

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
 January 17, 2008, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 Ramada Limited North, Springfield, IL
 Minutes (Approved as Written on 2/15/08)**

Members Present	Members Absent	DCFS Staff	Guests
Mercedes Ball	Ronald Davis	Gwenn Eyer	Cindy Backstein
Angela Barber	Tonya Duke	Ray Gates	Laura Marquette
Gladys Boyd	Nancy Lauffenberger	Vanessa James	Addie Mayfield
Debbie Freke		Joan Langan	Mick Polowy
Cecil Garner		Jean Maher	Josie Rocco
Robyn Harvey		Terry McGlothlin	Ronald Sutee
Ruth Jajko		Craig Missel	
Birdia Jenkins		Susan Netznik	
Sheila Jones			
William Miller			
Leanne Montgomery			
Ramon Nieves			
Rolinda Robinson			
Heather Schumacher			
Pamela Seals			
Uli Senz			
Rosie Starks			
Steve Steinhardt			
Patricia Welander			
Adrienne Welenc			

Leanne Montgomery, Hospitality Chair, welcomed council members and guests to the meeting, noting that the minutes would be recorded to assure accurate minutes. Uli Senz opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Draw Agencies to be Reviewed in 2008

Heather Schumacher, Policy Committee Chair, asked various council members to randomly draw the names of agencies and regions to be reviewed in 2008 on the implementation of their Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. The following agencies/regions were drawn:

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|---|------------------------------------|
| Alliance | Evangelical |
| Baby Fold | Hephzibah |
| Bethany for Children and Families | Hull House Assoc. |
| Catholic Charities Peoria | Kaleidoscope |
| Catholic Charities Rockford | Life Link |
| Catholic Social Services of Southern Illinois | Lutheran Child and Family Services |
| Chaddock | Shelter Inc. |
| Child Link | United Methodist Children's Home |
| ChildServ | Universal Family Connection |
| Children's Home Association of IL | Westside Holistic |
| DCFS Cook South | Youth Campus |
| DCFS Southern Region | Youth Services Bureau |

Status of Plan Scoring

Terry reported that there are about 10 plans left to score and five members that have not yet scored. She will get those plans assigned today. Plans need to be scored and returned to Terry by the end of the month.

11-16-07 Meeting Minutes

Uli asked for any corrections or revisions to the minutes. *Adrienne made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Sheila second. The motion carried.*

Final Reports to the Director

Uli said there are no final reports to the Director. He said that his monthly report to the Director is in member's packets, and added that Director McEwen responded via email to the report this month.

Regional Reports

Cook North – Cecil said he met with the RA and another staff member and discussed council meeting agendas.

*In November a calendar was sent out announcing upcoming meetings.

*At the December meeting, Cecil and Jackie Bright reviewed what had transpired over the past year and talked about the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

*Nine caregivers attended the January 8th meeting, where the caregiver conferences were discussed.

*The March meeting will feature confidentiality training and will be open to staff and foster parents.

*Cecil said Ms. Bright said that foster parent licenses would now need to be renewed every three years vs. four years. Susan will check on this issue.

*They are setting up times to have regional photos done. There was question about if children's fingerprints need to be done every year. Susan Netznik will check to see what is required in policy as far as fingerprinting and Ray will send the information out to council members.

*There was concern that case managers tend to not inform foster parents that there is funding for reunification. Ray suggested that Cecil work with Jackie to make sure workers and foster parents are at the training and invite Peggy Slater to provide training. Vanessa said she is doing a regular article called "Homeward Bound" that will highlight reunification issues routinely in the newsletter.

Cook South - Angela said that at their last meeting they discussed their 2007 accomplishments and planned for 2008. Someone came in to do a mini presentation from an agency that provides services to youth 9-17 in foster care. Vanessa said she will be writing about this in a future edition of the newsletter.

Cook Central - Adrienne said their last meeting was in November. The agenda included training on COA and a presentation on Lifebooks. They did not meet in December. On January 3rd they did Lifebook training with foster parents and children attending together. They are planning another session like this for February 11th. Next week they have scheduled a meeting and will have a nutritionist from Dominican University. They have a CPR class scheduled for January 29-30. The American Red Cross will provide the free training for four hours each day.

Adrienne said that COA does ask for this training, and their RA is looking into the cost of having some staff trained. At their February meeting they will provide tax training.

Northern - Robyn said they met November 13 and January 8. They have a roaming regional council, so Deb Freke was in Aurora and Robyn in Rockford, with 48 total in attendance. Robyn gave a presentation on 100 bits of information your caseworker wants you to know. In February they will do court training with DCFS Legal and CASA, and repeat that training in March in Waukegan. They are planning one implementation plan training meeting in each of the two subregions. Robyn said she speaks to the regional reporter after each meeting to give information for the newsletter. She said that there were a lot of private agency foster parents with complaints at the last meeting and she referred them to APT. Robyn said she was interviewed by COA as the northern region chairperson.

Southern - The Minutes from the Southern Region's November 6th meeting were included in the member packets.

Central - Patti said they met last Wednesday. People were at various sites and came together via conference call. They discussed the smoking ban. The Regional Administrator will have an aggressive agenda for the next few months, with 4 meetings in different regions, following the COA track. A week before the COA reviews he will meet with foster parents to discuss the reunification initiative, and how COA affects foster parents. He will not be going to all of the offices in the spring but will cover those in the fall.

There were two questions from Central Region:

1. Can both foster parents have their name on the medical card and checks? Some providers in Central Region were not accepting the medical card if the parent whose name was not on it took the child to the dr. appointment.
2. Can foster parents be given access to DNET? Cindy Backstein said there is a lot on the PrairieNet site, but frequently it makes reference to the DNET. Heather suggested a Google search and said many forms are available on the DCFS website. Patti said she is hesitant to recommend it because DNET holds documents that are confidential. Ray asked what public information exists on DNET that people can't get access to on the DCFS website. Patti will email those that were on the call to get more details and forward that information to Ray.

Committee Reports

Policy Committee - Heather said that council members are focusing on scoring plans, and the committee has not met recently.

Adolescent Issues - Robyn reported that she has been attending the SYAB meetings, and reported the following:

*At the November Youth Board meeting, Dennis Cassidy gave a presentation on an initiative called PRIDE of the Rainbow – LGBTQPAI initiative. They have a mission statement and have met with Dr. Larry Small and other key DCFS staff. They want to put a piece in core training in dealing with this population, and would also like it included in PRIDE training.

*There have been some issues at the SYAB meetings. Deputy Cynthia Moreno's office is aware and has scheduled a board developer to come in for three days at their March meeting to talk about how a board runs.

*Regional board meeting minutes seem to be going well, and they have given permission to send one of our committee members to each of the regional meetings. Being at the regional meetings will give us insight to what their issues are. Adrienne said that since Cook merged into one meeting, attendance is much lower.

*The Division of service Intervention reported that there would be a change in contracts for ILP and TLP's. They will be performance based contracts and have benchmarks for youth to meet. Three of the benchmarks will be educational & vocational progress, money & budgeting and healthy living environments. They are also changing so that everyone gets the same curfew and same allowance based on age.

*Get Goal'd website should roll out in May. Committees are being formed to plan subregional youth summits this year.

*Robyn said that she is now regularly getting meeting information from CAPS.

Training – Debbie Freke said there was nothing new to report, but reiterated that the concerns expressed during an earlier meeting with Training are being addressed and new methods of implementation show promise.

Legislative – Ruth Jajko said the issue of foster parent rates is still on their radar screen. She indicated that they're looking forward to the spring session when they'll rely on everyone's advocacy when the budget issues heat up. The other legislation they're watching is the federal regulation around kinship caregivers. Neither of the Illinois senators have signed on, so council members could write to encourage their support. Danny Davis is one of the sponsors and they've heard that he has a plan to move forward, so members were encouraged to continue their support.

Archives - Patricia Welander said she is working with Terry to gather materials. The committee has not met recently.

Resource Family Subcommittee/Reunification – Ruth Jajko said there's a new form and discussion points that workers will review with foster parents to survey them, asking them to participate in reunification work as reunification foster parents. Nearly all new cases will fit in this category. The goal is to have this information updated in the Foster Home Availability Database (FHAD) by April 1 so that when a child comes in they will look at the geographic area as well as the listing of homes that agree to do reunification work. Ruth read from the December 3rd Monday Report, that the system includes first searching for reunification homes within the school geography, then school geography only, and then reunification homes. This process is standardized and promotes the ability for foster parents to make an informed decision. Discussion concerned the sanctions that might be leveled against foster parents that might change their minds as they go through the progress. Ray stated that no sanctions are built in. Foster parents who decline reunification work will be asked to parent children and youth already in the system, i.e., disrupted placements.

Future Policy and Practice – No report

Policy Review – Susan Netznik

Susan Netznik spoke to the council about how policy, procedure and rulemaking are handled by the DCFS Policy Office, and the JCAR (Joint Committee on Administrative Rules) process. She

answered questions from council members and guests and stressed that she welcomes input from caregivers and council members.

Smoke Free Illinois

Susan said that Draft Rule 402 was based on the Senate bill (not a law). When the Senate bill became a public act, the part about foster homes was added. DCFS was not involved in this development. Susan advised on how council members could impact policy:

- Take action promptly
- Write to the legislature as a group or as individuals
- Provide petitions
- Provide a head count as to the loss of foster homes in meeting this requirement

Susan said the Policy Office does not write the laws. They provide legal research regarding past and present policies, and write DCFS policy based on public acts that are passed. Those that will be involved in drafting the rule will include DCFS Licensing, Policy, and council members from this group and others. Council members were encouraged to participate during the development of the policy. Council members agreed to act as individuals regarding the foster home smoking ban issue.

Vision & Support for Caregivers - Velma Williams/Judy Zaleski:

Assistant Director Velma Williams participated via conference call and apologized that she could not be there in person due to a schedule conflict. She spoke about changes DCFS is making in terms of providing training and support to caregivers statewide. Velma thanked Mick Polowy for coming to speak to the council today. She said they are working to pull together training and support in an effort to better meet the learning needs of caregivers and help them understand some of the challenges for the department in meeting some of their mandated goals. A PowerPoint presentation was shown titled “A Vision and Strategy for Training”. Velma turned the discussion over to Judy Zaleski.

Discussion:

- New workers will now be required to attend session 1 and 2 of PRIDE Pre Session.
- “Essential training” – Mick Polowy continues to be a consultant to the updates being made to the PRIDE Pre Sessions and the integration of PRIDE into Foundation Training. All of the digital PRIDE training modules will be offered when appropriate for Caregiver in-service training and will be incorporated throughout Foundation Training.
- Caseworkers will be encouraged to go to PRIDE with foster parent participants.
- All state universities have a relationship with the Department. They have scheduled a Dean and Directors meeting to talk about their role in supporting the Department in these efforts.
- DCFS is working to examine the Director’s initiatives and how they are implemented in PRIDE training. The PRIDE materials are so strong that they will always be used as a foundation for training.

Judy stated that additional staff will be hired as regional coordinators. People with real leadership ability will do scheduling and locations, but will also work to nurture and assist PRIDE Master Trainers and work with Family Development Specialists and the Foster Parent Councils to craft the Learning Circles, providing an opportunity to do things on a little higher

level. They will also work on the development of upper level training programs. Six coaches will also be hired to help support caseworkers implement key initiatives.

Judy distributed the draft training opportunities document based on a request from the council. She asked that council members review the document and send comments ASAP.

Presentation on Digital PRIDE Modules – Mick Polowy

Mick has worked for CWLA for 17 years. He's currently working in cooperation with Governor's State University, and often comes back to Illinois to provide support for the training programs here. Mick gave a brief history on the development of PRIDE, and made the following points:

- Digital training is designed to supplement, not replace, classroom training. It may be used to "make up" missed sessions.
- Digital training will not be required – classroom training is always the first option.
- Instructions will be provided when CD's are distributed, and are included in the handouts distributed.
- They are looking at upgrading the Registration phone line.
- A Core course will be tailored specifically to licensing workers.
- Training will be available to current workers as well as new hires.
- Digital training is designed to run the same length as the classroom training.
- These will work with the mutual assessment process to meet identified learning needs.
- These are designed for individual use – couples will be trained separately.
- The worker training program provides a solid overview of the five core competencies in the PRIDE program. They will not only learn about how foster parents will learn to meet those competencies, but also what they need to know/do to support foster parents as they meet the competencies.

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

Conferences and Institutes

*Ray distributed flyers for upcoming Caregiver Training Conferences and briefly described the conference events. He requested council participation on two Hot Topics sessions. Foster parents will earn seven credit hours. Uli asked for members to staff the table in Lisle and in Fairview Heights. Angela Barber will staff the table in Fairview Heights.

*Ray distributed flyers for upcoming Caregiver Training Institutes and briefly described the institute events. Foster parents will receive five training credit hours. Ray asked council members to promote the conferences and institutes within their local regions.

*Ray stated that Larry Chasey indicated that he thought it was a good idea for regional foster parent councils to be represented in the institutes and have an informational table to recruit and/or meet with members.

*Terry will order Council brochures for each conference. She will also send 100 brochures to Robyn Harvey.

Travel Reimbursement – Ray encouraged council members to submit paperwork for travel reimbursement as quickly as possible. If a voucher is submitted more than 60 days after the travel date, the travel reimbursement will be considered taxable income.

Legislative Proposals – Ray received a response from Dana Yowell, DCFS Legislative Liaison, that due to the unusual circumstances in the General Assembly during the past year and upcoming in 2008, technical legislative proposals are being held until next fall.

Membership from Cook County Juvenile Court – Ray followed up on a suggestion to appoint someone to the council from the Cook County Juvenile Court. He said he spoke with legal staff and determined that this would not necessarily provide a general representation of Cook County Juvenile Court or a background in child welfare practice overall.

Miscellaneous Discussion:

Cindy Backstein stated that a legislative contact she made around the COLA issue stated that legislation has been drafted to give adoption and subsidized guardianship families the COLA increase to catch them up to foster parents.

Heather asked about the lapse in having a medical card and subsidy payment after adopting. Ray asked Heather to email him with details and he will follow up and report back in February.

Motion: Heather Schumacher made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Sheila Jones; the meeting adjourned at p.m.