

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council/Illinois Adoption Advisory Council
Joint Meeting
APPROVED MINUTES
November 16, 2007
160 N. LaSalle, Chicago, Illinois
9:30 a.m. – 1:50 p.m.**

<p>SWFCAC Members Present Mercedes Ball Angela Barber Gladys Boyd Tonya Duke Debbie Freke Robyn Harvey Ruth Jajko Birdia Jenkins Sheila Jones Willy Miller Leanne Montgomery Ramon Nieves Rolinda Robinson Pamela Seals Heather Schumacher Uli Senz Rosie Starks Steve Steinhardt Patricia Welander Adrienne Welenc</p>	<p>AAC Members Present Donsetta Blakely Dr. Robert Bloom Kathy Casey Mary Debose DeAudrey Davis Diane Dominguez Gwenn Eyer Betty Johnson Jim Jones Patricia Kelso Alan Marcus Lisa Myles Elizabeth Richmond Gretchen Schulert Jackie Sharp Carol Sheley Kim Wheelock Linda Wolter</p>	<p>SWFCAC Members Absent Cecil Garner Nancy Lauffenberger</p> <p>AAC Members Absent Patricia Cooper Susanne Loss Joyce Loy Dave Matthews Krista McCoy Dorothy McGee Roman McCray Kate Monte Judy Pence Gina Samuels Michele Seidl Ron Tyler Karen Wardlaw</p>	<p>DCFS Staff June Dorn Gwenn Eyer Ray Gates Bridgette Glickman Vanessa James Director Erwin McEwen Rob Mulford Kim Peck Kevin Walsh Deputy Velma Williams</p> <p>Guests Mary Henderson Marilyn Panichi Jerry Welenc</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Hospitality

Adrienne Welenc welcomed members and guests, stating that the meeting would be recorded to assure accurate minutes.

Welcome and Introductions

Elizabeth Richmond, IAAC Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. She asked members to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes from 10/19/07 SWFCAC Meeting

Motion: Patricia Welander made the motion to accept the minutes. Gladys Boyd seconded. The motion carried and the minutes were accepted as written.

Approval of Minutes from 10/5/07 IAAC Meeting

Motion: Cathy Casey made the motion to accept the minutes. Diane Dominguez seconded. The motion carried and the minutes were accepted as written.

Training Update – Uli Senz, SWFCAC Chair

Uli said that a meeting was held with the Office of Training and representatives from the SWFCAC. The meeting was held to address a number of training issues that were identified by council members and outside stakeholders at the last SWFCAC meeting. Uli stated that eight concerns were shared at the meeting, indicating that the meeting was very positive and participants were hopeful that stated resolutions would be implemented in a timely manner.

- **Concern:** PRIDE classes need to have a minimum number of attendees in order to successfully implement the program. **Response:** Many trainings were scheduled during the transition, and conducted as scheduled. Now they will maintain a regional training list and will schedule trainings as the minimum class size of 8 is reached.
- **Concern:** Lack of necessary training materials to participants: **Response:** Training office will send out materials for the maximum number of participants who may be accommodated at the site.
- **Concern:** PRIDE is designed as a co-trainer model, with a professional foster parent paired with a child welfare professional. **Response:** Class size will address the issue, with two trainers assigned for the larger classes.
- **Concern:** Training credit is not entered in a timely manner, delaying licensing and re-licensure, with placements in jeopardy. **Response:** Training assured this group that pre-service credits are up-to-date, in-service training credits will be entered by the end of the year, and credits will now be entered in a timely fashion.
- **Concern:** Trainers do not have a tool to track PRIDE Connections. **Response:** Training will issue a paper form to track PRIDE Connections until a tracking tool is available on the Virtual Training Center.
- **Concern:** Directions to trainings were incomplete or incorrectly written. **Response:** The Training Office is developing a network of regional coordinators who will eventually address this issue. In the meantime, detailed directions will be developed and provided.
- **Concern:** PRIDE sessions 1-9 have been presented in less than three weeks, with no consideration for the time needed for completing Connections, etc. **Response:** No more than two sessions per week will be scheduled.
- **Concern:** PRIDE panels are not being scheduled for the ninth session. **Response:** This has been addressed, and they are working hard to develop panels. Training is committed to pursuing leadership in this area.
- **Concern:** The morale of trainers is very low throughout the state. **Response:** The trainers have experienced wrinkles that have been brought about by the transition. Training's hope is that the proposed changes will improve morale. Concerns about the payment cap will be addressed.

The PRIDE training curriculum will be a part of worker training beginning early next year. Workers will attend classes with prospective foster parents.

Adoption Preservation Program, Kids Hope United – Mary Henderson

June Dorn introduced the presenter, first explaining that there are a number of post adoption programs throughout the state. The Adoption Preservation and Linkage (APL) programs are new, with two agencies in Chicago and another in Aurora. These agencies are System of Care providers, and the Director has shifted some of their attention to adoption and guardianship families.

Mary is the supervisor of the program which assesses children. She explained that on the anniversary month of the adoption, families receive a letter from the provider agencies requesting that they participate in assessments which may link them to services and supports, and asking them to participate in their research for the Child and Family Research Center. Families may decline to participate, but their experience is that families are extremely receptive. Situations encountered include families in crisis for various reasons. The agency addresses specific needs of the 13 or 16-year-old, and also assesses and provides resources for other post-adopt children in the home. SWFCAC members expressed concerns regarding incarcerated youth, ICG Grants, etc.

Update from the Office of Service Intervention – Kim Peck, Associate Deputy Director for Deputy Director Cynthia Moreno

Kim introduced Kevin Walsh, the new Cook County Administrator, and reported on several topics.

Governor's Policy Academy – Kim stated that Illinois was chosen as one of six states to participate in a *Governor's Policy Academy on Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care*. DCFS proposed to use this opportunity provided by the NGA Policy Academy to create strategies that address the disparity between youth in Cook County who tend to remain in care longer and show better outcomes versus youth from downstate who tend to leave care at age 18 and experience poorer outcomes. They've been working with researchers from Chapin Hall to address the question of why youth leave care at the age of 18 downstate. Through this work it has become apparent that the further downstate you travel, workers are not as aware that youth may stay in care until age 21. In addition, there are fewer resources downstate, so there is less incentive to keep kids in care.

Community Based Summer Day Camp – Kim described the *Community Based Summer Day Camp* program in and around Chicago. More than 700 children and youth were involved this summer, in partnership with the Chicago and Suburban Park Districts. Vanessa James noted that Project SOAR offers spring programs that are available to DCFS adoptive and guardianship families as well. Spots are limited and registration is conducted well in advance.

Strengthening Families - Illinois was selected by the Doris Duke Foundation to implement the Strengthening Families Initiative. As one of seven pilot site states, the Strengthening Families Initiative is designed to provide the highest quality early care and education to young children in the child welfare system. Additionally, Strengthening Families uses six protective factors that are designed to build upon a family's strength to prevent child abuse and neglect. These protective factors are also used to work with families who come to the attention of the Department, working toward reunifying families and ultimately keeping children out of the child welfare system.

Youth Summits – Youth Summits were conducted with caseworkers, and they included youth who had been involved in foster care as panel presenters. These summits were designed to educate workers regarding transition programs and opportunities available to youth throughout the state. The *Get Goal'd* card has been recently updated to include community resources for downstate youth. This card offers a quick overview of information with contact numbers for follow up. There is a companion *Get Goal'd* brochure for workers to use to identify programs, forms, etc. for use in accessing these programs. In addition, they are currently working on a website for parents and hope to have it "live" in June, 2008.

Educational Programs – The Youth Scholarship program is available and the federal Education and Training Program is available to certain youth. The enhanced guardianship waiver may be available, as well.

Tip Sheets regarding services to older youth have been and will be included in Caregiver Institutes participant packets.

Lifeskills – The Division is working on a major revision of the Lifeskills delivery system. They have developed a workgroup to structure a training calendar with training topics that are presented in a hands-on setting. i.e., youth will actually wash clothes, prepare food, etc.

Incentives will be tailored to promote participation rather than attendance. They'll be reviewing a downstate ranch model where youth would perform community service while they learn in an informal setting.

TASK: Kim will email a list of transition managers and contact information to be distributed to council members. She will also include the contact number for the program that provides support in completing scholarship applications.

TASK: Ray will distribute a list of DCFS Education Advisors to Council members.

Note – As of 12/6/07 both tasks have been completed.

Office on Substance Abuse – This office is charged with providing increased services for children and families impacted by methamphetamine and other drugs. They have recently received a federal grant to develop advanced evaluation and treatment services for children and families affected by prenatal and environmental exposure to methamphetamine and other substances in the Metro-East area (Madison and St. Clair Counties).

Continuation and Expansion of Substance Abuse Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project – Based on the positive outcomes from the first substance abuse waiver project, DCFS received approval for a five year extension of its Recovery Coach project in Cook County and was also approved for an expansion of the project to Madison and St. Clair Counties in southern Illinois. The Title IV-E waiver allows Illinois to claim foster care reimbursement on services not typically eligible for federal matching.

The project assigns a Recovery Coach to work with substance abusing parents whose children have been placed in foster care. The Recovery Coach engages the substance abusing parent, removes any barriers to a parent entering and remaining in substance abuse treatment, works with the caseworker and treatment agency to collaborate on services, and provides regular reports to the caseworker and the court on the parent's progress in treatment and their readiness to parent.

The independent evaluation of the first five years of the project found that parents receiving Recovery Coach services (demonstration group) have statistically significant better outcomes than parents in the treatment as usual (control) group. Specifically, demo group parents were:

- more likely to enter treatment
- more likely to enter treatment sooner
- more likely to complete treatment
- more likely to be reunified with their children
- more likely to be reunified more quickly (6 months on average)
- less likely to be associated with a subsequent allegation of maltreatment
- less likely to be associated with a subsequent substance exposed infant

The improved child welfare outcomes allowed parents in the demonstration group to be served for less money than the control group. During the initial demonstration period the project generated over \$5 million in cost savings which the state was allowed to keep and use on other child welfare services.

The five year extension of the project will allow DCFS to enhance the Recovery Coach services to include mental health, domestic violence, and housing services and also expand the project to Southern Illinois for an additional five years, through December 2011.

Office of Health Policy

The Department has begun developing an initial design for an electronic Health Passport (E-Health Passport). When fully implemented, this will greatly improve the amount of health information available to caseworkers, caregivers and medical providers serving children and youth in DCFS care and custody. The Department is working with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to develop an interagency agreement on data exchanges between the two Departments. Once it is finalized, it will serve as a starting point for discussions with other state agencies that keep health history data.

Housing Assistance

Groundbreaking began on the construction of two housing projects that will provide subsidized, supportive housing for youth aging out of care. The Interfaith Development Corporation assisted the Department in putting together the two programs with local not for profit agencies and the assistance of the Illinois Housing Development Authority. They anticipate that clients will move into these units in Fall 2008.

Post Adoption - Outreach to Post Adoption Families

40,000 children and youth receive adoption/guardianship subsidies in Illinois. A new effort to provide outreach services to approximately 4,000 of these families (in Cook County and Southern Illinois) began in FY '08. These families were identified by three different criteria:

- Adolescent youth reaching ages 13 and 16.
- These same youth have been in their placement for 5 years
- Aging caregiver population

Currently the re-certification is a paper process. With the cooperation of the adoptive parent, this new initiative will allow face to face contact with the child/children receiving the subsidy. This effort is designed to contact adoptive/guardianship families and identify where support services may be needed to keep these families together.

Foster Kids Are Our Kids – Ruth Jajko

Ruth explained the *We're Making Foster Care Better* brochure she distributed and stated that there are many additional media promotions coming up.

Implementation Plan Scoring Update – Uli Senz and Gwenn Eyer

Recognizing that plan scorers needed more preparation, Uli reminded SWFCAC members that they need to identify potential award-winning plans while scoring plans. Gwenn stated that this year the awards will not be primarily point based, and she recapped the awards criteria.

Report from the Clinical Division – Deputy Director Velma Williams

Deputy Director Williams thanked the councils for coming together, and she recognized that November is National Adoption Month. She thanked the members from both councils for all they do to support permanency for children and families, noting that DCFS is dependent on the councils for influencing the work of the Department. She stated that tomorrow, November 18, is National Adoption Day, which will be celebrated with adoptions and other events in

Illinois and cities around the country. (One Illinois example is a celebration amid the finalization of adoptions at the Winnebago County Court House.)

Reunification - She explained that DCFS has been doing a lot of work on reunification policy and practice. Within the past month the practice guide has been revised with support information about how the work is done. She stated that the guide is more specific about staff expectations and what they need to do to make reunification possible. Caregiver reunification training will roll out around mid to end of January or early February.

Deputy Williams stated that she and the Director have talked a lot about enhancements and that they have written incentives into the practice guide for reunification foster families who will directly support reunification. She provided information regarding this program, indicating that this is still evolving as it is all being fine-tuned.

In reply to a council member's question, Director McEwen talked about the way they address reunification cases (18 months or younger) with the new protocol, looking at the Family Team Meeting to ensure that foster parents are involved in, or at the very least invited to, the meeting. They have piloted a tracking tool for follow-up and will work to refine it for future use.

Task: Robyn Harvey and Deb Freke asked to review the revised reunification training. Ray will work with Judy Zaleski to see that they have the opportunity.

Integrated Assessment (IA) – Deputy Williams said that initially IA's were done only on new standard cases, then disrupted cases were added, and soon a full IA will be done on every child coming into care. She said that the foster parent copy of IA information will be provided to foster parents beginning in January or February 2008. The child's caseworker will print out the foster parent's portion of the report so that early on in the case the foster parent will be able to see the clinical screener's assessment of the child by the end of 45 days. Assessments are ongoing and will be updated through the life of the case. Elizabeth reminded everyone that the IAAC has requested that this information be re-distributed at the time a family moves toward adoption finalization.

Trauma Training – Deputy Williams explained that the Department is working to ensure that we are utilizing a trauma-informed approach to treatment and care. All treatment providers will be trained to make sure that everyone knows the effects of trauma as well as ways to manage treatment outcomes. There is also a plan to train and support treatment providers in the field regarding best practices in this area. She stated that they have engaged some wonderful leaders who are working as trauma experts.

The Director added that this is examined in supports in post-adoption and in foster care. He said that the common theme that leads to disruptions in foster care placements or in adoptive homes is the level of problem behavior of the child and the challenge of managing that behavior. The need is to bring resources to bear in both situations, providing services to the child to mitigate the behaviors. They are trying to bring successful treatment models and practices in traditional and relative foster care, making this approach unique.

Three of the four models have been piloted:

Adolescent

School Age/Latency

Preschool/Parent-Child

Training clusters have been developed to train clinicians around these three models.

The *Psychological First Aid* model, which promotes the knowledge that there are some identified ways to respond that we know will help, has not yet been piloted. This model will provide a basic foundation around information caregivers need to know when responding to children who have experienced trauma. This approach is being developed to work with parents and workers and will be targeted toward traditional and relative foster care. He stated that sometimes the approaches may be counter-intuitive, and special training must be developed and tailored to various stakeholders.

Children's Mental Health - Deputy Williams discussed providing caregivers with information relative to the mental health backgrounds of children in care. She recognized the need to do a better front-end assessment providing more specific information regarding the traumatic and other experiences children have experienced, then tailoring the information to be more specific to information caregivers need. This information will be provided to caregivers within 45 days of placement. The commitment from the Department is to provide, to the extent possible, the information on the front end.

Parent Cafes - The Director described Parent Cafés that are being utilized in the Strengthening Families Initiative. He stated that they have addressed the Six Protective Factors that are present in families that protect and nurture children. He stated that when these topics were presented to parents, participants revised the language to be more user-friendly and appropriate to the audience. He stated that SWFCAC or IFAPA might want to establish café's of this sort to review and possibly revise the language in the proposed trainings.

The Director reflected on the ramifications of the Permanency Initiative and reported on Dr. Mark Testa's findings regarding permanency. The studies report on the past 10 years and show that 4.3% is the adoption disruption rate in Illinois. Director McEwen noted that this is a very low rate for that time period. He added that they are now working on the well-being issue as well as the permanency issue.

Report from the Director's Office – Erwin McEwen, Acting Director

Director McEwen noted that today is his one year anniversary as the DCFS Director, reflecting that he attended this joint meeting last year, his first day on the job. He also noted that he was a member of SWFCAC for five years, learning much from that experience.

National Adoption Awareness Month

Director McEwen acknowledged that November is National Adoption Month and he read and distributed the Governor's Proclamation proclaiming November Adoption Awareness Month in Illinois.

He acknowledged the leadership of the councils and thanked the members from both councils for all they do to support permanency for children and families. He noted the importance of being open and honest in communication and the willingness to be available for inquiries and concerns.

CAPU

Director McEwen said that in his first presentation, as he spoke to this group his first day as Director last year, he gave a PowerPoint presentation about the school placement system. To update the councils this year, he stated that currently the homes closest to the school systems have been filled and the circle is expanding. He noted that 36% of the schools in

Illinois do not have a licensed foster home available for placement, and targeted recruitment needs to be done in those school catchment areas where we do not have beds. He welcomed members' comments to be made through leadership.

Adoption Service Providers

The Director stated that the Department plans to continue expanding post-adopt services. He noted that we need additional providers and need to look at ways to measure and improve performance.

Strengthening Families

He stated that the Strengthening Families Initiative looks at families that are not currently involved in our system in order to identify risk factors and provide methods to strengthen families. He went on to say that we also need to work to support and strengthen foster, adoptive and intact families.

The Director stated that the Department's first priority is to children and that the second is to parents. He again stressed the importance of the foster care and adoption councils and how his experience on the SWFCAC has shaped his work today. He stated the Department has had a very productive year. He recognized the financial challenges faced by foster and adoptive families and stated that he will continue to push for funding for programs. He stated that the next big thing on the horizon is child psychiatric services and how to get the services to children in remote areas. When asked to forecast, he suggested that he does not anticipate an increase in funding, but predicts that there will not be a decrease, noting that we serve nearly 100,000 children when considering the various aspects of the Department's work.

Another of the Department's recent achievements is providing DCFS staff with laptop computers, reflecting technological advances and upgrading the tools staff have available to them. He stated that these computers allow workers to write up the case notes at the homes, providing immediate and direct access to detailed information.

Networking Lunch

Motion to adjourn: Adrienne Welenc, seconded by Sheila Jones. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.