

**Adoption Advisory Council
Hickory Ridge Marriott
June 6, 2008
10:00 – 3:00
APPROVED MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT		MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF PRESENT
Donsetta Blakely	Elizabeth Richmond	Patricia Cooper	Deirdra Davis
Dr. Robert Bloom	Gina Samuels	Susanne Loss	June Dorn
Kathy Casey	Gretchen Schulert	Joyce Loy	Ray Gates
DeAudrey Davis	Michelle Seidl	Alan Marcus	Becky Lamont
Mary Debose	Carol Sheley	Dorothy McGhee	Terry McGlothlin
Diane Dominguez	Mark Werner	Kate Monte	Norma Napper
Gwenn Eyer	Kim Wheelock	Judy Pence	Celia Valle
Derek Jeske	Linda Wolter	Ron Tyler	Jennifer Zaluckyi
Betty Johnson		Karen Wardlaw	
James Jones			Guests
Patricia Kelso			Dana Corman
Dave Matthews			Niambi Jaha
Krista McCoy			Joan Langan
Roman McCray			Maria Nanos
Lisa Myles			Mick Polowy

Welcome & Introductions

Elizabeth welcomed council members and guests. Everyone introduced themselves.

Digital Pride Curriculum – Mick Polowy

Mick gave an update on the PRIDE model of practice, and gave a slide show presentation showing examples of training vignettes depicting experienced foster parents. He said the curriculum is used for training workers and caregivers. Caregivers can only request one module at a time. He distributed a hand out listing each module and contact information for ordering.

Approval of the Minutes

Diane made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Gwenn Eyer seconded. The motion carried.

Calendar for FY09

The meeting schedule was set for FY'09 as follows:

- August 1 - Bloomington
- October 3 - Springfield
- November 21 - Lisle
- February 6 - Bloomington
- April 3 - Springfield
- June 5 – Lisle

The majority of council members agreed that this Lisle location works better than downtown for them, both for those from Chicago and downstate.

Elizabeth said that November has typically been the combined meeting with AAC and SWFCAC. She said there would be a meeting with the chairs of both councils to discuss an agenda. Elizabeth suggested having a presentation-based agenda, with possible presentations by Licensing, Training and the Director.

Project Butterfly – Niambi Jaha & Gwen Luster

Ms. Jaha and Gwen Luster gave a presentation on Project Butterfly. Gwen said the Project Butterfly curriculum is designed to strengthen families and reduce the challenge of parenting children in foster care and those who have been adopted, by offering a series of capacity-building, interactive workshops to support parents with a reunification goal and the caregivers of their children, and subsidized adoption/guardianship, grandparent and kinship caregivers. The workshops are designed to enable parents/caregivers to develop the skills needed to enhance their lives and support the growth of those children in their care.

The program just started in February 2008. Their facility is set up like a home. The parents find it to be a respite environment for themselves.

The program gets referrals directly and through agencies. They make presentations at agencies, and then the agency staff makes recommendation as to how to get the information to the clients. They can sign up at the presentation and start attending workshops immediately.

Those that do participate are getting the services they need. They need to get the word out to others. The phone number to call for additional information is 312/328-0886.

Center for Law & Social Work – Maria Nanos and Dana Corman

Maria said that they offer legal services to families when the caregiver is too ill or too old to care for the children. She said their initial client base were clients who called Post Adopt and said they were sick or dying and needed help with the children. Staff couldn't do anything until the death of the parent. She said data indicates that approximately 400 adoptive or subsidized guardianship parents die annually.

Maria and Dana work with the parents on their legal options. They attempt to have every family fill out a short-term guardianship form at their first home visit. The person designated as back up can sign it at a different time. The form is only good when their doctor says they are no longer able to care for the children. As of June 1st the forms are good for a year at a time. The form enables their designee to assume all guardianship issues.

They can also complete paperwork for stand by guardianships or stand by adoptions. Interim subsidy forms can be signed within five days of death. Families are very hesitant to take that step. They want them to remain in their role as long as possible. The preferred new legal option for relative cases is guardianship.

Maria passed out a brochure. She said they have been going to agencies and foster parents groups to let them know that this is a free service to families and they do make home visits. They sit down and meet with families to set up a back up plan for their children. Once people understand, they are willing and grateful for the service.

Maria said that Illinois is currently the only state doing this pilot project. They have had inquiries from Georgia and Indiana about replicating the program so we have to figure out how to do it.

Dana said that the subsidy payment would only change when the caregiver dies. However, if stand-by is arranged, the subsidy remains the same and the interim subsidy begins within 5 days after contacting the Post Adoption Unit, and the child maintains their eligibility.

Their contract says they see 100 parents the first year and 200 the second year. They did mailings to caregivers over 60, which included a letter, brochure and response card. Approximately 15% of the families asked them to come out.

Report from Director McEwen

Director McEwen said this has been an interesting legislative session with issues that might have impacted the Department's position on various legislation. One issue was cost – there were pieces of legislation that, when they were totaled up, represented over a one hundred million dollar increase in the DCFS budget. DCFS opposed such bills unless they had funding accompanying them. In 2003 DCFS lost \$100 million due to a reduced number of kids in care, and has had a flat budget for the past five years despite dealing with increasing costs. Opposing a bill that is not funded does not necessarily reflect the DCFS position on the merits of what the bill proposes to accomplish.

He said the budget would again be flat, except for a five million dollar increase for the foster parent board rate increase. Adoptive parent subsidies are not included in that increase.

Director McEwen said there is legislation proposed around secondary guardians for caregivers over 60 who are adoptive parents. This is a critical service but if it passes DCFS will spend a lot of money on legal services for creating secondary caregivers that will probably not be needed. He said he prefers trying to identify those cases that look like they need this service.

Another bill is the birth certificate legislation. Opposition comes from the Statewide Youth Advisory Board and their feelings about adopted siblings and birth families. We know it is a huge struggle and a controversial issue.

Director McEwen spoke regarding the level of involvement of this committee in the legislative process. He said this committee is an advisory group to the Director. Their role is to identify issues, legislation of interest and a position, and raise that with the Director and request the Director's support. He said if council members decide to directly contact legislators, they should do so as private citizens or citizens with a stake in the issue. Council members can say they are aware of the issues because of involvement on the council, but not that they are representing the council.

Director McEwen said Marla Williams has been appointed as the new Legislative Liaison for DCFS.

The Director said that many adopted youth want to go to college after graduating from high school but can't afford it. Kids in care are eligible for junior college, are considered to have \$0 income, and also qualify for the Youth in College program where they receive a payment when

in care. Scholarships are not typically used for foster kids because they are eligible for grants. Post adoption and guardianship kids do qualify for DCFS scholarships. More than half of the DCFS scholarships went to children who were adopted this year. This is a very competitive process.

Federal legislation is proposed that would support keeping youth in care until age 21 across the nation. If that passes, it will create a windfall in Illinois because of all of the money currently spent on the 18-21 age group. The legislation would give us 50% match, and would be a huge increase for the Children's Services Funds.

In regards to the budget, Director McEwen said he is addressing post adoption staffing issues. He also anticipates that the number of kids in post adoption will be declining over the next 10-15 years because more kids are currently exiting than entering post adoption. Dollars can then be moved away from subsidies and into the post adoption service category.

Director McEwen spoke about the new APAL programs. Letters are sent out to families with youth turning 13 and 16 notifying them that they will be getting a call. The providers then call them to set up a time to come to the home. A lot of the families do not want a visit. These providers are working with the families that do request a visit, and they have supplied a number of services. There is \$2 million dollars in the program to do outreach and \$4 million to increase post adopt services. So far it appears that about 85% do not need services and 15% do. The adoption disruption rate is about 2%.

Bill Process – Robin Stagers

Robin Stagers, Chief of Staff at DCFS, spoke about the legislative bill process. Notes follow:

If you have an agency or interested party that wants a bill passed on they have to find a representative in House or Senate to sponsor the bill, and write it in the proper wording to present in the House or Senate.

The sponsor drafts the bill, the House gets a copy and gives to each legislative liaison whose agency would be impacted.

The bill is assigned to the Rules Committee, which determines which particulars of the bill would be addressed by the particular committee. They look at the substance, and it may or may not pass out of committee.

From the Rules Committee, it is sent for first reading on the floor. It might come to the House or Senate first. Once it passes the first body, in the second body it might go thru an amendatory process.

1st reading – presented; 2nd reading – presented and amendments made. If amendments made goes back to 1st reading, then 2nd, then 3rd reading.

In 3rd reading the bill is looked at with all of the amendments included then to the Governor's Office for his approval.

At Governor's reading, it can be vetoed or amendatorily vetoed. It then goes back to the first house with his changes, then thru the review process again.

Time frames are assigned to get these things through. If the bill does not pass the third reading it starts thru the process again or is kicked out of the house and nothing more is done on it. If it leaves one house with total approval it goes to the second house.

Once both have finished the approval process it goes to the Governors office. If the Governor vetoes, it can be overruled with simple majority.

Report from Division of Service Intervention

June passed out the most recent permanency charts.

June said Leslie Cohen would come to a future meeting to talk about how the MAC and APAL programs are working. She distributed a chart for the Cook County project, showing what types of service needs were identified within the past year. She said most needs were around mental health issues. She said the Farm Resource Center reporting should be available by the next meeting. They have made initial calls and have had a low rate of yes responses.

June said she would be attending the Annual Waiver Demonstration in Washington, DC on June 16-17. She is hoping to get guidance about whether or not they will get an extension on the subsidized guardianship waiver.

June said Midwest Adoption Center currently provides search and reunion services only to former wards. These services will be extended to current wards in the Midwest Adoption Center contract for next fiscal year. Gretchen said that they have had requests from wards still in care for the past several years asking for a reconnection with a sibling or other birth relative who was important to them. She said they couldn't provide assistance because their contract was only for former wards.

June gave her contact information – desk 312/814-6858, or cell 312/636-1979.

Report from Office of Foster Parent Support Services – Ray Gates

Ray said that Terry emailed information on the Cook County Permanency Community Forums to council members earlier this week.

IFAPA Conference – 10/24-26/08

Ray said that at the IFAPA Conference there will be 7 banks of 9 workshops, including a post adoption workshop track. The adoption celebration will be on Friday evening, and the committee is working with some potential speakers. Jerry Welenc, past chair of the SWFCAC, is a pharmacist who puts on health fairs regularly in his pharmacy. He is organizing a health fair to run on Saturday at the conference. On Saturday evening there will be a dinner/dance for all caregivers, and IFAPA President Gladys Boyd has invited several members of the General Assembly and some judges. Ray said council members would be called upon to serve as hospitality, assist with on-site registration, and to facilitate workshops. The first registration opportunity will be in Volume IV of the IL Families Now & Forever newsletter, which should arrive in mailboxes the 3rd or 4th week in July.

Caregiver Conferences

Ray said the Director and Velma are again planning to put on 2 caregiver conferences and 4 caregiver conferences in 2009, as was done this year. Ray said his next step is to meet with the Director to find out the priority area of interest. Planning for these events will begin in July.

Departing Council Members

Ray recognized council members who had completed their second term on the council. He presented plaques to Mary Debose, Diane Dominguez, Gwenn Eyer, Krista McCoy and Gretchen Schulert. Joyce Loy and Ron Tyler have also completed their service, but were not in attendance.

Committee Reports

Membership Committee – Mark Werner

A list of vacancies was included in member's packets. Mark asked for recommendations to fill the vacancies.

Post Adoption Workgroup – Mark Werner

Mark said the committee met several times and drafted a memo to the Director from the co-chairs. Mark will complete the memo and send it to council members for review before it is finalized.

Adoption Month Planning – Karen Wardlaw

Mark reported for Karen that the committee is working on the event to take place on Friday, October 24th at the IFAPA Conference.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for August 1st in Bloomington. Elizabeth asked council members to email Terry with any requests for agenda items

Gretchen made a motion to adjourn, Diane seconded. Motion carried.