for Foster Parent Appreciation Month activities. They're considering combining with another region for these activities. They also addressed training issues.

## **WORKING LUNCH**

### **Training Reorganization - Judy Zaleski and Jean Maher**

Why reorganize?

History:

- For 14 years there has been a contract with eight universities.
- When Judy was appointed Deputy Director two years ago, her desire was to increase PRIDE training and in-service trainings.
- They are operating under the recognition that the training budget has decreased over the years and they now have more limited choices to provide both quality and quantity trainings.
- An extra challenge resulted from the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to include the Reunification Initiative, Trauma Initiative, etc.
- Nine months ago the Federal Government issued an edict that capped "indirect costs" for everything off-campus.
- DCFS looked for one fiscal agent, but none of the colleges and universities volunteered.
- Three universities, Rock Valley, College of DuPage and SIU-E, have accepted to continue their present contracts until June 30, 2007.

Strategies to implement the new plan:

- They are working to eliminate a duplication of services and associated costs by moving everything in-house.
- The money saved on the items below goes into programming to increase trainings offered.
  - Registration
  - Library
  - Administrative Costs
- They have reconnected with Regional Directors to secure their support.
- Training sites are being designed with storage for training materials
- Meetings are being held with trainers.
- Lending Library has been centralized

Current training schedules were distributed and Judy noted that they are a "work in progress." Judy thanked SWFCAC members for their participation in tweaking the Reunification training model. Reunification Training will be introduced at the Caregiver Institutes. She indicated that

they are working to pilot Reunification Training sessions in a four-hour module. (The draft curriculum outline is included in the packet.) She noted that they are continuing to refine the Trauma Training, as well. She noted that Trauma Training and Reunification Training are not mandatory trainings for foster parents.

Judy reaffirmed that **online trainings will not ever replace current training**, but rather supplement them with additional learning opportunities. She stated that the Department would not ever take an entire module and offer it online without also offering it in a classroom. She indicated that resources might be posted online to support classroom training topics.

Judy stated that they want to be sure that foster parent concerns are heard on every level. She indicated that Debbie Freke, representing the SWFCAC and Jean Maher, DCFS Training, would attend CWAC Training Subcommittee meetings regularly to make sure that foster parents' concerns are heard.

Jean Maher stated that transcripts would be sent to participants after training, allowing them to track their progress.

Council members were reminded to encourage everyone to refer to the *Illinois Families Now & Forever* newsletter to find updated training announcements.

#### **DISCUSSION – Reunification Training:**

1. Council members suggested that they run training from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 to eliminate the need for lunch and respect caregivers' time.
2. Offer childcare for participants.
3. Foster Parents are welcome to attend staff Reunification training.
4. Mary White stated that the training encourages foster parents to host visits in their homes, but if you follow the pattern DCFS sets (locked doors; glass, etc.) it's a contradiction.
  - a. Ruth Jajko pointed out that offices are secured due to confidentiality issues.
  - b. Nancy Hughes reminded the Council that DCFS offices are government buildings and are covered by Homeland Security and other federal regulations. Judy stated that the Director is looking at this issue, working on support mechanisms, etc.
  - c. Ruth stated that this issue has been discussed in the Resource Committee.
  - d. Sylvia Flory sits on the Future Practice Policy Committee and will be able to influence this, as well.

#### **DISCUSSION – Training Issues:**

1. How will foster parents be notified of the training schedules since they may not have access to Internet, etc. Judy stated that her office would do a direct mailing to foster parents with the training schedule.
2. Training will be sure to post training announcements on the general DCFS website as well as on D-net.
3. Tracking training hours is typically a responsibility shared between the foster parent and the workers. However, in Rule 402, it is ultimately the foster parents' responsibility.
4. The Virtual Training Center will allow foster parents to access training hours online.
5. Utilize email to distribute information.

### **SWFCAC Members' Questions and Concerns:**

- Provide shorter trainings that are more easily accessed by foster parents. Jean stated that they are trying to stick with the three-hour unit to design one-time trainings as much as possible.
- How were local foster parents notified that the training has been centralized?
  - Most colleges sent out letters announcing the change.
  - *Illinois Families Now and Forever* announcements

**Attachments:** Reunification for Workers Training Schedule, Trainer's Training Guide by Topic, Trauma Training announcement and schedules, Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training schedule

### **Agencies to be Reviewed in 2007, in alpha order**

1. ABJ
2. Ada S. McKinley
3. Arden Shore
4. Beatrice Caffrey
5. Camelot
6. Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Chicago
7. Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Springfield
8. Centers for New Horizons
9. Chicago Association for Retarded Citizens
10. Children's Place Association, The
11. Counseling and Family Services
12. Cunningham
13. Family Service Center of Sangamon County
14. Generations of Hope
15. Guardian Angel Community Services
16. Hobby Horse House, Jacksonville
17. Kemmerer Village
18. Kid's Hope United
19. Lydia Home
20. Our Children's Homestead
21. SOS Children's Villages
22. Unity Parenting and Counseling
23. Volunteers of America
24. Webster Cantrell Hall
25. Youth Outreach Services

### **Regions to be Reviewed in 2007**

1. Cook Central
2. Cook North

### **FINAL REPORTS TO THE DIRECTOR**

There were no final committee reports to the Director. Uli explained that as chair of the Council he is responsible for submitting a monthly report to the Director and that a copy of the January report is provided in the packet.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Policy Committee**

No report. Issues were addressed during the Agency Review Training.

### **Adolescent Issues/ Statewide Youth Advisory Board Liaison – Robyn Harvey**

Please see a copy of Robyn's report in the packet.

Committee Recommendations:

1. Invite Bobby Valdez to address the Council regarding the Care Package Program.
2. SYAB wants to form a workgroup for children who emancipate without linkage to resources. They would like representation from this Council when the workgroup is formed.
3. SWFCAC offered support to the SYAB Roundups during the joint meeting, but the Department is trying to discontinue the Roundups and keep only the Summits.
4. Cynthia Moreno has solicited Robyn's participation in the National Governor's Association Policy Institute. Robyn agreed to participate.

### **Archives – Jerry Welenc**

No work to date. Andre Robinson will contact Jerry to schedule a workday.

### **Legislation – Ruth Jajko**

No meeting has been held to date.

- This committee was invited to send representatives to the Child Care Association Policy Committee. Ruth attended and reported that CCA's position right now is that a COLA campaign (similar to 2006) will not be very successful. However, Senate bill 750 includes an indexing component for human service providers. The status is that there may be some constitutional problems with this bill since it may be perceived as a tax bill with amendments attached.
- They anticipate a Budget Address around March 7<sup>th</sup> and advocacy will kick into high gear at that time.
- Sex Offender legislation – No action is currently being taken because they anticipate a veto.
- CCA anticipates that hearings may be held in response to regular publicity in the Belleville News Democrat.

The Chair stated that he has never understood why board rate increases are not part of the DCFS budget. He asked the committee to examine this question.

**TASK: Terry will set up a conference call with the Legislative Committee and Dana Yowell prior to the next meeting.**

### **Training – Debbie Freke**

Debbie stated that the Lending Library is not yet up and running. She indicated that Judy's lunch presentation would serve as the committee report.

### **Reunification Initiative – Nancy Hughes**

Nancy stated that this committee presented Acting Director Erwin McEwen with a list of issues to be addressed when he met with the Council in December. She explained that this committee has worked in tandem with New Case Assignment/Placement Procedures Committee as both deal with Life Domains and keeping children connected by supporting placement near their

families of origin. She stated that efforts *are* being undertaken to involve foster parents in the processes inherent in this initiative.

**This committee will be discontinued until further notice.**

**TASK:** Reunification should be listed as a standing agenda item.

### **Foster Parent Support Specialists - Vicky Kline**

Vicky stated that Foster Parent Support Specialists are still seeking confirmation whether they may continue as PRIDE trainers. She also stated that she received emails from Contract Unit and demographics show that 45 counties no longer have coverage by FPSS's. All new hires must come in as private contractors. Sylvia stated that in her committee work their group has been advocating to reinstate FPSS's, both public and private, to support the Reunification Model.

**MOTION: Ruth Jajko made the motion: *The Council believes that full success of the Reunification Initiative is directly and inextricably connected with the availability of Foster Parent Support Specialists and calls for the funding of the public and private sectors statewide.* Ramon Nieves seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

**TASK:** Sylvia Flory will report the Council's support to the Future Public Policy Committee.

### **New Case Assignment/Placement Procedures – Patricia Welander**

No report at this time. **This committee will be discontinued until further notice.**

### **Resource Family Subcommittee – Donsetta Blakely**

They met and covered key practice issues related to reunification: safety, security and confidentiality. They had a draft to cover some of the issues, but still came up with some of the same concerns.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Tax Booklet for Caregivers - The booklet was mailed out January 5<sup>th</sup> and should be in caregivers' hands any time now. Information sheets on Free Tax Preparation Services are also included in member packets.

Adam Walsh Update - Per Birdell Fry, after speaking to our ACF regional policy representatives in Chicago, there would be no anticipated impact on current DCFS placement procedures. Apparently the national background checks are a requirement for licensing, not placement.

Legislative Update - Dana Yowell is scheduled to attend the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Springfield.

Foster Parent Appreciation Month - We still have a supply of posters, bookmarks and postcards from last year and copies were distributed to Council members. Terry will mail supplies upon request. A Governor's proclamation will be requested and a calendar of events will be posted on DNET and the DCFS website.

Caregiver Training Update - Our first Caregiver Training Institute will be held February 10<sup>th</sup> in Maywood. Flyers were distributed and a copy is in the packet.

Scholarship Applications – Information and applications are included in folders given to members.

Child Care Reimbursement Forms – New forms have been prepared and are included in the packets. Instructions are listed on the back of each form.

**DISCUSSION:** Members reported that calls are not being picked up when people call to register for Caregiver Institutes, nor are calls returned from voice mails left by prospective participants attempting to register. Ray called Judy Zaleski to follow up. Judy stated that voice mails are not acceptable and that she will follow up with her staff to correct this issue.

**Council Brochure**

Vanessa James distributed a mock-up brochure for Council review. She stated that Council members served on a committee to provide input and requested that the remaining Council members review it and provide input.

**MOTION: Adrienne Welenc made the motion for adjournment and Ramon Nieves seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.**

**The next meeting will be held February 23<sup>rd</sup> in Springfield.**