

**STATEWIDE FOSTER CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL
ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL
JOINT MEETING NOVEMBER 21, 2003
160 N LASALLE STREET, CHICAGO, IL
Approved Minutes**

<p>SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT Baker, Sarah Chasteen, Ray Cooper, Pat Dancy-Davis, Claudia Jones, James Kazaras, Ellen Kline, Vicky Lane, James Miller, Andrea Senz, Uli Stone, Linda Welenc, Adrienne White, Mary Wilson, Geraldine</p>	<p>SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT Blakely, Donesetta Boyd, Gladys Darville, Heidi Edwards, Faye Rowan, Meta Thurman-Green, Jerri</p>	<p>DCFS STAFF Byrd, Michael Deleonardo, Diane Dorn, June Freagon, Sharon Gates, Ray Maher, Jean Manuel, Jill Moreno, Cynthia Pence, Judy Slater, Peggy West, David</p>	<p>GUESTS Peterson, Eileen Welenc, Jerry Woods-Lis, Melinda</p>
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<p>AAC MEMBERS PRESENT Clark, Amy Cooper, Patricia Davis, Art Davis, Claudia Davis, Ronald Davis, Zelma Debose, Mary Dominguez, Diane Eyer, Gwenn Hall, Brian Howard, Jeanne Jones, James Jones-Green, Barbara Lambert, Gigi Matthews, Dave McCoy, Krista Panichi, Marilyn Richmond, Elizabeth Schulert, Gretchen Terry, Cleo</p>	<p>AAC MEMBERS ABSENT Ami, James Ami, Sharon Blasingame, Dr. Felicia Chaytor, Diana Flaherty, JoAnn Hay, Tammy Hinshaw, Diana Jackson, Tharecea Johnson, Vance Loss, Susanne Scott, Joyce Solomon, Terry Winn, Carol</p>
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Call to Order

Chairs Jim Lane, Elizabeth Richmond and Jim Jones called the meeting to order. Members, guests and staff introduced themselves.

Communications Deputy Jill Manuel

Ray Gates introduced Jill Manuel. She thanked everyone for attending this special meeting of both councils, noting it is indicative of the breadth of people who are involved in participating in the celebration of adoption during Adoption Month. She distributed a press release explaining this special month as well as the Adoption Celebration scheduled at Daley Plaza later today. She encouraged everyone to review the study on adoption done by the Dave Thomas Foundation, noting that it can be accessed online. She then explained the schedule of events for the celebration, and she encouraged all in attendance to participate. She also extended an invitation for anyone to contact her if they have questions or concerns about locally-generated newsletters, emphasizing that she is willing to work with them to make the newsletters the best they can be for consumers.

Approval of Minutes

Jim Lane called for acceptance of the minutes of the previous Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council meeting held 10/24/03. Andrea Miller moved to accept as written; Uli Senz gave the second; all voted in favor; the motion carried.

Jim Jones called for acceptance of the minutes of the previous Illinois Adoption Advisory Council meeting held 10/03/03. Marilyn Panichi moved to change, on page 5 at the bottom, that she was recognized by James Jones, not by James Lane. Michael Byrd moved to change, on page 1, the word pilot to a review program. Diane Dominguez moved to accept the minutes as amended; Ronald Davis gave the second; all voted in favor; the motion carried.

Guest and Candidate for IAAC Membership Melinda Woods Lis

Ray Gates introduced Melinda Woods-Lis, an adoptive parent and former employee of DCFS and other organizations, having worked for a significant amount of time in child welfare. Ray noted that June Dorn had suggested the Council consider recommending her to fill an open membership slot and that the Council co-chairs had agreed. He explained that the Director appoints all members, but the Council could recommend candidates for membership. He added that there is currently an open slot in the expert category, and it is not geographically limited.

Ms. Lis explained her experience as an employee and an adoptive parent. She thanked the Council for considering her, and she stated that she would be happy to serve if recommended and appointed.

Gwenn Eyer moved to recommend Ms. Lis as a candidate for filling the open vacant slot. Dave Matthews gave the second. All members voted in favor, and the motion carried.

Membership Updates

Ray Gates announced that the Director had recently appointed 2 new members to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. They are Ruth Jajko to fill a vacant joint appointment to CWAC slot and Johnnie Simon to fill a vacant slot for foster parent from the Cook South Region.

Regarding the Adoption Council, Ray announced that the Director had recently appointed Krista McCoy to an adoptee slot and Amy Clark to an expert slot.

Committee on Criminal Bars to Licensure

Ray Gates introduced this committee of the IL Adoption Advisory Council, noting that it was co-chaired by Krista McCoy. He explained that the Adoption Council co-chairs had asked that the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council join them in this effort, and Statewide Chair James Lane had agreed. He noted that Mr. Lane would ask that up to four members of Statewide volunteer to join this committee and that one of them would volunteer to co-chair it with Krista. Ray gave materials to Mr. Lane to present to the volunteers so they would have all of the materials distributed to date.

Ray then introduced Cleo Terry and Mary DeBose, who had agreed to present an overview of the most recent conference call had by the committee. They presented the overview, then attendees engaged in a spirited discussion about the merits and drawbacks to the statute, the Child Care Act, which enacts criminal bars and the policy and practice which has emanated from it.

The following observations were made:

1. One question is how many people are discouraged by the bars such that they do not pursue licensure or are counseled out by staff. The full effect is not known
2. The statute affects issues of social justice.
3. The licensing process is unfair to minorities, relying on history to lock them out of the possibility of fostering or adopting; this during times when there are not enough minority homes to serve the minority population that is in care.
4. The system is unfair.
5. Practice questions were asked, including whether workers tell people about waivers, whether they explain reasons when licensure is denied, and whether they explain appeal rights.
6. Licensing needs to take a more developmental versus enforcement role if we are to best serve the best interests of the children in care.

Members took a break to get food and resumed their discussion over their working brunch.

June Dorn noted that she had spoken with Camille Sleet about getting the history leading up to the bars as well as the history since they took effect. She hopes to have some information for the next conference call. Ray Gates noted that he had communicated with Legislative Chief Randy Wells about this effort. Plus, he stated that he had spoken with Lori Gray, who handles requests for waivers, and Lori told him that both she and her

predecessor in the position had never received a request to waive a criminal bar for licensure. They had, however, waived criminal bars for placement in unlicensed relative homes. Discussion ensued.

Noting that it was almost time to adjourn to the Adoption Celebration, Jim Jones charged the committee with determining its next appropriate step. Ray Gates announced that the next conference call is set for Friday, 12/5 at 9:00 a.m. The same call-in and pass code numbers will be used.

Update on Federal Grant for Respite for Adoptive Families

Deputy Cynthia Moreno announced that the federal government had recently informed DCFS that the grant has been renewed for its second of three years.

The group adjourned and made their way to the Adoption Celebration.