

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**May 19, 2006**  
**160 N. LaSalle, Room N505, Chicago**  
**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<br>Raymond Chasteen<br>Claudia Dancy Davis<br>Ruth Dominguez<br>Sylvia Flory<br>Cecil Garner<br>Robyn Harvey<br>Ruth Jajko<br>James Jones<br>Vicky Kline<br>Leanne Montgomery<br>Ramon Nieves<br>Andre Robinson<br>Heather Schumacher<br>Antionette Walker<br>Adrienne Welenc<br>Mary White | Gladys Boyd<br>Andrea Miller<br>Uli Senz<br>Geraldine Wilson | Mike Barry<br>Gwenn Eyer<br>Ray Gates<br>Bridgette Glickman<br>Vanessa James<br>Amie Joof<br>Terry McGlothlin<br>Chris McGrath, RA<br>Marsha Northrup<br>Delores Robinson<br>Director Bryan Samuels<br>Dep. Dir. Velma Williams<br>Michael Wonderlich | Rachel Ash<br>Angela Bell<br>Mattie Brown<br>Olivia Brown<br>Mary Anne Brown<br>Vera Coleman<br>Ellen Kazaras<br>Mary Sue Meshes<br>Rosalinda Moseby<br>Cindy Musick<br>Marilyn Panichi<br>Bettie Shaw<br>Dale Strassheim<br>Joanne Stiffic<br>Jerry Welenc<br>Derrick Whitehead |

**Hospitality**

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

**Welcome and Introductions**

Adrienne called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Adrienne welcomed new member Robyn Harvey to the Council. She welcomed Council members, asking each to introduce himself/herself to the Council.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Minutes from 04/21/06 Meeting**

Adrienne asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. There were none.

***MOTION: Claudia Davis moved to accept the 04/21/06 minutes. Mary White seconded. The motion carried and the minutes were accepted as written.***

**FINAL REPORTS TO THE DIRECTOR**

There were no final reports to the Director.

**Reports From Other Councils/Committees - Bridgette Glickman**

Bridgette stated that her written report is included in members' packets. She stated that the only update was for the CIAC, since they were the only group that had met since the last SWFCAC meeting.

**Request for Participation:**

**"Don't Write Me Off" Steering Committee** – Ruth Jajko said this committee is looking for foster parent representation. Their next meeting will be held at noon on June 13<sup>th</sup> at 208 South LaSalle in Chicago. Leanne Montgomery was appointed to represent the Council.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Nominations Committee - Vicky Kline**

Vicky reported that of the three nominations she received for Chair, two declined. Uli Senz accepted the nomination as Chair. She also received three nominations for Vice Chair, and two declined. Donsetta Blakely accepted the nomination as Vice Chair. Since there were no nominations from the floor, the slate was accepted by acclamation.

**Policy Committee - Jerry Welenc**

\*The Policy Committee met on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Jerry Welenc read the notes from the Policy Committee meeting.

\*Policy Committee members are in the process of reviewing and revising the three sets of review questions.

\*Ray Gates asked Council members that encountered an APT that did not understand the implementation review process to please contact Uli Senz or Jerry Welenc. Rather than retraining all of the APT, training will be provided only to those that need it, such as new APT.

\*Implementation review refresher training will be done with council members annually.

\*The implementation review manual that is given to council members each year will also be given to APT, so APT can fully understand Council members' role.

\*Both the lead and the partner will receive a copy of the review packet for the agency they are reviewing.

\*Council members will also receive APT's set of instructions.

\*Ray Chasteen suggested that a survey of 5 foster parents may not always be sufficient, indicating that if there is one dissatisfied foster parent in five, there might be more if more were interviewed. Ray Gates said that we could base it on the population of foster homes for the agency, stating that we would need to sit down with Erwin McEwen before going with larger sample sizes, because it would increase the work of the APT. (It is sometimes difficult to even get the five foster home surveys completed.) Adrienne suggested excluding homes without placements. Jerry said the Policy Committee would look at this more closely and come back with a recommendation.

**Adolescent Issues - Andrea Miller**

No Report.

**Archives - Ray Chasteen**

Ray Chasteen reported that there has been no new activity.

**Statewide Youth Advisory Board Liaison - Andrea Miller**

No Report.

**System of Care/SASS – Claudia Davis**

Claudia stated that there has been no SASS meeting since the last SWFCAC meeting.

**Foster Parent Support Specialists - Vicky Kline**

Vicky stated that she sent Operations management an Email to ask for information regarding contractual changes for Foster Parent Support Specialists. She had no response to report, so Adrienne asked her to copy her on any forthcoming information.

**PA92-0295 School Records Act - Ray Chasteen**

No Report.

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Adoptions Unlimited, Inc. Family Connections Project Grant - Marilyn Panichi**

Marilyn distributed a handout and said that the second page of the handout provides the background for the five-year project which is detailed on page one. Marilyn described the program development and project partners. She stated that a youth panel will participate in a 30-minute presentation to the core personnel and requested help in identifying youth panelists who have ongoing contact with a birth family member. (The first meeting with the youth is scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup>.) Marilyn introduced Rose Love, the Assistant Project Director on the grant. They will be working through Child and Family Team Meetings and workers will receive training in mediation/negotiation techniques.

**Foster Parents for Deaf Children - Marsha Northrup & Michael Wonderlich**

Marsha Northrup described her background, indicating that she was deaf, but that her deafness was not diagnosed until she was 2 years old. She was reared in an oral environment where she was expected to learn to speak clearly. She explained that children develop primary speech and language between birth and five years of age. She went on to say that only 10% of deaf children are born to deaf parents. She also described the recent controversy at Gallaudet University regarding their new president who was not reared in a strictly deaf environment, relating that to the intensity of the deaf culture. She stated that educationally, deaf and hard of hearing children are served through early intervention programs, then through special education programs. When asked, she described the generational atmosphere of the deaf culture. She stated that it is very important for foster families to be aware of the deaf culture and community in order to understand socialization for deaf children. An awareness of deaf culture will also offer opportunities for exposure to deaf leaders, friendships, role models, etc. When asked, Marsha responded that cochlear implants are a "hot issue" in the deaf culture, indicating that deaf people perceive it to be the end of the deaf culture. They seem to be more opposed to children being

implanted. She related that even with the implant a child may be delayed in speech and language and educational services, and supports need to be in place. She provided suggestions to assist hearing families in parenting deaf children, such as learning basic sign language and encouraging play with hearing children.

Michael Wonderlich displayed a chart demonstrating the impact of audiological delays. He asked Marsha about the incidence rate in general. Marsha stated that 10% are deaf or hearing impaired, and Michael indicated that approximately 1700 people within our system are impacted. They are working to accurately identify those who might need services, but are finding that many have been misidentified. He indicated that we continue to have issues with early intervention services, training issues, interpreter issues, etc. He stated that in response to his appeal at an earlier SWFCAC meeting and the article in the *Illinois Families Now & Forever* newsletter they have received 14 referrals of foster families willing to foster deaf children. Their phone number for referrals is: 312/814-5558.

#### **Cook County Park District Camp – Delores Robinson**

Delores Robinson told foster parents in Cook County about free summer camp that is available to foster children age 6-12 through every Chicago Park District. Delores said her job is to get the word out, and she asked Council members to share this information with other foster parents in Cook County. She said that if the money is not spent for this initiative this year, it might be redirected for another need next year. The Department is aware that some of the opportunities in Cook are not available downstate, an issue that needs to be addressed. Delores distributed flyers. Charlene McEwen was to provide information via email to the APT teams and the APT's were supposed to share with the private agencies that they work with. Delores said they have approximately 400 registration forms to date. Lunch is provided at the Park District day camp. Camp registration is still being accepted in the Cook regions, and if there are slots open you can still get a child into camp. Ruth Dominguez requested that the forms be provided in Spanish.

#### **Agency Awards for Top 2006 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans**

Deputy Director Velma Williams thanked council members for all of the work they do to help improve programs. She wanted to especially thank Adrienne and Claudia for the service and leadership that they have given to the Council. She said foster parents are the backbone of foster care. The Department is looking at more regional activities to get out and thank them individually.

Director Bryan Samuels said the system does not work without foster parents that are willing to step up and give kids what they need. He acknowledged the impact that many of the members made with the General Assembly during the budget process, getting a cost of living increase for foster parents for the first time in six years. He commended everyone that made the phone calls and advocated for the increase. Adrienne pointed out that Council members all pitched in to pay for the mailings.

#### **Awards Presentation**

Ray Gates said that this process has been taking place annually since 1995. He acknowledged Council members, Jerry Welenc, and Office of Foster Parent Support Services staff for their diligence in managing the scoring process. Following is the list of agencies/regions receiving

awards, their representatives in attendance, and a comment made by a foster parent who scored their plan.

**FOURTH PLACE – DCFS Cook North Region, Chicago**

103.84 points

Ms. Chris McGrath - Regional Administrator

Amie Joof and Mike Barry, staff

Mattie Brown and Ellen Kazaras, foster parents

\*This plan demonstrates solid efforts to include foster parents as professional team members, and providing the Grievance Procedure in Spanish indicates efforts toward cultural competency.

**THIRD PLACE – The Baby Fold**

103.93 points

Mr. Dale Strassheim, CEO

Ms. Cindy Musick, Family Development Specialist

\*Baby Fold shows a tremendous commitment to the Foster Parent Law. It's terrific to see the way this agency's committee worked to monitor the implementation of their 2005 plan while simultaneously developing their 2006 plan.

**SECOND PLACE – Hephzibah Children's Association**

103.95 points

Ms. Mary Anne Brown - Executive Director

Ms. Rachel Ash - Foster Parent Law Liaison

Ms. Bettie Shaw - Foster Parent

\*Hephzibah appears to value and promote cultural competence, providing training and other opportunities for foster parents. Utilizing the team approach to determine opportunities for caregivers who could be better utilized in ways other than acting as the primary caregiver should be a great way to maintain connections.

**FIRST PLACE (tie) - Catholic Charities of Chicago**

103.98 points

Ms. Mary Sue Meshes, Foster Parent Law Liaison

Angela Bell, Director of Foster Parent Development & Intake

Ms. Sylvia Flory (SWFCAC member)

Ms. Olivia Brown, Foster Parent

\*The high number of foster parents and staff providing input demonstrates a strong commitment to the implementation plan process. Their Placement Stabilization Project should enhance service delivery.

**FIRST PLACE (tie) – Lakeside Community Committee**

103.98 points

Derrick Whitehead

Ms. Vera Coleman, Foster Parent Law Liaison

Rosalinda Mosby, foster parent

\*This plan demonstrates strong teamwork efforts. Lakeside shows a strong support of the spirit of the Foster Parent Law.

## **WORKING LUNCH – Awards Luncheon**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Prior to today's meeting, council members had been asked to proofread the agency reviews that they had participated in, and sign the official versions. They were then presented to the council for approval.

**MOTION: Ruth Jajko made the motion to accept the agency reviews as submitted by the leads and their partners. Claudia Dancy Davis seconded. The motion carried by unanimous vote.**

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

\*Ray Gates described the work being done by the Clinical Division to enable them to provide foster parents with copies of the Integrated Assessment reports. He indicated that they have entered a "change request" to the SACWIS system and they are calling it the *Foster Parent Integrated Assessment Report*. Once this is completed the worker will be able to just print out the foster parent portion of the report. Note: There will be other issues competing for attention for this change request, but Deputy Director Velma Williams and Arthur Bishop are committed to pushing this forward as quickly as possible.

- After the Family Meeting (day 45) the report will be entered and the child's caseworker will deliver a copy of the report at the next home visit.
- Adrienne suggested that they add the requirement to have the foster parents sign off that they received it and place the signature form in the file. (Foster parents will keep the second page of the sign off sheet – carbonless copy.)
- Ray stated that there's a section that focuses on the foster parents and will contain recommendations listed for foster parents. The other section given foster parents will be the recommendations for intervention and care of the child. (The service plan is actually drawn directly from the child's section of the Integrated Assessment report.)

\*Ray said that they're working on a plan to publish the implementation plan scores in the *Illinois Families Now & Forever* newsletter. Vanessa James, Editor, drafted an article including the scores and this article has been distributed for management review.

- Ramon Nieves said that we might receive negative feedback from CWAC. Ray addressed this by again referring to the approval process that will be completed before moving forward with this plan.
- Vanessa discussed the educational direction of the article. She suggested the possibility of crafting an Editor's question to solicit feedback regarding foster parents' participation in their agency's implementation plan.

Ray said that the Clinical Division is developing a Birth Parent Council, which includes birth parents who are currently or have been involved with the Department. They have been meeting the third Monday evening of the month. The Council grew partially out of the federal review and issues that were identified regarding effectively communicating with birth parents. It also addresses the Departments' renewed focus on reunification. This group offers birth parents the opportunity to impact the way the Department does business, and members will review policy, practice and resources, advising the Department in a way similar to the other Councils. Ray stated that he anticipates starting another group downstate soon. In addition, there may be spin-

off support groups throughout the state. Ray said the Clinical Division is also planning a Birth Parent Information Fair, scheduled for June 28<sup>th</sup> from 3:00p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at 6201 South Emerald, with all child welfare-involved parents invited.

Ray reported that SWFCAC member Andrea Miller participated in the training of new caseworkers in Peoria. This pattern of having a foster parent trainer will be continued through additional trainings.

Ray reviewed the process regarding filling vacancies on the Council, reviewed the process around requesting nominations from Regional Administrators, and requested recommendations from current Council members. Resumes or brief biographies focusing on the candidate's foster care-related experience should go to Terry McGlothlin in the Office of Foster Parent Support Services. Ray reinforced the statute's statement that current members will continue to sit on the Council until they are replaced.

Ray recognized outgoing Council members James Jones; Andrea Miller; Ray Chasteen; Claudia Dancy Davis, Vice Chair; and Adrienne Welenc, Chair, thanking them, and urging them to stay involved through committee work.

***MOTION: Donsetta Blakely made the motion to adjourn. Leanne Montgomery seconded. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 1:55 p.m.***

**TASK LIST:**

Add to next Policy Committee agenda:

- Determine a way to identify the ways the foster parents receive the implementation plan of their agency, either directly or upon request.
- Determine how to get a broader opinion from foster parents than we get by doing just five surveys during implementation reviews.

The next meeting will be held Friday, July 14th, from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., at the Alton Holiday Inn.