

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**May 18, 2007**  
**160 N. LaSalle – Chicago, Illinois**  
**9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>DCFS Staff</b>	<b>Guests</b>
Donsetta Blakely	Mercedes Ball	Gwenn Eyer	Ruann Barack
Gladys Boyd	Sylvia Flory	Ray Gates	Angela Barber
Tonya Duke	Debbie Freke	Vanessa James	Mick Bockstruck
Cecil Garner	Vicky Kline	Terry McGlothlin	Mark Bouie
Robyn Harvey	Andre Robinson	Chris McGrath, RA	Bonnette Brooks
Ruth Jajko	Antionette Walker	Denice Murray	Natasha Brown
Birdia Jenkins	Patricia Welander	Gloria Orange	Robert Childress
Nancy Lauffenberger	Geraldine Wilson	Sari Rowitz	Maurice Dorris
Leanne Montgomery		Yvonne Sakes	Julie Dvorsky
Ramon Nieves		Terry Weck	Antonio Fernandez
Heather Schumacher			Kelly Hobbs
Uli Senz			Kimberly Iglesias
Adrienne Welenc			Karen Powell
Mary White			Amy O'Rourke
			Susan Reich
			Rolinda Robinson
			Martin Sinnott
			Casie Starks
			Latasha Thomas
			Jerry Welenc

**Hospitality**

Mary White welcomed members and guests, announcing that the meeting would be recorded to assure accurate minutes.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Uli Senz, SWFCAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He welcomed everyone, stating that this is a special meeting with our Acting Director who will address the current state of issues with the Department and present awards to the agencies and region with the top five Implementation Plans. Uli asked members and guests to introduce themselves and stated that guests are welcome to contribute to discussions, but should abstain from voting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Election of Officers**

The first item of business was the election of officers. Uli described the term of office and stated that Vicky Kline and Adrienne Welenc co-chaired the Nomination Committee. Adrienne conducted the election by ballot. Robyn Harvey and Uli Senz accepted nominations for chair and Robyn Harvey, Leanne Montgomery, Ramon Nieves and Heather Schumacher all accepted the nomination for co-chair. Later in the day the ballots were counted. Uli was elected chair and Ramon was elected Vice Chair. Since Uli was reelected, Adrienne will serve another year as Immediate Past Chair.

## **Set FY'08 Meeting Schedule**

**DISCUSSION:** Discussion centered on the need to have nine regular meetings per year. It was determined that the nine meetings be scheduled and consider breaking into committee meetings during the afternoon when time permits – prompting in-person participation and compressing the members' workloads outside of the council meetings.

The meeting dates were scheduled as follows:

July 20, 2007 - Bloomington

September 2007 – to be set with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board Calendar

October 19, 2007 - Alton

November 16, 2007 – Chicago, joint meeting with IAAC, Adoption Month Celebration

January 18, 2008 - Springfield

February 15, 2008 - Itasca

March 14, 2008 - Galesburg

April 18, 2008 – Charleston/Mattoon

May 16, 2008 – Chicago

## **Approval of Agency Reviews**

Terry stated that she had mailed typed copies of the agency reviews to council members that conducted the reviews for their review and signature. Only one agency scored less than “Acceptable.” Members' discussion surrounded experiences with the agencies with the top review scores. *Ruth Jajko made a motion to approve the reviews as written. Adrienne Welenc seconded. The motion carried.*

## **Agenda for the Next Meeting**

- Uli will send out his grievance procedure proposal to all council members. Discussion at next meeting on what the council can do time wise, financially and legally.
- Protocol being developed to pay foster parents that do extra work on reunification.
- J. Ortega Piron to address the effectiveness of the Advocacy Office
- Discuss or form committee to define roles of the Foster Parent Support Specialists to justify the additional cost.

## **DISCUSSION – Filing Foster Parent Law Grievances**

1. Grievances should have been reported with Implementation Plans this year
2. Some reported grievances against DCFS are more than a year old and have not yet been addressed
3. An audience member stated that perhaps the Council needs to think of how to approach the agencies regarding accountability around the Foster Parent Law
4. There is a push on the part of one member of the Policy Committee to promote an initiative to manage enforcement around grievance resolution
5. The Advocacy Office is not always responsive
6. Catholic Charities is closing and we are hearing of fallout from some service lapses
7. Promote/require training within each agency/region regarding the varied grievance processes
8. Guide agencies in using staff orientation or the written plan to better address grievances, retaliation, etc.
9. Provide a standardized form in triplicate for all FP Law Grievances – top copy to agency/region; copy to SWFCAC and personal copy

Terry Weck, POS Monitoring, addressed the seeming lack of coordination within the Department in addressing issues critical to foster parents.

- He indicated that foster parents typically utilize the following chain of command in dealing with concerns: Call the agency or region → Call the Advocacy Office → Call the Legislature/Governor's Office.
- Terry's office supports the work of the Advocacy Office when they cannot address a problem or when they encounter resistance to the solution.
- He stated that Foster Parent Support Specialists have "filled in the gap" in the past.
- Terry stated that he values foster parents and when a foster parent calls his office they are taken very seriously. He indicated that he would look into problems presented to his office.

The underlying question appears to address the effectiveness of the Advocacy Office on dealing with foster parent concerns to their satisfaction.

**TASK:** Invite Jeanie Ortega Piron or her designee to speak to these issues. Ray agreed to do this.

### **SWFCAC Service Recognition**

Ray Gates honored Donsetta Blakely and Mary White for their six years of dedicated service, and presented them with plaques in appreciation of their time on the council. Sylvia Flory and Vicky Kline have also completed two terms, and will be recognized at a future time.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Minutes from April 20, 2007 SWFCAC Meeting**

Uli asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the April 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

***MOTION: Ruth Jajko made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Leanne Montgomery seconded. The minutes were approved.***

#### **Final Reports to the Director:**

There were no final reports to the Director.

The Chair's monthly report to the Director was submitted, with copies sent to council members. The report was also included in the meeting packet.

#### **Update from the Director's Office – Erwin McEwen, Acting Director**

(Handouts from the Director's PowerPoint presentation, "Fulfilling the Promise: Enhancing Outcomes for Illinois Children and Families" have been distributed to council members.)

The Director's presentation included a look back to the first Child & Family Services Review (CFSR) in September 2003, identifying the outcomes and items in the federal findings. He then reviewed items included in the state's Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Some of the major initiatives address safety, permanency and well being. He then discussed the implementation of the PIP to date, identifying the mandated timeline for successful implementation. The Director indicated that there is still a lot of work to do to fully implement critical PIP initiatives to improve Illinois outcomes. In conclusion, he discussed the importance of working together and developing new strategies to build upon the Illinois Program Improvement Plan.

#### **WORKING LUNCH - Award Presentations for the Top Five Implementation Plans**

Uli introduced Velma Williams, Deputy Director, Division of Clinical Services & Professional Development. Velma acknowledged Foster Parent Appreciation Month and thanked council members and foster parents in attendance for all that they do. She said that the Governor issued a proclamation and foster parent events are being held around the state to celebrate.

Velma said that effective today (5/18/07) the Bed Hold Policy was reinstated for foster homes and specialized homes. Caseworkers submit the appropriate paperwork to the Central Payment Unit for reimbursement to caregivers. Adrienne asked if the change was retroactive. Velma responded that it may be retroactive on an individual case basis, and requests for such should come to her or Mary Sue Morsch.

Velma thanked Council members for serving on the planning committee and as presenters at the Caregiver Training Institutes. She said discussions are taking place to plan for next year's institutes/conferences.

Velma said if there are still training issues or problems, to let Ray know and they will be addressed individually.

Awards were presented to the following agencies with the highest scores on their Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans. Ray Gates spoke about the highlights of each of the agencies plans, and Director McEwen presented the plaques.

**First Place, tie** – Beatrice Caffrey - 103.993 points - Mr. Mark Bouie, Executive Director

**First Place, tie** – Casa Central - 103.993 points - Ms. Ann Alvarez, Executive Director

**First Place, tie** – DCFS Cook North - Region - 103.993 points - Ms. Christine McGrath, RA

**Second Place** – Hephzibah - 103.960 points - Ms. Mary Ann Brown, Executive Director

**Third Place** – Kid's Hope United - 103.950 points - Mr. Martin Sinnott, Executive Director

## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

Uli reported that “Miss South Central Illinois” from Champaign attended one of our meetings and wishes to make child welfare her social issue for future pageants. She would like to help with some presentations, etc.

### **Cook North, Donsetta Blakely**

Donsetta reported that Dr. George E. Smith spoke to the group regarding his book, The Do's and Don'ts of Parenting.”

### **Cook Central, Adrienne Welenc**

Ms. Mary Peterson, author of Jason, Ward of the State, addressed the council at the last meeting, speaking about a book she has written regarding her experience as a foster parent. Jerry Welenc said she is very articulate about how a private citizen, a schoolteacher, gets involved with a child and stays a part of that child's life forever. Ray asked if her presentation would add value to the SWFCAC's joint meeting with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board.

**ACTION ITEM:** Gwenn and Terry will work together to add her to the agenda for the combined meeting with the SYAB for a one-hour presentation.

There were no other regional reports.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Policy Committee – Heather Schumacher**

The report is in the packet.

- Grievance Policy Initiative – add to the agenda for the next meeting.
- Bed hold issue has been resolved.
- Other discussions have been extended

### **ACTION ITEMS –**

\*Uli will send his FP Law Grievance recommendation to council members.

\*The Policy Committee will meet within six weeks.

### **Adolescent Issues/ Statewide Youth Advisory Board Liaison – Robyn Harvey**

No report. It was noted that youth recently took a bus trip to Springfield for a Youth Day.

### **Legislation – Ruth Jajko**

The committee is tracking the following:

- The budget issue still hangs in the balance. However, the gross receipts tax did not pass. The indexing piece is still in process. Budget negotiations are still proceeding.
- Coming up with the revenue is the state's budget problem – members just want to continue pressuring to include social services in the mix.
- Emancipation Stipend – in follow up, it does not appear to be an inducement to encourage youth to emancipate early. It will probably include a vouchering process that will pay directly to the landlord, etc.
- Sex Offender Legislation is currently moving through the Senate. It might be more acceptable in that it does maintain some mandatory registration, but may also provide protections for youth.

### **Training – Debbie Freke**

Debbie was not in attendance, but submitted a written report on page 15 of the packet. Robyn said she did an independent survey of her own on the Lending Library. She faxed it to Springfield on Thursday and received the materials on Sunday so it is up and running. On-line training should be working by June 1st.

### **Adoption Day Celebration – Ramon Nieves**

Terry referred council members to a written report from the Adoption Day committee on page 16 of the packet. Their next meeting is scheduled for June 26th at 10:30 a.m.

### **Foster Kids are Our Kids - Leanne Montgomery**

Leanne said that she and Ruth Jajko are SWFCAC representatives on the Foster Kids are Our Kids committee. She said they have a new campaign out that is very upbeat and very focused. The new person in charge is Fernando Barcelona, and they are seeking a Chairperson. She also reported that WGN is totally committed and the Don't Write Me Off Campaign is tied in.

***MOTION: Adrienne Welenc made the motion for adjournment and Leanne Montgomery seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.***

The next meeting will be held on Friday, July 20, 2007 at Eastland Suites, 1801 Eastland Drive, Bloomington.