

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council  
 IL Adoption Advisory Council  
 Hickory Ridge Marriott – Lisle, Illinois  
 November 21, 2008, 9:30am – 2pm  
 Approved Minutes**

<b>PRESENT - SWFCAC</b>	<b>PRESENT - IAAC</b>	<b>DCFS STAFF</b>	<b>ABSENT - SWFCAC</b>
Mercedes Ball	Lisa Boatman	Gwenn Eyer	Ronald Davis
Angela Barber	Kathy Casey	Ray Gates	Tonya Duke
Gladys Boyd	Julie Cebulski	Eugene Grandberry	Pamela Seals
Debbie Freke	DeAudrey Davis	Jane Hastings	Uli Senz
Royann Garcia	Ruth Jajko	Vanessa James	Steve Steinhardt
Cecil Garner	Derek Jeske	Joan Langan	Patty Welander
Robyn Harvey	Betty Johnson	Director McEwen	
Birdia Jenkins	James Jones	Terry McGlothlin	<b>ABSENT - IAAC</b>
Sheila Jones	Patricia Kelso	Diahann Moore	Donsetta Blakely
Debra McGee	Billie Ray Lewis	Joan Nelson Phillips	Dr. Robert Bloom
Leanne Montgomery	Susanne Loss	Larry Small	Claudia Dancy-Davis
Ramon Nieves	Dave Matthews	Judy Zaleski	Tamara Guy
Kim Perez	Kate Monte		Krista McCoy
Rolinda Robinson	Lisa Myles		Roman McCray
Heather Schumacher	Maripat Oliver	<b>GUESTS</b>	Dorothy McGhee
	Judy Pence	Jan DeCoursey	Gina Samuels
	Breanne Radtke	Letchia Holmes	Michelle Seidl
	Elizabeth Richmond	Chris McGrath	Kim Wheelock
	Jackie Sharp Akins	Joan Nelson Phillips	
	Carol Sheley	Gretchen Schulert	
	Karen Taylor	Leonie Smalling	
	Karen Wardlaw		
	Mark Werner		
	Linda Wolter		

**Hospitality**

SWFCAC Hospitality Chair Leanne Montgomery welcomed council members and guests to the meeting and stated that the meeting would be taped to ensure accurate minutes. She asked that cell phones be put on mute and stated that if someone needs to take a call that he or she should step into the hall. She also advised that if anyone needed to have a side conversation, they should also step out into the hall so that the meeting could continue smoothly and that this is not an “open forum” but rather an agenda-driven meeting.

**Welcome & Introductions**

IAAC Co-Chair Elizabeth Richmond opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and asking them to introduce themselves.

## PRESENTATIONS

### **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) - Joan Nelson Phillips**

Joan reintroduced the review process, indicating that interviews will be conducted with foster and adoptive parents. The federal review addresses the way the Illinois child welfare system is functioning as a whole in achieving good outcomes for children and youth. Measures include safety, permanency and well-being. Joan requested input from both councils regarding how members are willing to support the Department as they go through the review. She indicated that someone from her shop will try to come back to revisit the councils regarding the review process. Please see the handout/attachment.

### **Update from the Division of Training - Judy Zaleski and Joan Langan**

Judy reviewed the handout regarding training statistics. Joan referenced the amount of work that has been accomplished in training foster/adoptive parents. Judy discussed the Division V (multi-state) Roundtable which was held about a month ago. She indicated that Illinois seems well ahead of other states in providing exceptional foster parent training within the division. She distributed contact information for the regional coordinators. See handouts.

Judy discussed past and present training issues being addressed.

#### 1) Financial constraints around purchasing postage and commodities for training

##### Suggested solutions

- Rely heavily on Illinois Families Now & Forever to share information/dates to save postage money
- Rely on trainers to mail out *PRIDE Connections* to staff. They have been working with SIU to develop reimbursement for the trainers and in January Training will again resume this responsibility.
- Promote online training for those who have a computer and would like to try an online course.
- 3-ring binders have been replaced by documents with ribbon binding – these are more easily transported and longer-lasting.
- They are discussing shipping costs and the method to actually send each trainer a designated number of packets for the training sessions, reusing them from one session to the next. Participants would receive a DVD of the materials to carry home for future use rather than a hard copy of the materials. (Hard copies would be available based on need and upon request.) She noted that they may be using state libraries throughout the state to store materials. They will also have copies of materials available for those who want to borrow them.
- Standing issue at CWAC addresses the number of participants required to host trainings and the use of the co-trainer model. Training is looking at holding to a minimum class size of 10 in order to effectively conduct training activities and use the co-trainer model. This would also reduce the number of cancelled trainings.

- Trying to support the trainers by utilizing a vendor to pay PRIDE trainers and using a new tracking system to monitor costs and the submittal of vouchers. This enables trainers to be paid in a more timely manner.
- They have recruited additional PRIDE trainers and conducted in-house training of trainers for a very experienced group of prospective trainers.
- The Director has an initiative now with the goal of providing training to caregivers in locations within a 45-minute radius of their homes.
- Judy indicated that Psychological First Aid training is undergoing review to determine how to best present it to caregivers, noting that staff trainings are open to caregivers upon request.
- Judy indicated that after quite some time they are moving forward with integrating the PRIDE training into Foundations training for new staff.

### **PACT Clinic Services - Diahann Moore**

The Office of Psychiatric Services is working to develop P.A.C.T. (Psychiatry for Adolescents and Children in Transition) clinics with a group of psychiatrists that are mindful of the needs and behaviors of our children and youth who have experienced trauma. A 1999 report indicated that one in five children may present with a behavioral health need. Diahann indicated that in our population it is probably closer to 40-80% of children and youth in care. Gang involvement, drug abuse, promiscuity, resultant elevated rates of teen pregnancy, and suicidal ideology are all behaviors that are symptoms. We are the only state in the country that has an Office of Psychiatric Services in its child welfare system. The clinic at La Rabida will open within the next couple of months if all goes as planned. Rural Illinois will be served by Tele-psychiatry – a means to meet the needs of children who do not have providers within a 100-mile radius. They can link a rural site with a provider in another part of the state so the psychiatrist can interview and assess a child long-distance. It's a method that has been in use successfully for several years in other parts of the country. Outcomes are comparably the same as in-person meetings. LSSI currently has a successful program and DCFS will partner with DHS in order to get up and running more quickly and efficiently. They are trying to place the clinics where there is the most need. The caregiver talks to the caseworker or to their pediatrician who may then contact the clinical coordinator to schedule an appointment. Diahann stated that she will be sure to get the phone numbers of the coordinators to council members.

Diahann said the Director's position is that this service is for wards only. People requesting psychiatric services for adopted children would need to seek such through post adoption services. Larry Small said that DCFS works with DHS and DMH to transition youth with psychiatric needs into adulthood as smoothly as possible. When they "age out" they will ideally continue these services. Jane Hastings stated that SASS is also available to adoptive families. Working to transition children aging out to adult guardianship also needs to be done.

Dave Matthews said in Southern Illinois they do not have psychiatrists available to our population, asking when these services will be offered. Diahann said tele-psychiatry is currently available through DHS. She will be meeting with them to discuss making these

services available to our kids in care. As progress is made she will keep council members apprised. SASS is limited but can help when there is crisis. PowerPoint Handouts will be distributed later.

### **Chapin Hall Research Presentation - Cheryl Smithgall, Jan DeCoursey**

Cheryl introduced the presentation, stating that Chapin Hall does research on many different aspects of Child Welfare. Jan summarized the findings from the 2005-06 Foster Parent Study presented in the handout.

Implications include the following:

#### **I. Findings**

A. Foster parents have different perceptions of their personal financial strain and fall into three distinct groups: strained, managing, and secure.

B. Foster parents within these three groups view their role in helping children participate in recreational activities, identifying children's needs, and accessing services differently. Children living with foster parents who believe they are financially strained participate in fewer recreational activities and access fewer mental health services than children living with foster parents who perceive their finances as secure.

C. Foster parents have needs that can be tied to their financial security.

- Some foster parents, especially those who are financially strained, are not as willing to advocate for services
- Foster parents who are financially secure and some who are managing are often savvy regarding securing services
- Relative caregivers typically utilize fewer services and unlicensed relative caregivers are often financially strained and need more/better supports

#### **II. Implications**

A. Supports that are needed

- Monthly financial support
- Child care – funding and access
- Mental Health services

Three A's of services: Accessible, Available and Acceptable

B. Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities

- Caregiver has day-to-day care and knowledge of the child
- Needs to be a mutual agreement taking into consideration the strength and skills of each party

#### **III. Q&A/Comments:**

- What was the impact of literacy on the survey results? No specific studies to address this were referenced. These foster parents may need more supports.
- Were results directly related to income/finances? No certain income thresholds were identified. The focus was on foster parents' perceptions of their financial security.

- There is no implication that foster parents that indicate that they are “strained” should not be foster parents – but they may need more and/or different supports.

### **Update on Legislation and Budget - Director McEwen**

Director McEwen stated that currently the biggest challenge the child welfare system faces is with regard to post-adoption services and supports. Due to the increased number of children and youth in adoptive placements, last fiscal year the goal was increasing services. Concrete programmatic information is based on assessments that were conducted throughout the state. This year the proposed budget was pretty flat, but we have experienced significant decreases. The current population is aging out, so the numbers have begun to decrease. He stated that attention needs to be directed toward insuring that there is no reduction in services and supports due to the reduced number of post-adoptive placements. Caregivers and grassroots groups could start now to address this issue in FY'10. Contact information should be distributed so that council members as individuals can advocate for maintaining and increasing post-adoption services and supports.

He stated that current budget restoration will address cash flow issues, not restore all services that were cut.

He indicated that we can't ignore any one part of the program – like losing an arm to save your leg. Moving forward we are going to start looking at carving out counseling money from foster care contracts, using a “fee for service” function and IV-E money. It will be very important to license unlicensed relatives. There is currently a 22 million dollar loss in IV-E rates due to this issue. Licenses will move the revenues into those homes where they're needed. Regarding the current financial situation, legislation currently indicates that we may lose 179 DCFS staff. Director McEwen is working on defining “front-end staff,” stating that the goal is not to have a lay-off at all. He is addressing his goal to keep a majority of non-management positions first, and then will address the 17 remaining management positions.

The Director discussed similar struggles in foster care, stating that the Department needs some ability to move children into residential placement as needed. He stated the importance of a “no decline” policy and suggested that they might be purchasing a set number of beds rather than operating on a daily pay basis.

He acknowledged the 3% foster care board rate increase, but stated that some programs have taken significant hits. (SOC sustained a 40% reduction. Recreational services such as the SOARS program, etc. also experienced cuts.) He indicated that they are trying to preserve staff first, then programs.

An audience member posed a question regarding a youth aging out of an adoptive placement without the ability for independence. The Director stated that the federal budget does not fund, as many states do not fund, services to adopted children aging out of the child welfare system, indicating that we need to continue to fight the system and change

legislation around this issue. He also stated that some of these issues may be addressed through the adult service delivery system.

The Director discussed legislation to support licensing relatives, discussing the ability to waive non-safety issues. With the force of law agencies are supported in waiving these issues without placing themselves at risk.

When asked about legislators' understanding of the child welfare system, the Director indicated that some are more aware than others, but all legislators can benefit from being reminded regarding the needs of our children and youth. He stated that he has had staff speak directly with legislators in an effort to help them better understand the issues we currently face and the impact of DCFS not being able to deal with them.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Approval of SWFCAC Minutes from 09/19/08 Meeting**

*Heather Schumacher made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Sheila Jones seconded. Motion carried.*

### **Approval of IAAC Minutes from 10/0308 Meeting**

*Kate Monte made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Kathy Casey seconded. Motion carried.*

### **Statewide Youth Advisory Board - Robyn Harvey**

Thu Vo has been given the task of revitalizing the SYAB with the Director's Office having oversight. The next SYAB meeting will be held December 5<sup>th</sup>. Robin stated that the SWFCAC had a very good meeting with the youth in Peoria.

### **Working Relationship between the Council(s), Adoption Preservation and CCBYS - Mark Werner**

The Adoption Advisory Council has a subcommittee for Post-Adoption. This subcommittee is currently addressing Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS) which is an arm of the police department to assist during crises. A lot of the youth they are dealing with as runaways are post-adoption youth. That situation has led to a proposed collaboration between Post-Adopt and CCBYS. Mark opened the discussion to both councils for suggestions of ways we can forge a better relationship between CCBYS and Post-Adopt to streamline referrals and provide additional supports.

Comments:

- Runaway status is one of the exclusions from being part of Adoption Preservation.
- Delinquency is another.
- Lock-out is another situation where children become involved.
- Dave Mathews indicated that they'd attempted to meet with the CCBYS agency downstate, but without success. He has spoken with Jane Hastings of the DCFS SASS program and she may be a resource for them.

The subcommittee will hold a conference call in early January and would welcome participation from SWFCAC members as possible. Robyn asked SWFCAC members to email her if they'd like to participate on the IAAC subcommittee

## **Conferences**

Gladys Boyd stated that the past IFAPA/DCFS Conference was very well-received and indicated that the Director has asked that we start planning for a FY '11 conference.

Ray Gates stated that due to the current budget crisis we just cannot afford to do the two two-day conferences this fiscal year. We will, however, continue to plan four one-day training institutes to be held.

March 7 - 6201 S. Emerald

March 14 – Jacksonville

March 28 – Marion

April 18 – Oglesby

The focus will be on mental health/psychological services.

## **Velma Williams**

Ray announced that Velma Williams resigned November 1 from the Department. She had most recently served as the DCFS Assistant Director and continued as the Deputy Director of Clinical Services.

## **Plans for Future Focus/Common Issues and Concerns - Jim Jones**

- We are encouraging people to adopt children at a young age, and concern was expressed about the availability of ongoing support through the adoption subsidy.
  - Adult Guardianship is an option
  - State Guardian would be a resource to assist us in forging a relationship with that office. Councils should take this suggestion to the DCFS Director before moving forward in utilizing this resource.
- Cook North expressed concern regarding gaining attendance at important trainings. The RA suggested requesting that a certain number of training hours be required on an annual basis to reduce the current standard of just chasing training at the last minute in order to be re-licensed.
- Concern was expressed about foster children aging out without the ability to really succeed independently.

## **Adjourn**

***Kathy Casey made a motion to adjourn. Royann Garcia seconded. Motion carried.***

The next SWFCAC meeting will be held January 16, 2009, in Effingham.

The next IAAC meeting will be held February 5, 2009, in Bloomington.