

**ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Friday, October 7, 2005, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Northfield Inn & Suites, 3280 Northfield Drive**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**

Members Present	Members Absent	DCFS Staff
Kathy Casey	Donsetta Blakely	June Dorn
Sue Cianci	Patricia Cooper	Ray Gates
Arthur Davis	Gwenn Eyer	Bridgette Glickman
Ronald Davis	Jeanne Howard	Vanessa James
Mary Debose	Marianne Kelm	Jean Maher
Diane Dominguez	Joyce Loy	Terry McGlothlin
Brian Hall	Gina Samuels	Erwin McEwen
Vance Johnson	Terry Solomon	Judy Pence
James Jones	Bernadine Spitz	
Susanne Loss	Shannabeth Stein	
Dave Matthews	Kim Wheelock	<b>Guests</b>
Krista McCoy	Melinda Woods-Lis	Cindy Backstein
Marilyn Panichi		
Elizabeth Richmond		
Gretchen Schulert		
Penelope Ford (for Jackie Sharp Akins)		
Ron Tyler		

10:00 Welcome and Opening Remarks - Co-Chairs

Elizabeth Richmond & Jim Jones, Co-Chairs, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made by all in attendance.

**New Business**

Adoption Reform Law

Ray Gates said that Christina Schneider could not attend to give an update due to family illness. Ray reported that Christina and Liz Yore have the lead on the Adoption Reform Law. The steering committee met, with the objective of developing an implementation plan and budget to present to the Director for approval. Many members of the council will be serving on subcommittees and should receive an Email to schedule conference calls within the next few weeks. A list of subcommittees and the names of members on each subcommittee was circulated. Council members added their names to any subcommittees that they were interested in serving on. The Adoption Reform Law Summary was included on page 8 of member's packets.

Ray said that Christina offered to attend the November 18th meeting to give an update on the work that has been done, and will hopefully have the final version of the Adoptive Parent and Birth Parent Bill of Rights.

Adoption/Post Adoption FY06 Budget - June Dorn

June distributed and explained the following charts/information:

- \*Adoption/sg costs for FY'97 through FY'06, including subsidies, post-adoption services, Midwest Resource Center and other services (largely pre-adoption including legal services).
- \*Contract information on the Adoption Preservation contracts, which are now providing respite services.
- \*Adoption Support Spending & Number of Subsidies from FY'97 through FY'06
- \*Breakdown of AA/SG cases by county and by LAN
- \*Projected amounts for board payment/subsidy increases, and various caseload ratios
- \*2002 Median Monthly Subsidy amounts for other states (AFCARS Data)
- \*Summary of State Adoption Assistance Programs (8/2005) (NACAC Survey)
- \*Permanency Charts

#### Post Adoption Booklet - June Dorn

June reported that Division of Service Intervention staff is working on updates to the booklet. There are changes being made to the Post Adoption/SG Unit, including six additional staff, and work towards centralizing post adoption staff. They are hoping to have this in place this fall. These changes will be incorporated into the booklet.

June mentioned, and showed a sample of, a portfolio that Wisconsin uses for adoptive parents. The file is given to the adoptive parents at the time of adoption, and includes post adoption information, subsidy papers, and other pertinent information. Cynthia Moreno has approved pursuing a similar project for Illinois.

#### House Reform Committee - June Dorn

June distributed notes from the September 15th House Reform Committee hearing that was held in Chicago. One of the issues was that foster families have access to funds to purchase vans and remodel their houses but adoptive families do not have access. June clarified that DCFS does not purchase homes or vehicles for foster or adoptive parents. They do sometimes provide modifications to homes or vehicles to meet special needs. She also pointed out that SASS Services are available to everyone, including foster, adoptive, and even birth children. She passed out brochures on SASS and asked council members to get the word out to other families.

Diane Dominguez said that the hearing was well represented. Diane reported that it seemed that this was the first time some of the legislators had heard of these problems, and Repr. Feigenholtz said that they needed to hear more from adoptive/foster care families. Diane Dominguez organized a legislative/public policy workgroup to discuss the issues to bring to the attention of the legislature. Jim said he would channel the information back through the Child Care Association, and that this group should function outside of the auspices of the IL Adoption Advisory Council.

Mary Debose said the Human Services Appropriation Committee is chaired by Repr. Feigenholtz, and recommendations for DCFS appropriations would come to her committee first before the General Assembly votes on it. Mary suggested that families bring issues to the attention of their local legislators and the Senate Appropriations Committee that hears human service issues.

Ray said that Statewide Chair, Adrienne Welenc, invited Repr. Feigenholtz to the November 18th joint meeting of the AAC and SWFCAC.

Terry will check with the DCFS Legislative Office to find out if there will be a Springfield hearing and where and when it will be held.

#### Adoption/Post Adoption Report - Council Input - June Dorn

June said that the UIC Children's Research Center is putting together a report on Adoption/Post Adoption. Elizabeth said that she, along with Jim & Melinda, have a conference call scheduled with Mark Testa for October 12th to discuss how the council can provide input on the report that is being prepared. Elizabeth said she hopes to send information out to council members regarding participation in forming the report after the conference call with Mark Testa.

#### Response to Priorities Memo to Director - June Dorn

June said she needs feedback from the council on where the service gaps are and how they can be met. The Director will be using the report mentioned above as a guide. Dave Matthews said he would welcome the opportunity to provide feedback regarding mental health service gaps. Judy Pence said that the Adoption Preservation programs could also respond to this issue. June will pass any information on to Cynthia Moreno.

#### Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

##### Adoption Core Training

Ray said that Judy Zaleski would send someone to talk about the curriculum at a future meeting. Mary Debose said that they had just completed a 2-day meeting to finalize the curriculum. She said that the suggestions AAC members made to Karen Taylor had been incorporated into the text.

Membership - Ray said that we are working on filling vacancies on the council. A flyer was sent out to all adoptive parents in Cook North to identify candidates. Chris McGrath will be interviewing these candidates as they respond. Cook South has identified a possible candidate, an adoptive parent of five boys, and is awaiting her decision.

##### Foundation & Advanced Staff Training

Ray said that Gwenn Eyer and Kim Wheelock were appointed to represent the AAC on this committee.

##### Reorganization

Ray said that, in addition to the Post Adoption Unit reorganization, there is also a reorganization taking place in Operations, and changes are being rolled out in phases. Because the changes involve direct service staff, which is all bargaining unit staff, the changes had to be negotiated over the last several months with the bargaining unit. Postings have gone up to fill some of the vacancies, with more to come. Ray will pass on additional information as we learn about it.

#### Reports on SWFCAC/YAB/CWAC/CIAC/CFS

Bridgette referred to her report on page 13 of members' packets, and reviewed some of the highlights of each council's activities.

#### Adoption Day Event - Vanessa James & Bridgette Glickman

Vanessa said that she has not received many photos from adoptive families for the Family Album that they are putting together for the Adoption Celebration. She will send the flyer to Terry to send out to council members. Information on this was in Volume IV of Illinois Families Now & Forever. This could include families that have adopted privately. The deadline to submit photos is October 31.

Bridgette said the line-up for the Adoption Day Event at the Daley Center includes Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, Repr. Sara Feigenholtz, Director Bryan Samuels, and Merri Dee. Adoptive families will also be featured; including a former ward that was adopted by her foster mother, later became an adoptive parent herself, and works for DCFS. They are also looking for a family that is adopting that day. At 10:30 a.m. Uhlich Voices will perform, and the press conference will follow promptly at 11:00 a.m. The Heart Gallery will have half of their exhibit at the Daley Center and the other half in the lobby of the JRTC at 100 W. Randolph.

#### Grant Committee

Marilyn Panichi announced that Adoptions Unlimited had been awarded the federal grant that they had applied for. The Family Connections Project was developed in response to the federal funding opportunity for "Developing Adoption Services and Supports for Youth Who Wish to Retain Contact with Family Members in Order to Improve Permanency Outcomes". ACF found in the initial round of Child & Family Service Reviews that no state achieved substantial conformity on Permanency Outcome 1, which evaluates the timely achievement of permanency goals. One reason is they are not choosing appropriate permanency goals. ACF stated that a common situation in which inappropriate goals were being chosen was when youth were interested in maintaining contact with birth family or siblings.

The overall goal of the Family Connections project is to increase youth connection and permanency via a model that educates youth, families, child welfare professionals, and court personnel about openness in permanency; mediates open permanency arrangements; and assists youth in addressing emotional issues that impact permanency and well-being.

Curriculum will be developed during year one of this 5-year grant. Virginia Sturgeon, who developed the Legacy training curriculum, will be the primary writer of the curriculum. Karen Taylor will assist with the module for workers and Peggy Slater will assist with the module for court personnel. A module will also be developed for families and be a continuing education module of PRIDE training. A training process will also be developed for youth. An Advisory group and the DCFS Youth Advisory Board's members will serve as key resources for developing the curriculum and implementing the mediation component in years 2-5 for selected youth through the involvement of the Child and Family Teams. Mediation training will be provided by Patricia Dorner for key grant participants. The agency partners are DCFS and LSSI. The grant evaluation will be conducted by ISU, Susan Smith and Jeanne Howard.

### Newsletter - Vanessa James

Vanessa gave an update on what she has been doing with the adoption pages of the newsletter. Standard features in the adoption pages include updates on this council and a column on post-adoption hints, typically taken from her personal life experiences. Vanessa, Diane and Melinda recently met with the staff of the Cook County Post Adoption/SG Unit. Based on what they learned, in Volume V of the newsletter Vanessa will attempt to familiarize families with the Post Adoption/SG Unit, and try to give them an idea of the volume of cases that they handle. She is working on Volume 6, and focusing on legal issues. She has been talking to Linda Coon, who told her that there has been a lot of legislative action around adoption. Vanessa asked for ideas for the newsletter. Gretchen Schulert suggested doing an article on search and reunion.

### Legislative/Public Policy Workgroup - Ron, Art, Diane, Gretchen, Kathy, Mary

This group met during lunch to discuss what questions/issues they want to address with Repr. Feigenholtz at the November 18th meeting.

Their question to Repr. Feigenholtz is in three parts:

- \*Request a meeting so that adoptive parents that are in the trenches can articulate a range of critical services and funding issues.
- \*Who are others that we should be addressing or meeting with? Do we use Repr. Feigenholtz' name or do we not use her name when contacting others?
- \*What tactic do we use that will work with contacting legislators?

Diane saw an article in the Chicago Tribune regarding the September 14th hearing that read "Parents Meet with Representatives to talk about the needs of Disabled Adopted Children". She stressed that legislators need to be educated that when we talk about children with special needs we are not necessarily referring to disabled children.

After the meeting on 11/18, Jim Jones would like to have a conference call with the workgroup to discuss what issues he needs to take to the Child Care Association.

Ray said a conference call would be scheduled with Jim, Elizabeth & Adrienne Welenc, Chair of the SWFCAC, before 11/18 to coordinate the agenda, emphasizing the meeting with Repr. Feigenholtz.

### Program Improvement Plan - Erwin McEwen

Erwin presented a slide show on the status of the Program Improvement Plan. Handouts of the slides were distributed (attached). Erwin said that we are now into the third quarter of the Program Improvement Plan, so he would give an update as to where we are. The Federal Government conducted a Child & Family Services Review on every state, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Every state failed this review. This was a review of child welfare systems, and not just DCFS. DCFS represents the executive branch because we are an extension of the Governor's Office. The legislators and the Juvenile Court represent the judicial branch. It was a four-part study, structured as follows:

1. Review of data from NCANDS & AFCARS. NCANDS tracks abuse and neglect and how it repeats and whether or not our interventions had an impact on abuse and neglect. AFCARS is

about adoption data, timeliness, percentage of adoptions, and how we do those adoptions. This data is collected continually and reported to the federal government on a quarterly basis.

2. A Statewide Assessment was done by Illinois. DCFS looked at over 1300 cases, and did stakeholder interviews with every agency. We compiled that report and submitted it to the federal government on July 15, 2003. That was 60 days prior to their visit.
3. On-site review that began September 15, 2003. Interviews were held with stakeholders, advisory boards, judges, and attorneys in three counties - Charleston, Rock Island and Cook.
4. On-site review that began September 15, 2003 - Review of 50 case records. Regardless of the caseload in each state, they still only reviewed 50 cases. We had reviewed 1300 and the findings were pretty close to what their findings were, therefore we accepted the findings of their review as the condition of the child welfare system of Illinois. This helped us identify things that need to be addressed or repaired in that system.

All 50 states, Washington, DC & Puerto Rico were required to submit a program improvement plan to address these issues. Illinois completed their program improvement plan and it was accepted in December 2004.

The charts that Erwin used illustrated the following:

- Federal Outcomes and Items in Need of Improvement
- CFSR Baseline 9/83 - Where we were at when the review was done
- 1st Quarter - 1/31-2/4/05 results
- 2nd Quarter - 5/9-13/05 results
- 3rd Quarter - 8/1-5/05 results
- Goal that should be obtained if we are to be released from this PIP

Erwin explained that many of the numbers have gone down. As you start to change the system, and restructure with new programs such as Integrated Assessment, CAYIT, stabilization centers, etc., there may be a negative impact on the system initially. Following the 2 years of quarterly reports, plus one more year, the CFS Review Team will come back to determine if we are adequately maintaining the improvements. DCFS requested \$30 million be set aside for the PIP initiative at the same time that they were making cuts. This prompted questions by legislators and they became more aware of what is happening and are reacting. Repr. Feigenholtz has raised concern about these issues. Erwin says that his opinion is that we are struggling with the judiciary piece, which has a heavy impact on the timeliness. We haven't been able to get them to integrate the requirements of this plan into the Court Improvement Project that is overseen by the Supreme Court. Some of the individual courts have been helpful, such as Judge Martin Bishop, but they need cooperation from the Administrative Offices of Illinois Courts.

Erwin said that Title IVE funds would be impacted by the review results, and about 40% (approx. \$600 million) of the budget is on the line. Penalties run between 5-20%, and he expects Illinois to fall in the lower range because we were close in a lot of indicators. The best-case scenario would be approximately a \$50-\$60 million cut, and the worst would be \$175 million. This would probably affect the FY'08 DCFS budget.

## **Old Business**

Approval of Minutes of August 12, 2005 Meeting

***Marilyn made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Kathy Casey seconded. All approved and the motion passed.***

Agenda for Next Meeting/Wrap-Up

The next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, to be held at 160 N. LaSalle, Room N505, Chicago. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. At 10:30 a.m. council members will walk across the street to the Daley Center for the Adoption Day Celebration. Following the event, members of both councils will return to 160 N. LaSalle for lunch, and then separate meetings in the afternoon until 3:00 p.m.

Future Agenda Items Requested:

- Update on Adoption Core Training

- Update on Adoption Reform Law

- Repr. Feigenholtz

- FCS Provider

- Updated on revised licensing standards - 402 - 0 license for adoptive parents

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.