

**Adoption Advisory Council
 October 6, 2006
 10am-3pm
 Approved Minutes
 Signature Inn, 3090 Stevenson Drive
 Springfield, IL**

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF PRESENT
Donsetta Blakely	Sue Cianci	Ray Gates
Kathy Casey	Patricia Cooper	Terry McGlothlin
Art Davis	Diane Dominguez	Chuck Meyers
Ronald Davis	Jeanne Howard	Judy Pence
Mary Debose	Susanne Loss	
Gwenn Eyer	Joyce Loy	
Brian Hall	Dave Matthews	GUESTS
Betty Johnson	Kate Monte	Cindy Backstein
James Jones	Bernadine Spitz	
Alan Marcus	Shannabeth Stein	
Krista McCoy	Mark Werner	
Marilyn Panichi		
Elizabeth Richmond		
Gina Samuels		
Gretchen Schulert		
Penelope Ford (For Jackie Sharp-Akins)		
Terry Solomon		
Ron Tyler		
Kim Wheelock		

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Introductions were made by everyone in attendance

Judy Pence announced that Jeanne Howard could not be here today. Judy said that Jeanne and Susan Smith won congressional Angels in Adoption Awards for all of the work they have done in the area of adoption. Judy distributed the press release with details.

NEW BUSINESS

Family Matters Program - Dana Corman

Dana Corman gave an update on the Family Matters Program, and she noted that Linda Coon had spoken briefly about the program at a previous council meeting. She said the Family Matters Program is now up and running. She distributed a one-page information sheet on the program, and four case examples. This program is a one-year pilot program in Cook and surrounding areas, funded by DCFS. The program is in response to the need for services for older and frail caregivers to secure future permanency for children in their care. Dana said they want to build in a plan at the time that the subsidy is written. Every APT monitor is supposed to meet with the identified back up family and the family at the time of the planning. Dana said they have worked with families young and old.

Dana said that one of the components of the program is a survey for the caregiver asking questions about the adoption experience, and how it helps to have a back-up plan. They're hoping this will raise some issues that can be addressed to make the experience better.

Rev. Davis suggested that grandparents need training to know what they will be facing when they adopt children. He also asked, absent such training, are we failing to meet the needs of the child.

Donsetta said that Metropolitan has an older caregiver program that is all about the children. The program connected her to the Senior Caregiver Program at the University of Chicago. Dana said they are not doing the evaluations, but will work along with such programs. Dana said they are there to provide a legal plan, and they do make home visits.

Elizabeth asked for volunteers to work with Dana's advisory group. Meetings are in Chicago, and Foster Parent Support Services will cover travel expenses. Alan Marcus and Penelope Ford volunteered.

Report from Office of Foster Parent Support Services - Ray Gates

Adoption Reform Law

Ray said that Christina Schneider sent updated versions of the Birth Parent and Adoptive Parent Rights and Responsibilities, and they began on page 10 of members' packets. He pointed out that this applies only to private, agency-assisted adoptions, not adoptions through the Illinois child welfare system; however, there is some overlap in how the work is done. He also said these documents are not for distribution because they are not final official versions. Ray said comments could be submitted to Terry to be forwarded to Christina. Elizabeth said that Kathy Casey was very active on this committee. Elizabeth asked Kathy to review the draft and get back to Terry with any comments. Terry Solomon pointed out that there was nothing in the document regarding placing the child in a placement with the same religion, and she suggested that it be clearer on specific rights.

Adam Walsh Safety & Protection Act of 2006

Ray referred to a summary of the Adam Walsh Act on page 24 of members' packets.

June said the most controversial piece is that before placement the state will be required to check child abuse and neglect registries in each state that the prospective foster/adoptive parents, and other adult(s) living in the home have resided in during the preceding five years. This also has an impact on emergency placements. The problem is the child seemingly cannot be placed until the national background checks are done. The law went into effect October 1st.

Elizabeth said this would be another item to add to the joint meeting agenda. June said she would be in Washington, DC and will get some answers then. June said that it was incorporated in Rule 302, and will still have to go through JCAR to make the change official.

Ethics Training Packets

Terry McGlothlin said that she mailed ethics training packets to all AAC members, and that she had received the majority of the signed certifications back. She brought extra packets with her to the meeting and handed them out to those council members that had not returned their certification, and asked them to review, sign and return to her by the close of the meeting.

Affidavit of Disclosure

Ray distributed the Affidavit of Disclosure that Gretchen Schulert had drafted, and CFS470-H, the template that is used through the DCFS SACWIS system.

Gretchen said the two documents are like comparing apples and oranges. The SACWIS page just says that you gave the information, but does not indicate what information you gave. She said the law says it is to be given in writing and there is no format for the worker to give it in writing, which is why Midwest Adoption Center (MAC) was asked to develop this. Gretchen said the law has changed since 1999 as to exactly what can be provided, which outdates the draft that MAC developed. Their task was to provide an easier way for workers to pull the information from the files and give it to adoptive families. Kim Wheelock said the information does have to be provided in writing. Rule and procedure has pages of what is to be given but it does not provide an instrument to give it.

June said the 1800 series forms have done much to make sure the information is included in the files, but the new Adoption Core Training addresses how to go mine the file and gather the information. June said Ursula would be here at noon and could give the information and answer questions about how adoption specialists are being trained. Page 32 of the members' packets gives some information about the Adoption Core Training.

Consolidation of Foster Parent Training

Ray said the community college functions are being consolidated to Central Office. Judy Zaleski did not come today because the work is incomplete at this time. She will report when it has been completed. It is her intent that the transition be seamless. Internally DCFS has some challenges to be sure to get materials to the training sites, etc. College coordinators may not be pleased with this decision. Some of the community college contracts chose to end their contract effective December 31, 2006, and the remainder will end June 30, 2007. Judy will come to a future meeting to give a more thorough update.

Caregiver Training Institutes

Ray said there would be nine institutes, one in each downstate subregion and two in Cook County. They are all scheduled on Saturdays from 9am - 3pm in February through April. The institutes will focus on reunification, although some of the workshops are broader so that they will appeal to a broader audience. There will again be presentations by youth. Regional Administrators are again asked to attend this year, and there will be some regional differences as needed. Terry will email the schedule to everyone. Elizabeth asked if we would try to use local youth.

Judy Pence asked that she be notified if respite providers would be asked to offer their services again this year so that she could alert the agencies. Ray said Arthur's advice was to inform caregivers through the newsletter that they should check with their region or their agency about what supports might exist.

Adoption Month

Ray said the Chicago Bar Association previously planned the Adoption Celebration at the Daley Center, but they decided not to sponsor it this year. Ray said he talked to the administration about it, and he was asked to explore the feasibility of local regional events to acknowledge Adoption Month. Ray said he then talked it through with Arthur Bishop and the six Regional Administrators. Arthur was prepared to be supportive, but Operations does not maintain connections with adoptive parents. Ray checked with June about resources with the Post Adopt Unit, and they also talked about the dynamic that when folks adopt they do not maintain contact with DCFS. Ray said after discussing how we could get adoptive families to come to an office and have a celebration, all determined it was probably not going to work. Ray said the Department is printing materials, posters, and bookmarks to send to regional offices and POS agencies, seeking a Governor's proclamation, and sending information to media outlets.

Marilyn Panichi said the Ad Council has released new ads on "You Don't Have to be Perfect to be a Perfect Parent." June said she spoke with Kendall about getting these on television and radio, especially for adoption month. They target the older adolescent, who we need homes for the most.

Marilyn asked for help getting the ads disseminated for adoption month. ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX have already agreed. Anyone that would approach a local station would be helpful. Elizabeth asked Marilyn to do a script and send it to council members, and include a section at the bottom where members will need to specify which format they need, and information on who they can contact in their local area. Marilyn said Adopt US Kids has a toll-free number (888-200-4005). AICI has been designated to respond to IL families that call. Adoption Month is November, but the campaign is ongoing.

Brian Hall and Gwenn Eyer put together a public service announcement to be sent out. Ray gave it to Kendall Marlowe and asked him to consider sending it to the Department's media outlets. Ray said Mr. Marlowe sent a request to the Governor's Office to proclaim November Adoption Month in IL.

Terry S. said she wished the Department could do something, along with private agencies, to come up with a creative way to highlight a major permanency goal. She said it was disheartening that it cannot be done within the Department. She suggested reaching out to support groups to identify some of the adoptive families. Ray said we would put it on the agenda earlier to plan for next year, so long as the chairs agree.

Marilyn said there is a National group called Voices for Adoption. They have done a child portrait project where they featured youth in congressional offices. Three congress people have pictures in their offices. This year they are doing families.

Family Connections Grant Update

Marilyn Panichi said they are just beginning year two of the grant. She distributed a newsletter, and she reported that the curriculum has been developed and is being converted to a web-based format. Legal personnel were trained in July. The youth in the video came in person and spoke with the legal personnel, which was very interesting. Former wards had their stories to tell about some who maintain their connections, and some who do not and are on their own. The training for foster adoptive families is being revised and still needs to be approved by the Children's Bureau. It will be trained classroom style. The first training for youth was held last Saturday. The youth were very bright, some very articulate and helpful in critiquing the training. Modifications are being made based on their recommendations. It will be a continuing education module. Marilyn said that during year two they would be working with these youth and their connections to move toward a real life plan to obtain permanency, and they will also be identifying more youth. Marilyn said the video would be shown at the Caregiver Institutes before the youth presentations.

Post Adoption Survey - June Dorn

June Dorn introduced Chuck Meyers, now working with Post Adoption Legal Services, formerly with the Administrative Hearings Unit. He assists with federal policy guidance and rules and procedures. He has been involved with the child welfare system for over 20 years, and is also a foster/adoptive parent.

June passed out the post adoption survey that was conducted by UIUC, and she relayed thanks from Melinda Lis to the council for their surveys and analysis of the report. She said UIUC did a study of other states, phone surveys of adoptive and guardianship families on how their needs are being met, and an analysis of data. The report has not been formally issued from the Department, but the

Director's Office did approve sharing it as a submitted analysis. June said AAC members are among the first to see the report. Tami Fuller with UIUC could not be here today but would be happy to come to a future meeting. June asked that council members review the report and come back with questions.

Reports on Other Councils/Committees - Bridgette Glickman

Bridgett was unavailable to attend and did not submit a written report

Review Committee List

Due to time constraints, discussion on the committee list was tabled until the February agenda.

Working Lunch - Adoption Subsidies - Ursula Angielski

Ursula Angielski, DCFS Statewide Adoption Coordinator, said that the Adoption Specialists have all completed a three-week training. DCFS is trying to standardize adoption statewide.

Ursula explained how workers write and review the subsidy and how it is reviewed with adoptive families. Adoption Specialists meet with adoptive families to determine what services are in place or need to be in place. They also review evaluations in case they make recommendations of services that should be in place. They use this information to draft the subsidy. The subsidy is governed by policy and procedure (Rule 302). Adoption Specialists should make it clear to adoptive families what services are allowable and will continue. Ursula explained what services are covered by the subsidy and what services cannot be included in the subsidy. She said there are three parts to the subsidy - eligibility, application for adoptive parent to complete, and the agreement. Parts in the agreement equal a disclosure because the worker has to put in specific answers to questions. She reviewed the questions. Ursula said the subsidy also includes future services, to address concerns that might create future needs.

Once the subsidy is drafted, and everything is included that they think is needed, the Adoption Specialist pulls all corresponding reports. They then meet with the adoptive parents to go over it and make sure everything needed is included. Ursula said that the permanency worker should also be there when reviewing the disclosure with the adoptive parent. This may go back and forth a few times to get the revisions made and everything included. When they have a final draft, it is sent, along with all corresponding reports, to the adoption attorney for their review. The attorney reviews it and they can come back with revisions, additional language, etc. The foster parent does not sign the subsidy until the adoption attorney sends a letter saying they approve of everything in the contract.

Ursula said that after the adoption is finalized, the recertification is done annually.

In response to a question by Cindy Backstein, Ursula said that the adoptive parent does have the right to take their time to review the subsidy without the worker before it is finalized.

Ursula said residential placements cannot be included in the subsidy. If all other services have been exhausted, the Clinical Office would review a request, and then make a recommendation to the Director.

Terry Solomon asked if respite could be put into the subsidy. June said respite is not allowed in the subsidy itself; however, there are programs available statewide to adoptive families. Ursula distributed the list of respite providers. Judy Pence oversees the respite provider contracts. She said she would email the FY'07 list to Terry, who will send it to everyone. Judy can be reached by phone at 217/557-5677.

June said that she and Judy try to assure that the respite programs are flexible to meet the needs of adoptive families. There are some medically complex kids that do not meet DSCC standards.

Ray asked if we are doing what we need to do in regards to the disclosure of information. Ursula said it is covered with the new adoption subsidy forms. Ray added that Karen Taylor assured him that the core training does address mining the files to pull all of the information.

Terry Solomon asked June Dorn to find out if there would be any increase in funds for post adoption respite services in FY'08. June said she would probably not have that information in the near future, but would check into it.

Cindy Backstein mentioned that adoptive parents did not receive the COLA that foster parents received.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes of August 4, 2006 Meeting

Terry Solomon made a motion that the minutes be approved as written. Donsetta Blakely seconded. The motion carried.

Task Chart

Due to time constraints, the task chart was tabled until the February agenda.

Agenda for Next Meeting - November 17 Joint Meeting with SWFCAC

The next scheduled meeting will be a joint meeting with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, and will be held in Chicago, at 3518 West Division Street, the Cook Central Regional Office.

Council members requested the following updates/future agenda items:

- Adam Walsh Act
- Reunification Training
- Training Reorganization
- Home of Relative Licensing Initiative
- Case Rotation
- UIUC Post Adoption Report
- CWAC Education Committee

Krista announced that next week she is speaking on a panel discussing transracial adoption in New York. The session will be recorded and she will send it to anyone interested.

Kathy Casey distributed information on the Midwest Adoption Conference to be held in Palatine on Sunday, November 5, 2006.

Adjourn

Alan Marcus made a motion to adjourn at 3:00 p.m. Kathy Casey seconded. The motion carried.