

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council**  
**Fairfield Inn & Suites, 1111 N. Henrietta Street, Effingham, Illinois**  
**January 16, 2009 ~ 9:00am – 2:15 pm**  
**Approved Minutes**

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>	<b>DCFS STAFF</b>	<b>GUESTS</b>
Angela Barber	Mercedes Ball	Arden Ancona	Julie Cebulski
Ronald Davis	Gladys Boyd	Michael Bollman	Karen Funkhouser
Tonya Duke	Debbie Freke	Robert Cain	Kim Hilvety
Robyn Harvey	Royann Garcia	Gwenn Eyer	Vicky Kline
Birdia Jenkins	Cecil Garner	Ray Gates	Maria Levengood
Sheila Jones	Leanne Montgomery	Cindy McCleary	Mark Pederson
Debra McGee	Kim Perez	Terry McGlothlin	Lynn Retna
Ramon Nieves	Heather Schumacher	Lynda Petrick	Cindy Spurgeon
Rolinda Robinson	Pamela Seals	Judy Rehder	
Uli Senz		Michael Ruzicka	
Steve Steinhardt		Kendra Storme	
Patty Welander		Leslie Werkmeister	

**Hospitality**

Tonya Duke, Southern Region, 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 that 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.

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Statewide Recruitment Plan/Work - Judy Rehder and Lynda Petrick**

Judy gave some background information, stating that recruitment is not necessarily the issue, but rather the dropping numbers of available foster homes. Families are dropping for reasons that may be classified as both “good” and “bad” – some are adopting or retiring; others may be unhappy with support or service delivery. Two years ago an administrative recruitment approach was developed and this is a continuation of that initiative. Recruitment Councils are being developed throughout the state to identify homes for children. (They are not looking for adoption-oriented families.) Researchers are focused on identifying high risk/high needs areas. The councils’ leaders are administrators or managers with the ability to compel participation. A facilitator runs the actual recruitment council meetings. All of the work is being done in-house due to financial constraints.

The objective is to immediately establish local recruitment councils that will direct, coordinate and implement localized recruitment efforts. The statewide leadership team will assist the regions to implement local councils in identified targeted recruitment sites. The council includes management and staff from Operations, DCP, LAN/resources and Licensing. Ray Gates suggested that foster

parents, including members of the Statewide Council, be added to the local recruitment councils. Judy agreed and said she would take that forward.

Although the initial program was targeted to DCFS' needs, private agencies have been invited to work together in this effort. Licensing staff, placement staff, DCP, adoption workers, etc. all work together to develop recruitment strategies. In addition to recruitment, they are looking at developing support networks. Sometimes a person may not be ready or willing to be a foster parent, but they could be a mentor or provide other support to fostering. Training issues are also being addressed.

*Discussion:*

- The School Minders System initiative prompted some of this work, focusing on neighborhood-based placements to keep children and youth connected with their local school systems. Based on the number and types of foster homes, sometimes workers must drive quite a distance to find foster homes for children.
- The foster home availability list does not include every home with a license. One factor in the availability list is the openness to work toward reunification. The availability list, updated weekly, feeds into CAPU which works to identify placements closest to home school districts. First priority on the search is the reunification criteria.
- Council members identified staff/agency support as a critical need to enhance retention.
- Kendra Storme reported that the new Foundations training offers the opportunity for a Foster/Adopt PRIDE trainer to attend the staff training to define training content from the foster parent perspective.
- Council members strongly supported development/maintenance of the supports and customer service aspects of retention. On the front end, members cautioned that we should not be recruiting until Licensing is ready to immediately contact interested persons then stick with them all the way through the licensing process.
- People present addressed problems with utilizing CAPU when so little information is provided to assist agencies with matching and placement.
- Folks noted that there have been many recruitment plans throughout the years, and a common problem/theme has been lack of staff support for folks interested in getting licensed.
- Members questioned what made this plan different and innovative enough to ensure success. Judy stated that nothing guarantees success but this approach indicates a commitment to finding solutions.
- Ray stated that the recruitment plans fall under the purview of the SWFCAC and indicated the council's willingness to be a part of the process both individually and collectively. Judy agreed to come back and keep the Council updated. He also stated that conference calls are being held to address development of the new State Diligent Recruitment Plan that is due in May. Management from various divisions and the private sector will participate in developing a plan that reflects recruitment work that is going on throughout the state.

Please see handouts/attachments.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Approval of Minutes from 11/21/08 Meeting

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

### Final Reports to the Director

There were no final reports to the Director. Council members received the monthly Director's Report via Email.

### **Working Lunch – Southern Region Advisory Council - Michael Ruzicka**

Mr. Ruzicka discussed current activities within the Southern Region. He indicated that he is looking at a community focus – stating that grassroots change comes from within.

- Their main goal is to be community-connected. He mentioned some possibilities for using community-based funding for back-to-school materials for our children and youth and the potential for hosting community-based recruitment fairs.
- They have offered training regarding racism and want to focus on servicing the population they serve. Ramon asked for general counts regarding the makeup of their population, suggesting that they utilize the Hispanic Consortium for more information.
- They've offered a Non-violent Compassionate Communication course and training for managers and supervisors as well as staff.
- They've offered training for investigations about reviewing evidence
- The region is reconfiguring their steering committee, looking for people who really want to have an impact on the community.
- Mr. Ruzicka said he is trying to take the emphasis off numbers and putting it back on relationships. They have the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) which assists in focusing family to family team meetings and promotes not only parental participation but also the family's relatives and community support in those meetings.
- They are working hard to "work smarter" connecting with community resources and working well with the resources they have. He indicated that although they haven't been able to add staff, people are working long hours to serve the children and families of the Southern Region.
- Michael Bollman reported that the Regional Foster Parent Council meets quarterly, utilizing eight sites throughout the region. People participate via teleconference from satellite locations to reduce the drive time. They meet in the evenings to better accommodate attendance. Participants receive a general meeting calendar through IFN&F and sometimes receive reminders from staff.
- Mr. Ruzicka said there are copies of the implementation plan at every office and staff has informed their foster parents that they may review the plan at an office and sign indicating their approval prior to the final sign-off each November.
- Mr. Ruzicka stated that the Southern Region continues to use a reality-based case scenario approach to Foster Parent Law training for both foster parents and staff. They review the scenario and discuss pertinent aspects of the FP Law in relation to each scenario. Participants are able to witness the application of the Foster Parent Law to day-to-day situations. Mass mailings go out regarding this training.
- Mr. Ruzicka spoke a bit about budget stresses including how the formerly pending layoffs, with a reprieve announcement the week of Thanksgiving, continue to affect staff. He stated the region has open positions they're unable to fill, much turnover, and new staff due to staff movement into other positions.
- They've been working with Head Start to ensure that our children are enrolled in some type of early intervention program.
- Southern Region hosted a Partnering with (birth) Parents Information Fair in Mt. Vernon and has developed councils in East St. Louis and Salem. Mr. Ruzicka indicated that when parents find out they're not alone they are empowered to succeed in reunification.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Policy Committee**

The Policy Committee met via teleconference January 7, 2009. They discussed the following:

- Changes to the Foster Parent Survey included in the Implementation Reviews. The six choice Likert Scale was a bit much for phone interviews, so the committee refined it to include only three responses.

**Recommendation: change response options to True, Mostly True and Not True which will translate directly into the review summaries. Recommendation voted down.**

**Motion: Patty Welander moved to restate the options to: True, Somewhat True and Not True. Sheila Jones seconded. Motion carried.**

**Recommendation: Eliminate the term “sufficient” from question 8. Recommendation unanimously approved.**

- Ray and Heather will conduct the Implementation Review Training during the February meeting. The chair stressed the importance of attendance at this meeting.

- Rule 340 – rule has not been adjusted per Council recommendations to include #7.5. Ray stated that changes made to 340 have gone to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). JCAR is comprised of members of the General Assembly who review rules to ensure that the changes are appropriate. JCAR changed the numbering to make new right 7.5 number 8, and then renumbered the remaining points. This change will be in effect once the DCFS Director signs off and will impact plans only in that numbering will change. Content should not change. Tonya Duke recognized that changing numbering would automatically throw tracked changes into the rest of the plan, requiring each narrative to be scored. **Gwenn will make revisions to the Style Sheet to indicate that scorers should not identify the renumbering as a revision.**

Patty Welander questioned scoring criteria that are inaccurate and might promote a review and recommendation for policy change. Uli stated his recommendation that narratives seven and eight be reversed since the initial information should appear before ongoing information in logical order. **The chair referred these two issues to the Policy Committee and requested that Sheila Jones, Legislative Chair, sit in on the committee meeting addressing them.**

- Another concern shared with the council was an implementation plan that seemed to have many similar cut and paste type revisions that were inappropriate. Scorers were concerned that the plan would be distributed to foster parents in that format. The situation was resolved by scoring the plan as submitted, as required, but requesting that the extraneous material be removed and the plan for foster parent distribution be resubmitted for file. (The reformatted plan has been received and filed.)

- There are many inconsistencies in plan style. Some agencies list rights first, then responsibilities with running numbers; others number rights and responsibilities individually. Foster Parent Law is numbered 1-14 and 1-17, and the Policy Committee may make a recommendation regarding numbering style. **The chair referred this back to the committee with a request for recommendation at the next meeting.**

### **Adolescent Issues/Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) – Robyn Harvey**

Robyn said someone on the Council needs to replace her as the chair of this subcommittee. She indicated that she has not had much luck with inclusion in their work, and no one has been returning

her phone calls (0 for 5). Robyn said the Council does need to be a continued presence. She had a conversation with Katrina Schroeder who indicated that things are still in a state of reconstruction. Katrina told Robyn that Thu Vo from the Director's Office has indicated that they are considering bringing former SYAB members back to the board in an advisory capacity as they move forward.

**Archives – Patti Welander** – Patti is continuing to go through the materials and sorting them. She noted that many of the items she's reading correspond to current issues being addressed and suggested that as she finds items with application to current issues she will share with the subcommittees. Ray stated that sometimes the record does not tell the whole story. Patti agreed with Ray and stated she will ask Ray and work group members to add the historical perspective that may be missing from the archives.

**Legislation – Sheila Jones**

Sheila stated that much of the legislative work is currently focused on impeachment, and she indicated that no one is really clear on how the outcome will impact the budget. During the last CWAC meeting the Director and others discussed the current budget saying DCFS is challenged to meet a budget without all of the needed funds. Sheila said DCFS maintains that they have monies allocated so that they can pay substitute caregivers. They also indicated that in the future, concerns may center on the timeliness of payments to other providers, including POS agencies.

Sheila reported that some of the initial fear regarding DCFS staff cuts has been alleviated due to funding restorations, adding that there is still a priority to license relative caregivers. Steve Steinhardt stated that POS agencies have been encouraged to look at other funding sources to provide back-up in case state payments are delayed. He also indicated that another strategy would require counseling services to become Medicaid providers.

**Training – Patty Welander for Debbie Freke** – The Training Committee discussed DCFS Training (potentially) providing the PRIDE manual in DVD format. (Training's current proposal is to provide hard copy loaner manuals for use during training with only the DVD provided for home use.) The committee noted problems with this approach, including foster parents' possible lack of access to DVD players and the lack of interest in viewing an entire video to find information they are looking for.

**Recommendation: While the SWFCAC supports the idea of offering an additional resource such as the PRIDE training in DVD format, we cannot support the DVD option as the sole training resource. Recommendation approved.**

**Recommendation: Do not provide the Foster Parent Handbook solely in DVD format. Recommendation approved.**

Ray asked if the chair needed to direct him to update Craig Missel regarding these issues. The Council continues its recommendation that the best training model is the co-trainer model for the best practice. If the training drops to less than ten participants it is cancelled if it has not started. If it has already started, it will drop to a single trainer. The chair referenced an Email reply to committee questions addressed to Joan Langan. The overall conclusion appears to be that decisions are budget driven.

**Motion: On behalf of the Council and foster parents in Illinois the SWFCAC chair will write a letter of inquiry expressing concern regarding earlier discussions with Training Unit management that the co-trainer model is adhered to throughout the state. This letter will**

**address the dedication to Right #2 in the Foster Parent Law. Ramon withdrew the motion and Robyn referred this issue back to the Training committee.**

*Discussion Notes:*

- Arden Ancona, audience member, stated that in her area they might only offer one training per year, so if they cancel training due to small class size/no co-trainer that eliminates training entirely.
- Kendra Storme, DCFS Training, stated that she has pushed to continue training the smaller groups in some less active areas.
- Perhaps this committee could secure statistics including completed training attendance numbers and locations, cancelled classes with number registered, etc. for use in formulating their recommendations.

Respite – Gladys Boyd - No report due to Gladys' absence.

## **REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS/COMMITTEES**

Future Policy & Practice - Robyn said they are still on break, so there was no report.

Foster Kids Are Our Kids – No report.

National Governor's Association (NGA) Youth Policy Task Force – No report.

Foster Parent Support Specialists - Ronald Davis

Ronald questioned whether there is still a need to have a Foster Parent Support Services subcommittee. Initially the Director asked the council to back up their recommendation to add support specialists by providing proof of the effectiveness of that position. Ronald stated that the Director had indicated to him that he would move away from the Foster Parent Support Specialist position, but agreed to fill the existing positions. Ronald went on to say that the Director's new plan called for Foster Parent Recruiters for the obvious purpose of recruiting new foster homes. He noted that with the current budget shortfall, the Director's new initiative will be kept on hold until further notice.

**Action: Table the work of this subcommittee, leaving things as they are now and revisit within a few months to re-evaluate the role.**

Caregiver Institutes – Ronald Davis

Ray distributed a "Save the Dates" flyer. Ronald stated that dates and locations are locked in and work is being done to plan the institutes.

Strengthening Families

Robyn reported that they have requested that the council schedule a Parent Café the night before the next meeting. Those who expressed interest in participating include the following: Angela Barber, Debra McGee, Sheila Jones, Ronald Davis, Uli Senz and Ray Gates.

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

- Ray stated that the APT training in preparation for Agency Reviews will be conducted before the end of February. Council co-trainers will include Angela Barber, Patty Welander, Jerry Welenc and Robyn Harvey. APT's set up the reviews, interview foster parents and meet council members on site to convene the reviews which will be conducted throughout the month of March.

- Planning for Caregiver Institutes is well underway. Ray stated that the administration has asked the committee to focus on mental health issues. Presenters will be working to address COA standards during their presentations.
- No caregiver conferences will be hosted this year, due to budget constraints.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Chapin Hall Report**

This discussion was tabled until the February meeting. Robyn stated that the Director has charged the Councils with studying the report and identifying practice issues to further support foster parents.

### **Tax Booklets for Foster and Adoptive Families**

Robyn stated that these booklets have been discontinued. Caregivers meeting income eligibility can still gather information and support through the tax project.

## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

Cook North – Cecil Garner, Royann Garcia - No report - members absent.

Cook South – Angela Barber, Rosie Starks

Angela stated that they decided that their council should focus on recruitment, recruiting new foster parents as well as foster parent council members. They are mailing flyers and foster parents are bringing other foster parents to council meetings. Their next meeting is scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup>. Staff support for this council: Gloria Long Orange and Rod Mulford.

Cook Central – Birdia Jenkins, Rolinda Robinson

Rolinda said at their last meeting November 26<sup>th</sup>, Christine Feldman and Howard Goldstein spoke about adoption issues and changes in court practice. Their next meeting is January 27<sup>th</sup> and Peter Gonzales from the State Treasury will speak about credit cards and finances.

Northern – Debbie Freke, Robyn Harvey

Robyn said the summer hiatus has extended into the fall and winter. She noted a pattern of difficulty resuming following summer breaks. Stakeholders will meet to try to revamp and recreate a strong advisory council.

Southern – Tonya Duke - Covered during the earlier presentation.

Central – Pat Welander, Leanne Montgomery, Pamela Seals - No report.

### **Agenda for Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2009, at the Eastland Suites, 1801 Eastland Drive, Bloomington. ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY for implementation review training. Members must attend the entire meeting in order to have their lodging provided and transportation expenses paid. Any exceptions requested must be approved by Ray – in advance.

### **Adjourn**

**Birdia Jenkins made a motion to adjourn. Angela Barber seconded. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:25p.m.**