

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Ramada Ltd. North, 3281 Northfield Drive, Springfield, IL 62702
April 17, 2009 ~ 9:00am – 3:00 pm
Approved Minutes

PRESENT		ABSENT	DCFS STAFF
Ball, Mercedes	Jenkins, Birdia	Garcia, Royann	Chasey, Larry
Barber, Angela	Jones, Sheila	Gil-Taylor, Valerie	Gates, Ray
Boyd, Gladys	McGee, Debra	Nieves, Ramon	McGlothlin, Terry
Davis, Ronald	Montgomery, Leanne	Perez, Kim	Thompson, Nancy
DeLao, Andrew	Robinson, Rolinda	Schumacher, Heather	Langan, Joan
Garner, Cecil	Senz, Uli	Steinhardt, Steve	Chepulis, Mary
Harvey, Robyn	Welander, Patricia		
			GUESTS
			Backstein, Cindy
			Waller-Andersen, Jane

Hospitality

Leanne Montgomery, Chair of the Hospitality Committee, 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 that if someone needs to take a call he or she should step into the hall. She also advised that if people need to have a side conversation, they should also step out into the hall so that the meeting may continue without interruption.

Welcome & Introductions

SWFCAC Chair Robyn Harvey opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and asking them to introduce themselves. Andrew DeLao, new Council member, gave a brief introduction, stating that he had retired from the Los Angeles Police Department and is now living in Illinois.

PRESENTATIONS

Service Plans – Larry Chasey

Larry gave an overview about proposed changes with service planning. He stated the goal was to “Keep the focus on protecting children by strengthening and supporting families.” An outline of his presentation is attached to the minutes. Highlights of his presentation follow:

1. Integration of Changes

- Safety Assessment -- A consultant worked with the State to look at the entire safety process throughout a case. 25 safety threats were identified which would determine whether DCFS might need to take protective custody.
- Integrated Assessment – The document/process of screening and interviewing clients is quite lengthy and unyielding. The process is being streamlined and is getting ready to flow.
- Health Passport – We are moving toward an electronic version of the health passport. SACWIS designers are working and hope to have the new version ready this fall. DCFS is pulling out health data from other statewide data systems and integrating it into the DCFS system. Steve Bradford, SACWIS staff, was identified as a DCFS person who can give more information on the status of the Health Passport.

2. Inclusion of New Initiatives
 - Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) – This is a new process which includes the caseworker, therapist, and the residential facility -- all identifying the needs and strengths of children and adolescents. Everyone will be going through CANS training and will be certified after the training.
 - Trauma-based Service Planning – DCFS staff are currently going through trauma-based service planning.
 - Strengthening families is integrated into the language of the service plan.
3. Service Planning as a Process – DCFS is attempting to electronically manage the realm of the service planning process, aiding the foster parent to help the child(ren).
4. Separation of Documents -- Documents are being integrated into a “Refrigerator Page”, a one-page document that might be put on foster parents’ refrigerators to identify both child and foster parent tasks.
5. Behavioral Change Focus with Outcomes and Action Steps – DCFS needs to move and make steps to participate in any service we provide, identifying any behavioral issues that a child might have. Recommendations and information will be electronically brought into the Service Plan and addressed within the Plan. The assessment process will determine if a child’s behavior has changed, based on strong interaction with the child.

Larry stated that minimum parenting standards are being addressed in this process, but we are hoping that the focus will be on the reason why the case was opened in the first place. This point should be kept upfront, until the case is assessed out of the system. Timeline for the process is March 2010.

Foster Parent Appreciation Activities in the Regions

Larry also spoke about the FY09 budget approved for foster appreciation activities in the regions. In the past, each region had equal funding. However, not every region is the same as far as number of children being served and number of foster parent participants. A chart is attached which shows how DCFS has customized the allocation of dollars to be spent statewide to support these activities this fiscal year. Other factors in the distribution of funds were the number of workers and number of local field offices. This budget has been accepted by all regions. DCFS will utilize this process again next year.

Larry noted that foster parents will know of local activities by multiple notices: local connections, local newsletters, or calls from the local office.

OLD BUSINESS

Report from Each Lead on Status of Agency Reviews

Terry said the deadline to have the review transcripts turned in is April 27th. She addressed what reviews were received from Council members and the dates they were received.

Council members discussed concerns revolving around the process of conducting agency reviews. Ray Gates clarified that dignity and respect and the rights and responsibilities in the Foster Parent

Law are based largely on common sense regarding how people should treat other people. These parts of the Law were written by foster parents.

Some bilingual agencies posed difficulty with communication, and Council members needed to break the questions down into small pieces. Ray noted that agency employees need to have a good command of the English language.

Council members felt that some agencies did not demonstrate adequate interest in the Agency Review process. They felt that some answers were “by-the-book” and agencies were putting on a front. Council members also felt that the questions may be too long. Robyn stated that Council concerns and questions will be posed to DCFS Policy for review. Uli stressed that interviewers need to study the questions and understand what they are asking.

Officer Nominations - Rolinda Robinson

Rolinda distributed Officer Nomination ballots to council members. Terry said she sent the ballots to the six council members who would not be at this meeting. She has received three back from them, which she turned over to Rolinda. Members filled out the Officer Nomination form, and turned them in by lunch-time. Gladys Boyd asked that her name be deleted from the form because she is the President of IFAPA and cannot serve, as she is Chair of another Council. Birdia Jenkins, Mercedes Ball and Patricia Welander asked that their names be deleted from the list of qualified candidates.

Approval of Minutes from 3/20/09 Meeting - Council

Ronald Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 20th meeting, as written. Sheila Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Final Reports to Director - Robyn Harvey

There were no final reports to the Director. Robyn’s monthly report to the Director was emailed to council members the first week of April.

Parent Café’ Design Team Discussion - Robyn Harvey

Angela and Robyn led the discussion about Café #2. The purpose of doing Cafes for the Council is because we want to put together a committee to design foster parent-specific cafes for foster parents. A design committee will determine if current questions work for foster parents, or if we might need to tweak them so parents are allowed to have the desired experience. Another goal is to determine if people are actually interested in the Café experience.

Café #1 was therapeutic and reflective, but Café #2 reminded people that they are parents, to look at their internal, individual parenting skills. The Cafes were also identified as a possible resource for the IFAPA Conferences. Council members agreed that the cafes would be of value to foster parents, creating an atmosphere to reflect on their role. Mercedes Ball, Angela Barber, Birdia Jenkins, and Gladys Boyd volunteered to be on the design team for foster parent cafés. Strengthening Families representatives are thinking of coming the evening of May 7 to meet with the design team.

Regional Reports:

Cook North - Cecil Garner

Cecil reported that Cook North is constantly concerned about the number of caregivers participating in monthly meetings. In an attempt to gain more attendance, they are trying to rotate meetings, mornings and evenings. They focus on getting more people to sit on the panels to let caregivers know that other people share similar problems. Prior to meetings, supervisors make calls to increase participation at meetings. In Cook North, it is vital to get caregivers to the meetings!

Robyn Harvey stated that the Advisory Council must support and advocate for training opportunities at regional meetings. Gladys Boyd noted that conferences were successful because parents talked about what types of training were needed – bringing new ideas to reach everyone. Uli stressed that training sessions must impress and influence people in order to create a valuable learning experience; the topics being presented must be of great value to DCFS staff, foster parents and caregivers to ensure the well-being and safety of children in care!!

Cook South - Angela Barber/Mercedes Ball

At the last meeting the educational advocates gave a presentation on school registration. Michael Byrd gave dates for coffee/cake and Movie Night -- one event at Harvey and one at Emerald. No portion of the meeting was devoted to advocacy issues.

Cook Central - Birdia Jenkins, Rolinda Robinson

Mayra Burgos talked about Cook Central's Implementation Plan and how they were disappointed with the score they received. They asked foster parents to take the Plan home to review. Parents were asked to make suggestions for improvements to the Plan at the next meeting. The Park District group talked about summer camps and fitness clubs. No portion of the meeting was devoted to advocacy issues.

Northern - Robyn Harvey

The meeting was scheduled to have training about policy making; however, the meeting focused on private agency issues. Attendance was low, with only three people from private agency families. DCFS management was interested in what was happening with agencies. Typically Northern has a greater concentration of POS people than foster parents in attendance.

Ray was the guest speaker at the meeting; he talked about the expectations of regional councils, as advocacy groups – what they were years ago and what they are today. He also talked about the role of the DCFS Advocacy Office: Advocacy will return calls, regardless of what issues are; however, they are not supposed to work your case. They jump-start your inquiries, telling you the chain-of-command to contact staff who can help resolve problems. Ray suggested that one might look at the Foster Parent Grievance section of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, which may give an outline of chain-of-command. Robyn suggested that we may ask the Advocacy Office or APT to come to one of our meetings. Before we invite them, we would need someone to take a look at the advocacy scene in order to pose clear, specific questions about issues that foster parents would like to have a conclusion or answer.

Southern

The next Southern Region meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 4/21.

Central - Pat Welander, Leanne Montgomery

Central had a teleconference on March 25, and Bob Blackwell detailed the number of State contracts that are running out and have not been reinstated to date (those directly related to children in foster care). He said 60 new jobs have been posted in the Direct Field service, with six of those being in the Central Region, mainly in licensing. There is a focus on getting more relative homes licensed, which will aid in obtaining more Federal Funding. There is a focus on finding strategies and resources for the number of children on the waiting list for residential placement. He suggested that Council meetings include training sessions so caregivers can have hours for attendance. He also spoke about the budget for Foster Parent Appreciation month, and he discussed the Transformation Team which addresses issues of race and foster care. It was thought that 3 foster parents were on the call. Next in-person meeting is April 28 in Danville.

Committee Reports:

Policy Committee – Uli Senz

Uli said that they met via teleconference on March 26th. The agenda was based on charges by the council. Items of discussion:

*A rule change was recommended to have plans being scored by 2 people instead of 3. That was voted on at the March 20th meeting and Ray is following up with the Office of Child & Family Policy.

*Uli will remain as immediate past chair if Robyn serves another year as Chair. This has been past practice and will stay the same.

*Award recommendations need to be stronger. One member in particular, Patti W., had submitted four so the committee suggested that she and Ray train the council on how to identify award worthy features of the plan. The committee suggested going over the nominations with council members and explain that they need to write a thorough nomination when they encounter something that excels in one of the award categories, and all scorers should review the entire plan for award-worthy features.

Terry included her notes from the Policy Committee conference call in council members' packets.

Robyn said all awards for this year will be in the area of Dignity and Respect. Award winners are Our Children's Homestead, Catholic Charities-Diocese of Rockford, and Little City Foundation.

Adolescent Issues/YAB - Angela Barber

Robyn said Angela recently agreed to take her place on this committee. There was no report. Mary Chepulis has been involved in the planning for the Youth Summits. Robyn asked that caregivers be notified of the summits so that they can bring their youth. Mary said they are offering a session on college and career planning for caregivers. Robyn asked that they look into giving caregivers training credit for attending that session. Mary Chepulis will follow up with Mary Ochman Ahmed in Training. Robyn said she has not been informed of youth meetings. Ray will reach out to someone about that.

Archives - Patricia Welander

Patti said the committee will meet shortly to discuss next steps.

Legislation - Sheila Jones

Sheila submitted a written report which was in council members' packets. HB3632 is federal funding for children services plan. HB 83 would like to take 24million from the general revenue fund to increase cost of care reimbursement rate. SB 1576 would require the Department work with

providers for calculating foster parent reimbursement rates. She suggested council members check with their agency or the CCA, who is setting up events to lobby in Springfield. Gladys will call Marge Berglind about the advocacy events in Springfield. She said there is also information on the IFAPA website. They would like parents to come and advocate again as they have done in the past.

Training - Mercedes Ball

Mercedes will schedule a conference call before the next meeting. Mercedes cannot attend the CWAC training committee meetings, so Robyn asked Rolinda or Leanne to try to attend. Joan said she will send the HMR training DVD to everyone on the council.

Public Relations - Leanne Montgomery

Leanne said she is mailing cards or notes, thanking members for their service, get well, etc. She asked for council members to let her know when a card should be sent.

Recruitment Committee - Leanne Montgomery

Terry said that in follow up from the March minutes, she was told that there is not a Statewide Recruitment Committee. There are small local committees in several areas around the state that council members can work with. Cecil said he serves on the Cook North Recruitment Committee. Robyn said she serves on the Recruitment Committee in DeKalb. Anyone else that wants to be connected with a committee in their area can contact Terry and she will get the information from Judy Rehder. This committee of SWFCAC was then disbanded.

Respite Committee – Gladys Boyd

There was discussion about whether or not to continue with this committee. Cecil said there is a lot of concern about respite. Agencies don't have the funding, or payment has to come out of the foster parent's check. DCFS and private agencies have different rules around respite. Gladys said she had a previous conversation with the Director and he said if we get all of it in order it could be done. Ray said the committee should start with Child and Family Policy to seek to establish a respite policy across the board for DCFS and private agencies. He will contact Shelly Knuppel and go from there. They will focus on the mission to establish a standardized policy that will supersede the other policies in the agencies. Ray said at some point down the road APT, who is our official liaison with the agencies, will need to be involved. Uli and Leanne both dropped from the respite committee.

Reports from other Councils/ Committees:

IFAPA Caregivers Conference for FY11- Gladys Boyd

Gladys said the planning committee has met once and are in the process of planning the next conference call. She said she has a proposed date of August 27-29, 2010 at Oak Brook Hills Resort. She asked council members to ask caregivers what type of training they need. Some training topics have already been identified and she would like to hold 18-20 sessions at one time. Gladys asked Joan to provide a workshop on the Virtual Training Center, have DVDs available for caregivers to check out, and offer information on other not-so-common training tools.

NEW BUSINESS

Status of Rule 340 Amendments - Ray Gates

Ray said we are proposing to change the Rule so that plans only have to be scored by two scorers. Tony Correa in the Office of Child & Family Policy has drafted the rule change and it will soon go to JCAR. Ray said we have done everything internally that we are supposed to do.

Report from Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

Caregiver Institutes - Ray said the last caregiver institute will be tomorrow. Leanne will be co-training with Dr. Diane Moore. There are 27 signed up and room for 100 so it is not too late to attend.

Budget – Ray said that over the last several months we have worked diligently to make sure we are able to have council meetings when and where they were scheduled. In March we had to move the meeting because of the hotel not accepting direct bill. He said in the coming fiscal year, we will have to select hotels that are on the training list for accepting direct bills. He asked council members to understand the restrictions when setting the schedule for the next fiscal year.

Set FY'10 Meeting Schedule - Council

Robyn had set a tentative meeting schedule so that the Council would meet equally in each of the six regions. After discussion, some revisions were made and the final FY'10 meeting schedule was set as follows:

July 17 – Aurora (Guest Council - Northern Region)

September 18 – Peoria (Guest Council - Central Region) – possible joint meeting with SYAB

October 16 – Carbondale (Guest Council - Southern Region)

November 20 – Lisle (Guest Council - Cook Central) – possible joint meeting with AAC

January 15 – Tinley Park (Guest Council - Cook South)

February 19 – Rock Island (Guest Council - Central Region)

March 19 – Rockford (Guest Council – Northern Region)

April 16 – Alton (Guest Council – Southern Region)

May 21 – Lisle (Guest Council – Cook North) – Implementation Plan Award Presentation

Robyn will follow up with the AAC Co-Chairs regarding a joint meeting in November.

There was discussion about having the joint meeting with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board. Ray said that Thu Vo in the Director's Office now has oversight over the SYAB. Robyn will have a conversation with Thu Vo, and Angela will be included in that discussion. If a meeting were to occur:

*There needs to be a clear goal and meaningful agenda.

*The two councils need to have a meaningful relationship rather than meeting just once a year with no follow up.

*Degree of respect from both sides needs to be gleaned.

*If 2-3 of the youth get information from us as role models and adults it will be worthwhile.

*Life Skills – has the program been reinstated, and if not, when will it be?

Agenda for next meeting - Robyn Harvey

Robyn said the Director will present awards to the agencies selected to receive awards for their 2009 Implementation Plans.

The election of officers for FY'10 will be held.

Nominations of Officers:

Rolinda read the results of the nominations:

Chair:

Robyn Harvey

Sheila Jones - declined

Vice Chair:

Leanne Montgomery

Angela Barber

Heather Schumacher

NEXT MEETING – In 3 Weeks

Friday, May 8 at the Marriott at Hickory Ridge, Lisle

PARENT CAFÉ DESIGN TEAM MEETING

Thursday, May 7, 7-9 pm, Board Room, 9th floor, Marriott at Hickory Ridge, Lisle

Adjourn

Birdia made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Debra McGee. The motion carried.