

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**October 19, 2007**  
**Holiday Inn – Alton, Illinois**  
**9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>DCFS Staff</b>	<b>Guests</b>
Mercedes Ball Angela Barber Gladys Boyd Tonya Duke Debbie Freke Cecil "CR" Garner Robyn Harvey Ruth Jajko Birdia Jenkins Sheila Jones Nancy Lauffenberger Willy Miller Leanne Montgomery Ramon Nieves Rolinda Robinson Uli Senz Rosie Starks Steve Steinhardt Patricia Welander Adrienne Welenc	Heather Schumacher Pamela Seals	Gwenn Eyer Ray Gates Terry McGlothlin	Michael Bollman Jerry Welenc

**Hospitality**

Leanne Montgomery welcomed members and guests, stating that the meeting will be recorded to assure accurate minutes.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Uli Senz, SWFCAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He asked members to introduce themselves, with special attention given to new member introductions. Rosie Starks is a new member from Cook South; Steve Steinhardt from the Southern Region, represents CWAC (professional slot); Ronald Davis, Southern Region, will represent this Council on CWAC (foster parent slot.)

**Final Reports to the Director, Uli Senz**

There were no committee reports submitted to the Director.

**Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Training – Gwenn Eyer**

Gwenn reviewed the newly developed Table of Contents, the updated Style Sheet and the updated Score Sheet (draft). She addressed the key points outlined in the training handout, pointing out changes and improvements in the scoring process. She distributed Conflict of Interest and Scoring Availability forms which must be returned as soon as possible. A summary of the training notes was distributed.

## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

### **Cook North – Nancy Lauffenberger, CR Garner**

Nancy reported that, as stated last month, they have been unable to receive any notification of regular regional meetings. She followed up on a recommendation from Sari Rowitz, calling Cheyenne Jones, and found out that the region is holding implementation plan meetings October 22, 23 and 25<sup>th</sup>. Those who attend in person will receive 2 hours training credit. Nancy stated that no official meeting notifications have gone out, although Cheyenne indicated that meetings will be held on a regular basis. Concerns continue to be expressed regarding the lack of structure of the regional council following recent management transitions.

### **Cook Central – Birdia Jenkins and Rolinda Robinson**

Their meeting was held recently and Adrienne Welenc discussed the upcoming Caregiver Conference. Jerry Welenc addressed the group, asking for recommendations for *Hot Topics* recommendations for the conference. He also talked about federal legislation that allows teens to maintain benefits even when they age out of the foster care system. Elizabeth McKinney, from Michael Reese Hospital, presented training on diabetes. She also discussed cholesterol and high blood pressure. Screenings were offered throughout the meeting. Laura Bahena from Mt. Sinai Hospital addressed poison prevention, offering examples of household items that are poisonous. Their October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting will feature Jim Greve, a DCFS attorney, giving the annual training regarding confidentiality and court issues. Their 2008 implementation plan will also be presented for approval at that meeting.

### **Cook South – Angela Barber, Rosie Starks**

Cook South held a rally on Wednesday. Angela attended and spoke at the rally. Mercedes reported that approximately 20 foster parents attended the meeting. Veteran foster parents identified a problem with retrieving training transcripts from Springfield, a problem that resulted with licenses being placed on hold. Other concerns included limited access to training materials at in-service trainings. She indicated that new foster parents have faced challenges because they have been told that it is their responsibility to secure a training transcript from Springfield in order to deliver it to the licensing agency. Veteran foster parents also are concerned that they are required to develop their own network of foster parents in order to identify respite service providers.

**\*\*AGENDA ITEM: Access to respite services** – who identifies the providers, who pays, etc.

### **Northern Region – Debbie Freke, Robyn Harvey**

Robyn reported that they just held a meeting in Joliet with 17 parents in attendance. The presentation was, *Overcoming the Overwhelming*, with Dr. Larry Small as the presenter. This council is foster parent driven, with direct support from the region. Grassroots support groups are developing to meet in their own local areas. They have identified licensing issues as key challenges within their region. They are planning additional meetings, including an upcoming meeting with Deputy Director Arthur Bishop.

### **Southern Region – Tonya Duke, Willy Miller**

The minutes from the August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting are in the packet.

## **Central Region – Patty Welander, Leanne Montgomery**

The minutes from the August 19<sup>th</sup> meeting are in the packet. They have some questions regarding the Reunification Initiative and want to know more about definite ways to develop strong regional councils.

### **Council Discussion – What Should Regional Councils “Look Like”**

- Needs strong foster parent leadership to remain viable, especially during management changes – results in “ownership” of the program
- Utilize DCFS staff to present trainings
- Use community service providers (hospitals, fire department, etc.) to present trainings
- Provide services i.e. blood pressure checks, etc.
- Send meeting announcements to other offices
- Utilize indirect support from regional office, i.e. direct mail, include meeting announcements in other mailings
- Foster Parent Support Specialists provide additional resources, making reminder calls for meetings and trainings
- When appropriate, utilize bylaws as a guideline
- Offer satellite meeting locations
- Offer teleconference option
- Make it worth participants' time investment
- Utilize comment card for input regarding program development
- Utilize an end-of-the-year survey

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Reunification Initiative**

Concern was expressed that reimbursement may only be designed for cases with “early” reunification (12-month milestone), although many other parents are providing similar services. It was suggested that more needs to be done to provide clarification around this issue. Training for foster parents needs to be addressed.

**TASK: Ray will seek further information for distribution.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Minutes**

PAGE 2: Change to read, “**Debra addressed one question that came up during the development of the brochure: *How will foster parents get specialized supplies? i.e. disposable gloves. Answer: In a spec care situation, THIS WOULD BE PAID FROM THE CHILD’S BOARD PAYMENT. Traditional foster homes WILL COVER THIS EXPENSE THROUGH A SPECIAL SERVICE FEE.***”

Change spelling to *Dawn Overend* on PAGE 3.

***Motion: Ramon Nieves made the motion to accept the minutes as corrected. Ruth Jajko seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected.***

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Policy Committee – Ramon Nieves for Heather Schumacher, Chair**

The policy committee met October 16<sup>th</sup>. The report is in the packet. Key issues include the following:

- Score sheets have been updated
- Averaging will be done internally
- Comments are required on items with less than a perfect score. "No change" is an acceptable comment.
- Scorers must explain why items show a drop in score.
- Comments are optional on other items
- Language change on committee list: The term "Consultant" will be removed and replaced with "Workgroup Members," and include the definition of workgroups

### **Recommendation – Statutory Changes**

- Abolish the Cook County Advisory Council slot to be replaced with a slot to be filled by "Public at Large with Proven Interest or Experience in Child Welfare Issues."
- Previous SWFCAC members may be reappointed after being off the Council for two years.

***Patricia Welander made the motion to accept all of the recommendations of the Policy Committee. Ruth Jajko seconded. The motion carried.***

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

The full report is in the packet.

Items discussed include the following:

- Ways to communicate available services to youth in care - The major problem is the lack of knowledge about these programs
- Lack of website
- *Get Goal'd* Booklet – Directory of available programs and services for teens, and young adults.
- SWFCAC committee member representation at statewide and regional Youth Advisory Board meetings

**There are no formal recommendations from the Adolescent Issues Committee at this time.**

### **Legislative Subcommittee – Ruth Jajko**

#### **Illinois Legislation:**

**SB 121 – Amends the Juvenile Sex Offender Registration Act:**

The bill recently passed..

#### **Federal Legislation:**

##### **HR2188/S227 - Kinship Caregiver Support Act**

1. Both bills establish a *Kinship Navigator Program* to help relative caregivers find supports and resources and give states the option to use federal funding for subsidized guardianship. This is crucial for Illinois since Illinois' waiver allowing for subsidized guardianship will be ending.
2. Both bills would allow states to create separate licensing standards for relative and non-relative foster parents. This would make a big difference in Illinois as enforcement of an administrative rule that does not allow states to get federal dollars for unlicensed homes is having a huge impact on DCFS'

budget. Efforts to encourage relatives to get licensed have resulted in minimal success.

3. Both bills also expand eligibility for the Foster Care Independence Program for youths exiting foster care to adoption or guardianship. (House bill extends these benefits to kids exiting at age 14; Senate bill uses 16 as the age).

**Recommendation: The committee recommends that Council members take action on this issue by calling legislators, sending letters, etc. The recommendation was accepted.**

**The Legislative Committee was tasked with sending a letter in support of this position to pertinent legislators.**

**Key Question:**

- Research the subsidized guardianship option for kids placed with non-relative caregivers.

**Discussion:** Support this now, but follow up with guidance during implementation, utilizing separate standards for kinship care.

**Efforts to Secure Cost of Living Increase for Illinois Foster Parents:**

A recent study done by the Alliance for Children's Rights, the National Foster Parent Association and the University of Maryland School of Social Work found that most states reimburse foster parents less than the actual cost of caring for a foster child. Illinois fell into the second-lowest category for foster parent reimbursement and would have to raise its rates by as much as 81% to meet the actual costs of raising a foster child, per this study.

In the *Tribune* article, DCFS spokesperson Kendall Marlowe noted that an increase had been given last fiscal year for the first time in 6 years. He also stated, "the Department is committed to increasing these rates over time."

**Recommendation: The Council Chair will ask the Director's office to speak to the Council on the Department's plan to fulfill that commitment.**

The committee also decided to draft a letter about this issue and in support of the notion of a new standard rate. Jerry drafted the letter and a copy is included in the packet. This letter could be used with DCFS, state legislators, federal legislators, and other publications.

Gladys also reported that this issue will be discussed at the National Foster Parent Association meeting in November. She has attended in the past and has asked to attend again this year to represent Illinois. She will utilize information compiled by the Legislative Committee in her work with the national organization.

**Recommendation: The committee asked the council to approve their use of this document for advocacy with legislators, letters to the editor, etc. The recommendation was accepted.**

## **Foster Parent Support Specialists**

No Report. Ronald Davis will now chair this committee. Tonya Duke, Debbie Freke and Mercedes Ball joined the committee.

## **Training – Debbie Freke**

*Key concerns include the following:*

- Quality of training has deteriorated on many levels
- Inability to encourage group discussions with small classes, can't conduct activities, etc.
- Problems with the training schedule
- Locations
- Applications are being collected, then trainings are being scheduled
- Class size
- Directions to training sites
- Trainer morale
- Lack of use of the co-trainer model as designed
- Materials do not arrive on time, or not enough to distribute to all participants
- Online access to registration, training credit, etc.
- No 9<sup>th</sup> session panels
- Inaccurate/incomplete rosters
- Cancellation/rescheduling issues
- 9 weeks of training completed in 2-1/2 weeks
- Placement disruptions due to a lack of ability to obtain training and verify training hours

**Rosie Starks volunteered to join the Training Committee.**

***Motion: Pat Welander moved that Uli Senz, SWFCAC Chair, and Debbie Freke, Training Committee Chair, form the foundation of a small group to sit down with Judy Zaleski to work toward identifying potential solutions to the foster parent training issues. Robyn Harvey seconded. The motion carried.***

**Suggestion:** Provide a detailed list of concerns in advance of the meeting.

**Recommendation:** Develop a SWFCAC policy that if a representative of this Council is contacted to address issues with their behavior as a representative of this body, the Chair should be present for that discussion.

## **Archives – Patricia Welander**

The committee met via teleconference and Pat stated that they have developed an increased understanding of the scope of this project. They are currently working to consolidate files.

## **Future Practice & Policy Committee – Robyn Harvey**

Robyn participated by teleconference. She stated that it sounds like they're still in the planning stages, as the policy establishing the group is not yet set.

### **Adoption Day Celebration – Ramon Nieves**

The committee is working on a plan to tie in with the opening of *Bella*, a major motion picture with a focus on adoption.

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

*Ethics Training* – The Governor’s Office requires all state board appointees to complete annual ethics training. ALL council members are required to review the packet provided and sign and return the last page to Terry.

*Caregiver Training Institutes/Conferences* – Notes from last meeting were included in the packet.

*Tentative dates and locations include the following:*

#### **CONFERENCES:**

February 22-23, 2008      Chicago Area Conference  
*Hyatt Lisle, tentative location*

March 7- 8, 2008      Southern Conference  
*Four Points Sheraton, Fairview Heights*

#### **INSTITUTES:**

March 1, 2008      Cook Institute  
*DCFS Cook South, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago*

March 15, 2008      Central Region – Peoria  
*Embassy Suites, East Peoria*

April 12, 2008      Northern Region – Aurora  
*Hampton Inn & Suites*

April 26, 2008      Central Region – Champaign  
*Hawthorne Suites*

The focus will be on trauma. A Save the Date article will be in the holiday issue of IL Families Now and Forever, with the full registration information in Volume 1 in January 2008.

### ***Announcement of New Appointments from Director (handout)***

Denice Murray – Executive Deputy Director

Robin Staggers – Chief of Staff

Joan Nelson-Phillips – Deputy Director, QA

Roman Moore III – Deputy Director – Planning and Performance Monitoring

Mike Ruzicka – RA, Southern Region

### **IFAPA FY’09 Conference – Gladys Boyd**

Gladys stated that they are working on solving hotel issues for the conference that is proposed to be held October 23-26, 2008. They are looking for volunteers to provide support throughout the conference.

**Agenda Items to be addressed in future meetings:**

- Respite policies and procedures – **Bill Schmidt**
- Update regarding the meeting with Training

**MOTION: Adrienne Welenc made the motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Leanne Montgomery. The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.**

The next meeting will be the joint meeting with the Adoption Advisory Council November 16<sup>th</sup> at 160 N. LaSalle, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, in Chicago. The SWFCAC will meet at 9:00am just before the joint meeting convenes at 10:00am.