

SWFCAC Meeting
October 21, 2011 ~ 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Comfort Suites, 111 N. Broadway, Aurora, IL
APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present		Staff Present
Carlos Argueta	Andre Marshall	Holly Bitner Duck
Mercedes Ball	Cathy McCoy	Mayra Burgos-Biott
Gladys Boyd	Bill Moorehead	Gwenn Eyer
Lee Coffman	Steve Steinhardt	Ray Gates
Edith Cruz	Danny Tolliver	Vanessa James
Andrew DeLao		Shaun Lane
Debbie Freke	Members Absent	Cheryl Lawrence
Robyn Harvey	Angela Barber	Terry McGlothlin
Doreen Henry	Irma Dixon	Debbie Palmer-Thomas
Janice Hopson	Kelly Green	
Birdia Jenkins	Michael Simpson	Guests Present
Sheila Jones		Kent Coffman
Kathleen Lutz		George Lemperis

Welcome & Introductions – Sheila Jones

Sheila welcomed council members and guests to the meeting. She asked that cell phones be put on silent, and she said the meeting would be recorded to ensure accuracy of the minutes. She asked that if anyone needed to take a call or have a side bar conversation they step out into the hall to do so. Andrew welcomed council members and guests to the meeting. All introduced themselves.

Final Reports to Director – Andrew DeLao

There were no final reports to the Director.

Approval of Minutes from September 16, 2011 - Council

Sheila made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Steve seconded. No opposition. Motion carried.

PRESENTATIONS:

Step Down/Spec Care - Mayra Burgos-Biott

Mayra said her basic responsibility is to work with specialized care programs. Her office handles intake and referrals of specialized cases into foster care. They assist with new cases coming in or when agencies need help finding placements for specialized cases being moved to a different home. She also oversees the Spec Workgroup, which is a subcommittee of CWAC with a focus on recruiting foster parents who are willing and able to provide spec.-level foster care.

She has been working with Training and the Clinical Division to prepare a Training of Trainers on the NCTSN curriculum so that private agencies can train foster parents in the trauma focus. The training starts next week downstate and every agency has been asked to send 2 staff, 1 foster parent and 1 supervisor to become trained to train foster parents in the NCTSN trauma curriculum. Sixty people are registered so far, thirty are PRIDE trainers and the rest are from

POS agencies. Agencies will bring their own foster parent co-trainer. It will be presented in 5 three-hour training sessions at a slightly advanced level. We are hoping caregivers will take the other trauma training first so they come into this one with some knowledge of trauma.

Mayra said she has been meeting regionally with DCFS foster parents to discuss their considering spec.-level care. She said this includes the need to work with a private agency if they will be taking specialized children. She said that POS foster homes availability becomes limited, especially in the Southern and Central Regions, so this will offer more opportunities for our children. The population in step down is mostly teenagers and we don't have that many homes who will take teenagers.

We are working with the residential agencies to make a good plan for children to be sustained in foster care. The foster parent has to be part of that planning process and be willing to wait sometimes months for the child to return. We need homes that would be able to take this youth unconditionally and work with those agencies providing the services and supporting the foster parent. Even though by rule or practice we only want no more than two spec children in the home, sometimes we have sibling groups and we have to make an exception. We work on a case by case basis and have conference calls with everyone involved so we can talk about what is going on with the youth. Sheila said when children are moving into residential care there is a transition where POS meets with DCFS. When they transition back into foster care there is still a lot of collaboration going on. Doreen said all of her kids are from step down and there is a process that goes very smoothly. Before you even take the child you go to where they live, see their surroundings, and then they start visits. There is also a behavior analyst from the spec. agency that comes out to check on the youth, and they provide contact numbers of people who can help.

Shaun said this is reflective of a fundamental shift in how we think about residential placement. Residential has traditionally been considered as a placement, but we are moving toward residential being considered a form of treatment. If there is continued involvement with the foster family one could envision the residential placement to be shorter.

Robyn asked if a foster parent is willing to stay involved whether there is a special fee. Mayra said that is currently not in policy and would be negotiated on a case by case basis. When a foster parent is identified and starts visiting, payments start, but the payment is not actually made until after the child is placed. Gladys said then if the placement does not work out, the parent would not be reimbursed for travel, etc. Mayra has not had that situation, but they would have to look at that on a case by case basis as well. Mayra will check and try to get a more clear answer to that question.

Mayra said there are a couple of agencies working on their own system. More are needed, especially in Central and Southern Regions where we are short of resources and homes. We are starting conversations with agencies, hoping they will make some proposals to begin providing spec.-level care.

Debbie Freke said we need to be sure that the kids know that residential care is treatment rather than placement so that they understand that this is not where they live. Holly asked if this would be a discussion at the CAYIT to reinforce that the youth will continue a relationship with a

family. Shaun said that CAYIT is one of the venues intended to drive this perspective. Shaun suggested that might also be a good venue for discussion of support needs.

Vanessa said three months ago she had a discussion with Larry Small about putting an article in the newsletter around foster parents staying connected with a foster child when he/she goes to a residential setting. They discussed support for foster parents to do this, but that had not all been worked out yet so the article has not been written.

Janice Hopson said she is currently in this situation. The child is in residential and Janice has been visiting since April. She picks up the youth and does things that are therapeutically in line with what they are going through. She is spending money to take her on outings, etc., and the youth has a bond and no one else. She is developmentally delayed and fast approaching 21. Mayra said it is the identified foster parent who will receive the reimbursement. Danny said maybe it should be a requirement for the agency to tell the foster parent up front that there is reimbursement available if they stay involved with the child.

Bill said since the Department is shifting their emphasis the Department may need more of a specific list of guidelines and rules for this very thing so everyone is aware of what it is. Mayra said those exist in the residential protocol.

Shaun said we are listening closely and there is a sense of urgency that members are communicating about our bringing greater specificity regarding how we can support the continuing involvement of foster parents. We hear you loud and clear and will address this.

Mayra said she can be reached at 312/814-5501 if anyone has questions.

SYAB/College Care Package Program - Holly Bitner

Holly said she is the Northern Region Transition Services Manager. She helps youth apply for educational and vocational supports. She also works with the Youth Advisory Board and the Pregnant and Parenting Teens Program.

Care Package Program for College Students - Holly distributed a form to sign up for this program. This program is to match students in the Youth in College Program with volunteers to send them a care package and/or make a connection with them. She currently has a waiting list of about ten students and has made about twenty matches so far. Holly said right now volunteers can only be licensed caregivers or staff because we don't have the ability to do background checks on others. Vanessa suggested putting information on this program in the newsletter.

Pregnant and Parenting Teens – Holly asked council members to let her know if they have a pregnant and parenting teen in their home so she can make sure they have all of the supports that are available to them. An Unusual Incident Report (UIR) is done when a youth in care is pregnant, and should also be done upon birth of the child. This starts a chain reaction of things that need to be done. Holly distributed a pamphlet from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Holly works in the Northern Region. Her counterparts are Gail Simpson for Central and Southern regions and Linda Swan McClendon in Cook County.

Holly said we have Life Skills Training individually and in groups. Social media and the dangers of it are something she has added. There are also regional and statewide advisory boards

and youth summits. At the Northern Region summit they had a detective speak. Debbie Palmer-Thomas said when the detective spoke everyone listened. He told them if you send a sext message you take the risk of being a listed sex offender for the rest of your life. Holly said we need to take every opportunity to talk to youth about the dangers of social media.

Update from Division of Service Support - Shaun Lane

Shaun expressed appreciation for the work that Holly does, stating how important the supports are that they offer for education and other resources. He said that he anticipates spending a part of the joint AAC/SWFCAC meeting on the topic of educational supports. We will hear about the research that really highlights some of the challenges we have as caregivers in the child welfare system, resources, and tracking the educational progress of our youth.

Shaun said that Jeanie Ortega-Piron is now our Acting Director. She has served as Guardian for many years and brings significant experience and expertise to the role of Acting Director. As Guardian, her vantage point comes from a child advocacy point of view. There has been an important statutory change in IL which states that the Governor is obligated to submit a nomination for a permanent Director within sixty days. By December 1st the Governor will need to have communicated to the General Assembly who he is recommending as permanent Director.

There has been a considerable amount of press regarding the OIG report. It has powerful implications for us. The OIG report highlights a set of alleged shortcomings in the contracting oversight process, particularly of a grant structure. We are actively in the process of implementing a set of recommendations to modify, tighten and improve our contracting process, particularly grant structure contracts.

The General Assembly will be back in session next week. Dana Yowell reported that DCFS does not have any specific legislation in play. The general economic situation of the state is quite challenged. We anticipate continuing budget pressure in FY12. There is a particularly high level of scrutiny in any discretionary budget category. We will preserve core services to children. Rob Stanek reported that through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) they are beginning budget building for FY13. We do not have specific guidance from OMB yet, but we are anticipating a very challenging budget process for FY13.

Report from Office of Caregiver & Parent Support - Ray Gates

Ray distributed flyers for a dental company in Springfield area that accepts the medical card. He said Familia Dental is also located in other areas of the state.

Ray welcomed the newest SWFCAC member, Andre Marshall from Lakeside Community Committee. Andre said he has been in child welfare for twenty years and is looking forward to working with the council.

Ray reminded everyone that they need to complete their Ethics Training and return their Acknowledgement of Participation form to Terry. This is a requirement from the OIG's office.

Ray said the next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. We will meet on Friday November 18th from 9am-2pm. Kevin Walsh from Daniel Fitzgerald's office will present about the education experience and needs of children in care, along with co-presenters from Northern IL University and Chapin Hall. Chapin Hall has done significant

research related to our children's educational experience. We are almost certain the Director can join us for that meeting.

Ray said in order to qualify for lodging on Friday night, 11/18/11, council members must stay at 6201 after the meeting Friday to set up for the next day's event, and arrive at Saturday's event by 10am and be signed up as a volunteer to help in a designated area. Terry added that they must also qualify for lodging according to state guidelines just as they do for other meetings. The committee is putting together a list of areas where workers are needed. Terry will send emails with more detail. We have been working closely with the planning committee. Carol Williams and other regional staff will provide child care and we will do the other tasks. There will be a general session in the morning and workshops in the afternoon.

2012 Caregiver Training Institutes – Ray said that Terry emailed the schedule to council members and the dates/locations will be as follows:

March 3-Concordia University, River Forest

March 10 – Four Points Sheraton, Fairview Heights

March 24 – Best Western Plus Prairie Inn, Galesburg

April 7 – Clocktower Resort, Rockford

All institutes will run from 9-3 on Saturdays. In the morning we will deliver information about developmental stages with a focus on problematic behavior to help caregivers understand what to expect of behavior at various ages and recognize when it might signify there is an issue to be dealt with. In the afternoon we will talk about resources and what to do when behaviors arise.

We hope to have region-specific literature available from service providers and other agencies. The program book will be half the size as last year but will still include any critical information, including a list of links to helpful web resources. The Program Committee is working on identifying presenters, and Ray will be working with Cheryl to identify foster parent co-trainers.

Gladys voiced concern that not all foster parents have access to computers so they cannot access web resources. Ray said that they can go to a local library to access a computer. Gwenn said we will have some handouts and we will also pass out brochures that are available. They can also take notes at the training. Some agencies provide computers for their foster parents to use. Gladys offered to get the word out if the Cook Institute does not get the response needed. Ray said the January edition of the IL Families newsletter will have the registration information in it. We will reach out to Gladys, licensing workers, caseworkers and APT staff to spread the word if numbers are low.

Travel Reimbursement - Ray reminded council members to submit their request for expense reimbursement within 30 days of the meeting.

Report from Office of Training - Cheryl Lawrence

HMR DVD – The DVD training for relative caregivers is almost finished. Cheryl expects to receive the final copy in a few days. Once it is reviewed by the Regional Training Managers it will be rolled out.

Online Adoption Certification Training - WIU is working on the final revisions. When done it will be piloted around the state and made available to caregivers who cannot make it to classroom training.

Trauma Training – Cheryl said Mayra spoke about the new NCTSN training. After trainers have been trained we will try to roll it out sometime around the first of the year in a few areas of the state and then tweak it according to feedback from caregivers who attend those sessions. The initial 4-hour trauma training will still be available, and it will be suggested that caregivers go to it first, but it will not be mandatory.

Staff – Kendra Storme, Southern Region Trainer is retiring. Her replacement is Amy Guy, and she will start as soon as we complete the hiring process.

Teen Attachment – Cheryl said they hope to offer beginning curriculum on pre-teen and teen development next spring.

Cheryl said they are trying to provide information to licensing supervisors and workers, case management staff and POS staff on how to help caregivers make strategic and targeted choices on training that matches what they are doing with specific children.

PRIDE Books – Cheryl said they are using up the last of the PRIDE books and will start to roll out the 2009 version of PRIDE soon. It was updated with a tremendous amount of input from Illinois looking at current trends of child welfare practice, and includes more information on trauma, working with birth parents, concurrent planning, etc.

Report from DCFS Northern Region Administrator – Debbie Palmer-Thomas

Debbie reported that in the Northern Region they have a Partnering with Parent Council, and last week they had the opportunity to have birth parents from the council come out to speak with the direct service supervisors. The parents were articulate, emotional, honest and they totally captured the attention of the staff. They want them now to come in to speak to direct service staff. Debbie challenged the foster parents to do the same thing, encouraging everyone throughout the state to partner with staff.

Regional Reports:

Cook North - Edith Cruz, Irma Dixon

Edith said they had two focus group meetings to work on implementation plans for Cook North. They will be having CPR training provided by two firemen at the end of the month. They are hoping to give out smoke alarms and first aid kits to those who attend.

Cook South - Angela Barber, Danny Tolliver

Danny said he couldn't make the meeting so did not have a report. Mercedes said they had a meeting last Wednesday, but not a council meeting, and the Regional Administrator emailed people to come and work on the implementation plan. Ellyce Worrell was the staff person who had worked with the regional advisory council and she has retired. They are looking for someone to take her place. There is currently not a Regional Advisory Council, and it will have to start all over again.

Cook Central - Birdia Jenkins, Janice Hopson

Birdia said at their regular monthly meeting Mayra gave a report concerning specialized homes for children similar to the report she gave to this group today. Mildred Cardona spoke about the implementation plan to let them know we are working on it. Denise spoke about the Peyton Foundation Christmas party at UIC. Albert Steiner was there to speak on how he has been

involved with students, some of the conditions he found that were serious, and how he is trying to motivate them to have a positive attitude. Their next meeting is scheduled for October 25.

Northern - Cathy McCoy, Debbie Freke

Robyn said foster parents got together and started a Facebook page and have been communicating and sharing information. They currently have 62 members and they are very excited about it. Information is posted for foster parents and they appreciate it.

Robyn said the Northern Region did have a request for the SWFCAC. She submitted a paper to Angela. The Northern Region would like the board payment breakdown distributed to foster parents that lists what the board payment is to be used for, i.e., allowance, clothing, etc.

They will be meeting in early December for a holiday advisory council meeting. Debbie Palmer Thomas asked Debbie and Cathy to spearhead a foster parent function with her staff. Robyn is still chair but at the beginning of the year there will be an election.

Southern - Andrew DeLao, Michael Simpson

Andrew said their next meeting will be a conference call on November 8th. He said the LANS received \$10,000 from ISBE but those funds have not been provided yet. They also had a report from Training indicating that if you don't get your training approval forms in within 6 months they will no longer accept them.

Central - Bill Moorehead, Lee Coffman

Lee said they had a teleconference and covered what went on at SWFCAC. Next meeting will be held Tuesday October 25 in Decatur.

Training on Scoring Implementation Plans - Ray Gates & Gwenn Eyer

Ray and Gwenn presented the annual training on how to score Foster Parent Law Implementation Plans that are submitted by November 30th of each year. Ray explained that training members every year helps to enhance inter-rater reliability among the scorers; plus, it helps the newer members who have never scored or only scored once.

Ray said the plans have to be received in our office by November 30th. We then review the plans to make sure they are complete and *this year we will add a note that instructs members to either score all of every narrative in the plan or only changes that were made to the plans' narratives.* The plans are then assigned to council members. Scoring must be completed by January 31st but we ask that council members don't wait that long. Gwenn said scoring a plan takes about one hour per plan for those with experience. She is willing to help over the phone if needed and can be reached at 217-245-1013. Ray and Terry can be reached at 217/524-2422.

Ray distributed a sheet with each member's name on it and the name of each agency and region with a plan to score for 2012. Ray carefully explained that members must recuse themselves from scoring the plans of every entity with which they have a relationship, had a relationship, or are aware of any appearance of a conflict of interest. Ray noted that this council's integrity has never come into question because the members always apply due diligence to matters such as these.

Reports from other Councils/ Committees:

CWAC - Steve, Sheila, Mercedes, Doreen

Steve said there was a teleconference yesterday. They discussed family engagement when stepping down from residential care in order to make the step-downs more effective and stable.

IFAPA - Gladys Boyd

Gladys said the National Foster Parent Association Annual Education Conference will be held June 15-18, 2012 at Oak Brook Hills Marriott Resort in Oak Brook, IL. She will keep the council updated as more information becomes available.

UIC Steering Committee – Doreen Henry

Doreen said Andrew gave her a packet of information and asked her to represent the SWFCAC on this committee just today. She will contact the necessary people to see when the meeting is scheduled and will report back at a future meeting.

Committee Reports:

Legislation - Sheila Jones

Sheila said the Legislative Committee met by teleconference 10-19-11. She said that the legislature goes back in session next week (Oct 25 - 27). She reviewed what the legislators are working on. Their upcoming session does not seem to contain bills pertaining to child welfare. She discussed the At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act, H.R. 3172 which would prevent a youth's eligibility for medical assistance from being terminated should they become incarcerated. Currently this eligibility stops when the youth becomes incarcerated. When the youth is released from incarceration it takes 90 days for the Medicaid eligibility to be reinstated. This results in a lag time for the youth where they are not covered by Medicaid. This act is requesting that Medicaid be "suspended" while the youth is incarcerated instead of ending their eligibility. When the youth is later released from their incarceration they would be covered by Medicaid immediately.

Training - Mercedes Ball said that Cheryl covered training information in her report.

Step-Down – Bill Moorehead said he is on the step-down committee with Mayra and she covered the information in her report.

Research - Lee Coffman had no report.

Kin Caregiver Support Services - Cathy McCoy

Cathy said she has been speaking with Barb Schwartz who will send information for her to distribute. They've been talking about how to share information with relatives.

Respite - Gladys Boyd

Gladys said that respite is kind of a hot topic again, and she prefers to give her report when Shaun is present. She said private agencies are taking funds away from the caregivers to pay for respite when they're not supposed to be doing so. She also talked about payment issues re the second child placed in a home. She wondered if SWFCAC needs to form a committee to meet with Miller Anderson to protect and retain POS homes.

Ray apologized in case several communications to Gladys in the recent past were not clear. He reminded Gladys that he recently communicated more than once to her that Shaun put forth a plan to investigate and give feedback on situations where POS agencies are allegedly reducing board checks by the cost of respite that had been provided. As soon as Gladys forwards those papers Shaun will form an internal group to look into that. Ray said we need to look at the documentation first, and we are committed to working with her when she forwards this evidence. Ray said he checked with the Advocacy Office supervisor in response to Gladys saying at the previous SWFCAC meeting that she had referred a lot of foster parents to the Advocacy Office to report this experience that had allegedly affected them, and the administrator reported back that they have none of these calls from Cook County or from downstate. Ray said that two SWFCAC meetings ago we asked if this was going on downstate and members at the table said no. Ray asked whether, given that there is no evidence this practice is occurring statewide, coupled with the fact that the Department has already committed to investigating the alleged incidents in Cook County, this is appropriate for discussion at SWFCAC meetings.

Andre said this has been a topic in infrastructure and there has been no uniformity of the application since the inception of DCFS. He said Shaun made inquiries to agencies about how they operate this. Gladys said that Robyn indicated that it is going on in her area. Gladys said people call her and she tested it herself to see if it was taken out of the other foster parent's board payment. She has her own check stubs showing where she was paid for that respite. Ray again asked for copies of those as well as the other foster parent's board check receipts. She said she does not believe the Advocacy Office is not getting calls, but she added that caregivers might not call Advocacy because they are afraid of being black balled. She said she doesn't have documentation other than phone calls.

FPSS - Andrew DeLao - This issue has been tabled due to the budget.

Adjourn - *Steve made a motion to adjourn, Birdia seconded. No Objections. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.*

*Next Meeting – Joint Meeting with IL Adoption Advisory Council – Fri., November 18, 2011, 9am – 2pm at 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago;
Adoption Day Event, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago, Sat., November 19th 11am-4pm*