

Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting
Approved MINUTES
February 23, 2007
Ramada Inn, Springfield, IL
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Members Present	Members Absent	DCFS Staff	Guests
Mercedes Ball Gladys Boyd Tonya Duke Sylvia Flory Robyn Harvey Birdia Jenkins Vicky Kline Leanne Montgomery Ramon Nieves Heather Schumacher Uli Senz Adrienne Welenc Mary White	Donsetta Blakely Debbie Freke Cecil Garner Nancy Hughes Ruth Jajko Andre Robinson Antionette Walker Patricia Welander Geraldine Wilson	Gwenn Eyer Ray Gates Terry McGlothlin Gail Simpson	Cindy Backstein

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 9:05 p.m. He welcomed everyone and dispensed with introductions, as guests were regular attendees. Debbie Freke, Patricia Welander, Donsetta Blakely and Ruth Jajko were excused from the meeting by prior arrangement. Uli stated that the meeting would end early due to members' advance requests to leave in time to pay their respects to the family of a DCFS worker in Chicago. Ray informed members that Pat Cooper, former SWFCAC chair, recently lost her husband. Cindy Backstein stated that there is a guest logbook for condolences at the Chicago Tribune website. Memorials may be contributed to the college fund for the five Cooper children remaining at home.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes from September 8, 2006 Meeting

Uli asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the November 17th joint meeting. There were none.

MOTION: Ramon Nieves made the motion to accept the minutes. Gladys seconded. The motion carried.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Cook Central - Jerry Welenc

SWFCAC Member Patricia Welander attended their last meeting and presented training on Internet Safety. Salvador Gonzales will attend their next meeting to do a presentation regarding Tax Preparation for Foster Parents.

Cook South - Mercedes Ball

The Regional Council met last Wednesday, with more than 30 private agencies represented. Participants showed interest in the “bed hold” change that reduces foster parent reimbursement for maintaining space for the child while hospitalized. There is also concern about the expectation for the foster parents to attend staffings during this time, noting that when funds are removed they believe that contact will also be restricted. The regional council will submit a recommendation to the SWFCAC soon. Vicki Kline stated that there are concerns in Southern Region around this issue, as well. She will forward a copy of the “official” response they’ve received to Terry. Discussion was around the inability to pay two entities under the 906, CAPU, medical card payments, and the importance of parent (foster parent) involvement in the lives of children who have been hospitalized. Heather suggested that perhaps a reimbursement system similar to the ones used for supporting sibling visitation could be instituted. In addition to this topic, Mercedes said that attendees indicated that they enjoyed the presentation on reunification, but were concerned with who would be available to meet foster parents’ concerns and emotional needs.

TO DO: The Policy Committee will review the materials from the Southern Region in their next committee meeting.

Northern Region - Robyn Harvey

Robyn stated that eleven people attended their Joliet meeting. They’re still talking about demystifying reunification. She indicated that the RA did a terrific presentation. Robyn stated that she spoke to all of the supervisors, reporting on her role on the SWFCAC. The next meeting will be held in Rockford.

Southern Region - Vicky Kline

Vicky reported that she was unable to attend the meeting January 23rd. She stated that they did have reunification presenters there, although the program around Foster Parent Reimbursement was not presented. Vicky indicated that the January meeting was not very well attended, possibly due to weather and health issues. She said that the Southern Region calendar has been established for the satellite meetings.

Central Region - Mary White

No meeting was held due to cancellation. Their next meeting is scheduled for March 7th.

Cook North - Cecil Garner

No report due to Cecil’s absence.

REGIONAL REPORTS DISCUSSION:

- Adrienne suggested that regional councils consider presenting First Aid and/or CPR training at their meetings, especially in light of upcoming COA reviews. Red Cross has provided these trainings free of charge in Chicago.
- Uli stated that he’d recently talked to a private agency supervisor who asked who “came up with” the reunification program. She stated that foster parents are

concerned with perceived expectation that they will be expected to “parent” birth parents.

- Robyn stated that in her region foster parents are trying to understand the initiative and they are considering their ability to work as reunification foster parents.
- Ray reminded members that we are really looking at around 20% of the cases when we address reunification.
- Council members expressed concern around foster parent participation in reunification trainings for management.
- Foster parents who have been included in trainings are responding with grave concerns about their role and available support for them in fulfilling their roles.
- Concern was again expressed for the need for FPSS’s for both public and private foster parents.
- Tonya Duke expressed concern over her perception that children will be returned too early when there are still safety risks. Mary responded to state that this protocol backs up foster parents as resources once children return home.
- Timing appears to be an issue. If foster parent training was rolled out along with supervisor training a lot of these concerns and perceived problems may have been prevented.
- Reunification will be kept as a standing agenda item.

Task Tracking Chart

The updated task chart is attached.

FINAL REPORTS TO THE DIRECTOR

There were no final committee reports to the Director. Uli explained that as chair of the council he is responsible for submitting a monthly report to the Director and stated that a copy of the February report is provided in the packet.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Committee – Heather Schumacher

The committee discussed several topics at their recent meeting.

How to resolve cancellation of agency reviews

- a. Council members need to take their red binder with complete review instructions with them to the reviews.
- b. Call Terry McGlothlin to notify her of any problems.
- c. If you have notice that your partner is cancelling, try to contact another member to participate with you, or call Terry to find another partner for you.
- d. If you end up on site alone, give the agency the option of rescheduling if they want both team members there. If you want to, and the agency agrees, you may conduct the interview solo, but both partners must do the rating.
- e. No phone interviews are allowed.
- f. If the agency is a no-show, even once, it will be mentioned in the feedback letter, cc’ing the Director and the review will not be rescheduled this year. The agency will receive an unsatisfactory rating. NOTE: These situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- g. If one agency representative does not participate, someone else should be interviewed in their stead and the review will be conducted as planned.
- f. Math procedure: On the Final Results page of the red manual, the math to determine the final result is incorrect. The packets distributed to council members for each agency review did contain the corrected page.
- g. The council will not review grievances this year. If this issue is of concern, it can be addressed next year.
- h. Jerry and Gwenn will work together to develop an updated style sheet providing directions for a distinct Table of Contents for agencies and regions to follow in submitting streamlined plans.

Committee Recommendation: All plans will be reviewed in their entirety in 2008. The council approved this recommendation.

The distinct strategies for implementation will be developed.

- Council members will read but not rescore the entire plan.
- Council members who notice major misstatements, major omissions, or other mistakes, will document in the comments sheet, requesting that agency or region make the revisions and send addenda to their foster parents.
- Tonya referenced her educational experience, stating that every three years they must rotate their plans, requiring fresh submissions every three years.
- Ray noted that the Council must develop appropriate justification for such a major change and then discuss it.

AGENDA ITEM:

The council's handling of grievances next year will be an agenda item for a future meeting.

Adolescent Issues/ Statewide Youth Advisory Board Liaison – Robyn Harvey

1. Patty Welander joined this committee.
2. Deputy Director Cynthia Moreno added Robyn to the National Governor's Association Youth Policy Institute.
 - a. They're working on the New York "trial" emancipation plan, doing trial emancipations for 18-year-olds with the option to come back into care prior to age 21.
 - b. They're also looking at new TOT programs.

Robyn referred to information from these meetings that was included in members' packets.

Archives – Jerry Welenc

No work to date. Andre Robinson is the committee chair and is supposed to contact Jerry to schedule a workday.

Training – Debbie Freke

In Debbie's absence, Ray made the training report. He stated that Judy Zaleski frequently asks him questions to get a foster parent's perspective on reunification training issues that come up during field trainings. In addition, he stated that foster parent reunification training is still under development, indicating that SWFCAC member Mercedes Ball has had the opportunity to review and comment on the draft training. Mercedes reported that she has been working on the committee and that they have been looking specifically at the foster parent role. Robyn asked

specifically about content. Members asked to review the curriculum. **Update** - The curriculum was sent to members 2/27, with comments due 3/2.

Legislation – Ruth Jajko

No report due to Ruth's absence.

WORKING LUNCH - Agency Reviews Assignments

Terry distributed agency review packets to council members. She explained that the packets include an assignment chart, contact information, steps, script, review questions, etc. Every packet includes both a copy of the plan and the set of review questions. Uli reminded members to be on time to conduct the reviews, and if you have a conflict to let Terry know in advance so that someone else can be assigned.

Update from the Division of Service Intervention – Gail Simpson for Kim Peck

Gail opened by stating that former Director Bryan Samuels was invested in taking care of youth entering adulthood in the same way they would with children living in their birth families. She distributed materials; including a (power) red folder, which she said reinforces the power youth have to secure their futures.

Scholarship Programs:

- Although scholarships are competitive, our youth are heavily encouraged to apply.
- Program details are in the packet.

Youth in College Vocational Training Program

- The “magic number” is 21 for these programs. Services are available for youth between 16 and 21.
- Although many youth have the goal of “18 and out,” this program offers alternatives to those who are willing to stay until age 21.
- Program details are in the packet.

Community College Program

- Details are in the packet.

Employment Incentive Program

- Youth must work a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- This program provides a supplementary stipend to youth with steady employment to assist youth as they move into their chosen field.
- Details are in the packet.

Education and Training Vouchers

- An application process is required.
- Details are in the packet.

Youth Housing Assistance Program

- Youth must be between 17-1/2 and 21 years of age.
- Youth must be a ward for a minimum of six months to qualify.
- Details are included in the packet.

Life Skills Program

- Ansell Casey Assessments are required to be completed when youth are 14 years of age.
- Youth and workers share responsibility in this program.
- Details are included in the packet.

Academic Excellence Program

- This program promotes, “what it takes to achieve excellence.”
- This program supports youth in making sure they’re ready to exit the Department.
- Details are included in the packet.

Job Corps

This program is community-based, removing youth from the distractions in their daily life and providing job skills. The brochure was distributed.

Central Region Programs

Gail stated that when she was hired she was asked to replicate successful Chicago area programs in the Central Region. She mentioned a program based on building strengths in young women, encouraging peer-to-peer interaction and providing mentors and examples of strong successful women. She indicated that the Department supports two programs in the Springfield area, through the Urban League.

DISCUSSION:

- Who supports youth in decision making within these programs? I.e., banking their Employment Incentive Program stipend rather than spending frivolously. Gail stated that their caseworkers provide assistance.
- Youth are entitled to take advantage of multiple programs as they can.
- Ray recommended that Gail contact the regional reporter for *Illinois Families Now & Forever* in order to gather information and promote programs.
- If youth still have a legal relationship with the Department they can access GED programs. Gail stated that most of the job programs offer GED components.

Gail’s Email address is Gail.Simpson@illinois.gov

Reunification Initiative – Nancy Hughes

No report due to Nancy's absence.

Foster Parent Support Specialists - Vicky Kline

The committee is examining inconsistencies in services and discrepancies in supervision. Jerry suggested that the committee might want to send a memo or meet with the Acting Director to address budget issues since his past participation on the council might offer him a good perspective on the importance of the allocation of funds to Foster Parent Support Specialists. Gladys reported that as IFAPA president she met with the Director and that she informed him that we need Support Specialists. She indicated to him that the FPSS’s currently serving the state are limited in number. She stated that he indicated that they were trying to ensure in the budget that some FPSS’s would be rehired. Ray referenced other discussions that are taking place regarding utilizing FPSS’s to support the Reunification Initiative.

Vicky referenced a licensing survey she recently received, stating that two of the questions reference the services and supports of Foster Parent Support Specialists. Vicky noted that if this is a statewide survey it could document the need.

She also stated that she would work to compile a statewide coverage list. She indicated that at least 45 counties are not adequately covered. This list will be forwarded for administrative review.

Resource Family Subcommittee - Donsetta Blakely

No report due to Donsetta's absence.

Adoption Month Celebration - Ramon Nieves

Ramon said he had not heard from Marilyn Panichi, chair of the committee, about a meeting yet. Gwenn said she is also on the committee and just received an email asking committee members if they were available March 1st, 6th or 8th for a conference call.

NEW BUSINESS

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

- Ray said that Dana Yowell reported that proposed changes to Rule 340 have not been taken forward by the Governor's office.
- Ray reported that the Caregiver Institutes have had a good turnout. In observing the foster parent attendees, it appeared that they were engaged, that they were listening to what was said, and that they were thinking about reunification. All in all, it has been a good experience. Adrienne reported that the Institutes have been well received. She indicated that preparatory work by Foster Parent Support Specialists probably paved the way for an open-minded approach. She noted that both Cook audiences included primarily veteran foster parents and they were open to the topic. Mercedes, who presented at both Cook sessions, stated that the birth parent involvement in the institutes was a terrific asset.
- We have a committee working with Vanessa on the Council's brochure.
- Ray asked the SWFCAC if we should continue to look at regional institutes in 2008, or should we look at offering a DCFS statewide conference.

DISCUSSION and SUGGESTIONS:

- ◆ With the caregiver institutes we are reaching larger numbers.
- ◆ When you take the training into the areas foster parents serve in it makes it more personalized to their needs. It requires more staff involvement.
- ◆ Offer two conferences in both ends of the state.
- ◆ Offer regional meetings at conferences.
- ◆ Recognize that foster parents view conferences as respite.
- ◆ The larger conferences tended to offer more meet and greet opportunities with top management staff.
- ◆ Conferences offered more opportunities for networking and building supports.
- ◆ Conferences offered more opportunities for staff and foster parents to network.
- ◆ Offer two-day conferences at locations throughout the state. (Possibly run Saturday morning through Sunday mid afternoon.)
- ◆ Offer daily admission, or one-night registrations

The Council recommended the following:

- 1) Offer one three-day statewide conference (in addition to the IFAPA conference).
- 2) Consider having two two-day training conferences (Saturday and Sunday) one in the northern part of the state and one in the South.

IFAPA Statewide Conference

Gladys stated that IFAPA is working toward hosting a four-day conference for October 23-26, 2008. She stated that this is an opportunity that she is very proud of, to reunify IFAPA and DCFS. She stated that she has secured sponsored bus service to transport parents to the Conference. She stated that they anticipate their speaker pool to include Senator Barack Obama, the Director, and Dr. Ira Chasnoff. She said she has reserved the Oak Brook Marriott hotel, and she said the Director told her he would fund this conference.

MOTION: Adrienne Welenc made the motion for adjournment and Leanne Montgomery seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be held March 16th at Comfort Suites O'Hare.

DRAFT