

**Adoption Advisory Council
February 2, 2007
Eastland Suites, Bloomington, IL
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
APPROVED MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT		MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF PRESENT
Donsetta Blakeley	David Matthews	Kathy Casey	June Dorn
Rev. Art Davis	Krista McCoy	Sue Cianci	Ray Gates
Ronald E. Davis	Dorothy McGhee	Patricia Cooper	Bridgett Glickman
Mary Debose	Kate Monte	Diane Dominguez	Jean Maher
Gwenn Eyer	Marilyn Panichi	Brian Hall	Terry McGlothlin
Jeanne Howard	Elizabeth Richmond	Gina Samuels	Judy Pence
Betty Johnson	Michele Seidl	Jackie Sharp Akins	
James Jones	Gretchen Schulert	Shannabeth Stein	GUESTS
Susanne Loss	Terry Solomon	Ron Tyler	Cindy Backstein
Joyce Loy	Mark Werner	Kim Wheelock	
Alan Marcus			

Welcome and Introductions

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introductions were made.

Follow-Up Discussion on Post Adoption Report - Jeanne Howard

Jeanne Howard led a discussion on the Post Adoption Report that was distributed at the November 17th meeting. Jeanne said the report was very similar to the study the Children's Center at ISU had done in the past. It indicates that many adoptive families are doing well but there is concern that many others struggle, and a number of service gaps were identified. Jeanne distributed a summary that she had prepared, which included issues that she thought the council should consider. (See Attachment A)

Discussion on Issues to Consider:

1. Raising subsidy amount?

- * Children in low-income homes may not be receiving services they need because the caregivers are not aware of the services and are less educated.
- * Tease out whether the kids are doing better or the families are less educated.
- * Over 50% of the families served by the Older Caregiver Program have less than \$10,000 income including subsidy.
- * There are pervasive poverty issues that an increase won't solve.
- * If additional subsidy could be related to family income there could be a greater impact at less cost.
- * Suggest that the system indexes to inflation or cost of living.
- * General revenue funds could be used if not seeking IVE reimbursement.

2. Increasing access to post-adoption linkage and support?
 - * Having the services in place doesn't help if the families are not aware of the services. There should be a standard procedure to make adoptive families aware.
 - * One issue around disruptions is that families are not getting adoption preservation services fast enough.
 - * Services are more helpful than additional subsidy to some adoptive families.
 - * Master Adoptive Parents - DCFS has a contract with the Cradle to create a statewide online directory of services. If the MAP's could be reinstated, and they had access to that directory, they could be a link to families to get services earlier.
 - * Welcome wagon when there is a new adoption in the area to give list of information on who they call for assistance.

3. Expanding coverage of subsidy services? (Adding residential treatment to the list of available services)
 - * Not discussed

Mark volunteered to chair a workgroup to discuss these issues further. Council members who volunteered were Rev. Davis, Alan Marcus, Dave Matthews, Elizabeth Richmond, Judy Pence, Jeanne Howard and Joyce Loy. They will meet to come up with recommendations to make to the Director based on the UIUC study and Jeanne's response.

Planning the 2007 Adoption Celebration - Marilyn Panichi

Marilyn said a committee was formed at the November 17th joint meeting with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. She said a conference call would be scheduled in the near future to begin discussions. Ideas offered were:

- *Focus around families that have adopted.
- *Work with members of congress to have a portrait of an adoptive family in legislators Washington offices in the month of November.
- *Tie in with the Midwest Adoption Conference the 2nd Sunday in November. Sundays are a great time for press coverage. Do a kick off at the conference.
- *Babyfold has a nice event with their Christmas tree where adoptive families come for free – nice local event.

The co-chairs will add this to their list of issues to discuss with the Director.

Ray will check with Dana Yowell to ask if there are any restrictions on working with Illinois legislators to participate in events in 2007.

Report from Office of Service Intervention - June Dorn

June distributed a folder of materials, including:

*Statewide Post Adoption & Guardianship Unit Organizational Charts - depicting staff and cases they are assigned.

*Breakdown of Post Adoption & Guardianship Unit Workload - Sheet for each of the regions in the state - profiled different functions they perform, volume and amount of time it takes in work hours.

*Updated permanency rate charts – adoption and permanency numbers thru December

June said she does not have good solid data on disruptions, but there is attention with this administration for these types of issues, and Jim Gregory is trying to track cases as they come back in.

Post Adoption & Guardianship Book – June said that over the next several months a book would be developed with a wide distribution. Meanwhile, a draft interim publication should be ready within two weeks. June will send the draft to Terry to share with a couple of council members for comment before it is finalized.

Report from Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

Tax Booklets – Ray said that tax booklets were sent to all foster, adoptive and guardianship homes. There is a toll free number on the booklet to call for answers to tax questions, and a list of satellite offices that will do taxes for low-income families.

Caregiver Training Institutes - Ray said the first institute is scheduled for February 10th at the DCFS Maywood office. Registration has been very low so a direct mailing is planned for next week to downstate caregivers. He asked council members to take flyers to distribute to other caregivers. Ray said if caregivers need childcare they should go through their agency.

Scholarship applications were included in members' packets and can be shared with other families.

Childcare Reimbursement forms have been revised with instructions included on the back of the form. Ray asked council members to review the instructions before completing the form.

Adam Walsh Act - Ray checked with Birdell Fry, who said that the federal regional staff in Chicago said that this Act would not have an impact on current DCFS placement procedures. The national background checks are a requirement for licensing, not for placement.

Midwest Adoption Center Brochure - Gretchen Schulert

Gretchen passed out a brochure about services provided by Midwest Adoption Services that are designed specifically for adoption and guardianship parents. The brochure will be made available at the Caregiver Institutes. The brochure includes the service request form that can be torn off, completed and returned.

Prepare for Meeting with the Director - Co-Chairs

Suggested topics to Discuss with the Director:

Response to the U of I Study on Adoptions and Guardianships in Illinois -

Mark will schedule a conference call with the workgroup. They will then report back to the full council at the next council meeting. Terry Solomon and Michelle Seidl both volunteered to join the workgroup.

Adoption Celebration - Marilyn will schedule a conference call after she gets answers on what the limitations are, and report back at the next council meeting.

Priorities Memo to the Director - Jim suggested that the committees refer to the priorities memo that was previously developed by the Council to use as a guideline.

Indexing Approach/Subsidy Rates - Jim suggested this council connect with other groups that are working on this issue. Terry Solomon suggested consulting with CWAC because they work with financial issues. Mary Debose, AAC's representative on CWAC, will make CWAC aware of the Council's concerns.

Case Rotation - Krista said she still has concerns with the new placement system.

Budget Cuts - Krista said there have been drastic cuts in Juvenile Court staff. Mark said that every hearing officer was given a 30-day notice. Additionally, 20-30 public defenders will be laid off countywide, will be going down to 3-4 day workweeks and will report to the County Board instead of the Chief Judge. Because the DCFS foster care rate and number of wards is down significantly, the judges will be expected to handle the hearings themselves. Krista suggested asking Director McEwen what his position is and what DCFS will do to expedite cases and keep them flowing.

Working Lunch – Training Reorganization - Judy Zaleski & Jean Maher

Judy said that schedules are posted on the DNET or DCFS website for Trauma Training and Reunification Training. The listing was also sent to Marge Berglind of the Child Care Association of IL (CCAI) to include in her Monday report to private agencies.

Judy said that licensing workers, council members, other staff, and the IL Families Now & Forever newsletter have been relied on to relay training schedule information to foster parents. There have been questions and concerns about scheduling locations. Judy said that the majority of the locations and many of the same trainers that the colleges used are still being used. The training schedule can be found on the DCFS website under Child & Family Services – Features – Check out Foster & Adoptive Parent Training Schedule.

Judy said that online training would not take over classroom training. Any modules that are available on line will also be available in a classroom setting. Online training is convenient because parents can look up specific resources when they need to. Every foster and adoptive parent will have their own account so they can log on themselves to review their training records, resources, etc.

Adoption certification training has been completed, and Jean brought the curriculum with her if anyone wanted to review it. The curriculum committee was made up of POS and DCFS staff statewide, and included members of the AAC and SWFCAC. Training of training was held in June, and training has been rolled out.

Report from Other Councils/Committees - Bridgette Glickman

Bridgette said she will do her best to submit a written report bi-monthly. Her written report was included in members' packets.

Approval of Minutes of November 17, 2006 Meeting

Rev Davis made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Joyce Loy seconded. The motion carried.

Suggested Agenda Items for Next Meeting/Wrap Up

Committee reports

Report on Juvenile Court staff issue

Report on the Family Connections Project

Adjourn

Terry Solomon made a motion to adjourn. Gwenn Eyer second. The motion passed.