

ILLINOIS ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS FIELD OFFICE
FEBRUARY 6, 2004
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
APPROVED AS WRITTEN MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF	GUESTS
Clark, Amy Davis, Art Davis, Claudia Davis, Ronald Davis, Zee Debose, Mary Eyer, Gwenn Howard, Jeanne Johnson, Vance Jones, James McCoy, Krista Panichi, Marilyn Richmond, Elizabeth	Ami, James Ami, Sharon Blasingame, Dr. Felicia Chaytor, Diana Cooper, Patricia Dominguez, Diane Flaherty, JoAnn Hall, Brian Hay, Tammy Hinshaw, Diana Jackson, Tharecea Jones-Green, Barbara Lambert, Gigi Loss, Susanne Matthews, Dave Schulert, Gretchen Scott, Joyce Solomon, Terry Terry, Cleo Winn, Carol	Amato, Carla Byrd, Michael James, Vanessa Maher, Jean McGlothlin, Terry Thompson, Nancy	Foster, Sonja for Terry Solomon

WELCOME

Elizabeth Richmond welcomed the Council members. All Council members and guests introduced themselves.

MINUTES FROM 11-21-03 MEETING

Gwenn Eyer made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Reverend Davis seconded the motion. All members were in favor, and the motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports for this meeting.

FEDERAL REVIEW - UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT/LICENSING PIP – JAMES JONES

Jim clarified that PIP is related to the Federal Review in terms of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Jim said Illinois was reviewed in September and was scored in several areas; the report is not for wide circulation yet. He said there was a workgroup meeting this week of all the co-chairs of the PIP, and he was waiting for feedback from the various workgroups. Jim also said the actual report should be released to the public, hopefully within the next two weeks.

Jim is involved with one of the workgroups focused on foster parent recruitment and retention, an area that was reviewed during the Federal Review process. Jim asked for feedback from the Adoption Advisory Council on some of their work before the workgroup gave their recommendations to the Department regarding what should go into the PIP report that will be finalized in March. He spoke about a key issue that some children are not being cared for in their community of origin, with focus on insuring that the needs of the individual child are met. Jim said one of the most important issues is placing the child in the most appropriate home. He said there is a lack of a well-coordinated statewide recruitment effort in place; multiple initiatives are available, but not necessarily working together; and consolidation is needed. Jim distributed a worksheet that listed related items, possible action steps, methods of measuring, and noted the responsible parties for the issues.

Jim said the number of children who need placement is down, so we have an abundance of homes available. He said the matching process is difficult because some families want kids in a younger age group, and most of our children are older.

The Council discussed issues related to training, the cost of training foster parents, sibling placements and foster parent license issues. They spoke about needing to question why there are 17,600 licensed foster homes in the state, but only 40% are being utilized at any point in time. They also talked about matching and placement of children with foster families and bias issues related to those placements. Reverend Davis talked about assessing the role and authority of the placement worker. Krista McCoy also discussed the role and responsibility of licensing workers and supervisors in closing certain licenses, i.e. those licensed families who do not or will not take kids, so they do not affect the 40% category. The Council also discussed the process of respite only, emergency care, and short-term care licenses related to this issue.

James Jones said many of these issues should be part of the PIP process, especially assessing the foster/adoptive home to make sure parents have the tools/resources to provide an appropriate home for the child. Carla Amato clarified that Integrated Assessment is not a decision-making group; they make recommendations. Their focus is to interview the caregivers around the needs of the individual child. Carla said the thrust would be to work with the home to develop that home to care for a child with special needs. She also talked about the siblings issue. Carla said that placing siblings together was a priority issue, while making sure that placement is always done in the best interest of the child.

Mary Debose talked about enhanced training (skills and spirit) of supervisors and staff who will provide services to the children and families who are part of the system. She will email the PIP plan to the Council to get feedback, as a part of making the larger recommendation.

James Jones will take the recommendations of the Adoption Advisory Council to the committee to be included in the PIP report.

SPRING 2004 CAREGIVER CONFERENCE REGISTRATION – CARLA AMATO

Carla said the deadline for registration is today, but slots were still open for the Council. She stressed Council members need to make out their registration now. A form was also distributed

for lodging needed for the night of March 25. Gwenn Eyer asked for volunteers to work at the conference.

UPDATE OF LEGACY PROJECT – MICHAEL BYRD

Michael said the last piece of the Legacy work is to address the mission to enhance the recruitment efforts for older wards. He talked about the Intensive Relative Search Project that is an effort to connect young people with relatives who they can count on to care about them and to guide them now and into adulthood. The pilot for Intensive Relative Search will start in the Cook regions where 26 kids with a goal of independence have been identified as needing some form of contact with relatives. Michael said the goal is to create lifelong connections, if appropriate for the child (a quality contact), so a child can learn that he does have family that cares about him and can experience increased family commitment to his well-being as he enters adulthood.

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE AND SUBSIDIZED GUARDIANSHIP RULE CHANGES – DEB MCCARREL (phone: 217-785-1077; cell 217-836-1243)

Deb distributed Policy Transmittal 2004.02 and 2004.03. She gave background on the Rule: In 2001, the Feds came out with policy announcements on our IVE Adoption Assistance program. They called to let the Department know that we were severely out of compliance on our policy and procedure on a number of issues. The Director pulled a multi-disciplinary group together to find where we were out of compliance. Deb said they took all recommendations and hammered out changes to rule and procedure. She described changes to the rule, including respite care for medically complex children. Deb said the issue of non-ward adoptions is also clarified in the changes, and what it takes for non-wards to qualify for IVE adoption assistance. She said the Adoption Assistance form looks radically different in an effort to make the form easier to use and to clarify who is eligible.

Deb addressed the issue of adoption training, and said she would be involved in the training process that would provide help to workers and families in correctly filling out the forms. Deb provided clarification on questions Council members had about the rules and procedures, and she asked the Council to review the new forms and provide feedback by March 5, 2004.

Reverend Davis identified a need to ensure that children in care are provided with adequate medical assistance. Deb McCarrel suggested that the Council contact Debra Kinsey, Office of Health Policy, who works extensively with Medicaid issues and doctors. Ms. Kinsey is knowledgeable about logistics, Medicaid, and barriers that might exist with public aid; she could provide input on putting together a proposal. The Council asked if Deb Kinsey could come to the next meeting, but the Council members also stressed they needed to define/shape questions and identify the depth of the problem first. James Jones and Art Davis will work on a conference call with Debra Kinsey to discuss this issue.

UPDATE OF LEGISLATION TO CODIFY SIBLING VISITATION RIGHTS – MICHAEL BYRD

Michael said the Youth Advisory Board has developed efforts to have a Sibling Bill of Rights. He said they are at a point where there is a draft resolution that is going to the Legislative Executive Committee February 25, 2004 on sibling rights. Michael introduced LeShonda

Rogers, Assistant to the Chief of Staff and also Downstate Youth Coordinator to the Youth Advisory Board.

Michael talked about parts of the Resolution that focused on contact with siblings (when contact is in the best interest of the child), post-adoptive visitation issues, and a friendly environment to make the relationship with siblings a reunifying and supportive part of the child's life and respect the rights of adoptive parents.

Michael asked for Council feedback and support. Michael talked about the joint Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding post-termination sibling contact. He asked for three members of the Adoption Advisory Council to be a part of this Task Force. Michael said the Statewide Foster Care Adoption Council (SWFCAC) wanted to pull together a joint committee of the SWFCAC, the Youth Advisory Board and the Adoption Advisory Council to meet and start discussions around this issue. AAC members discussed the pros and cons of how this resolution would impact the rights of adoptive parents.

Elizabeth Richmond made a motion to mirror the motion that the SWFCAC made -- to create a joint sub-committee on the sibling visitation issue to include members of the Youth Advisory Board, SWFCAC and members of the Adoption Advisory Council. Amy Clark seconded the motion. All members were in favor, and the motion passed. Volunteers for the subcommittee were Vance Johnson, Amy Clark, Claudia Davis, Art Davis, and Elizabeth Richmond.

NEXT STEPS ON CRIMINAL BARS COMMITTEE – KRISTA MCCOY

Krista said during their conference calls regarding criminal bars there was uncertainty about the issue – that along with the opinion from the SWFCAC, the Adoption Advisory Council needed clarification on a lot of things from DCFS, including policy and practice. She said Ray Gates would be getting some statistical information about who is asking for waivers for barred or non-barred offenses. Krista said we have found out there is no central location for that information. Krista also said this type of information is needed in terms of making a recommendation. She said this information was being requested from the Office of Licensing. Krista said they would continue with their sub-committee about which offenses they would want removed/lessened. The next conference call is scheduled for Monday, February 9, 2004.

UPDATE ON IL RESPITE COALITION (NEED TWO APPOINTEES FROM COUNCIL) – GWENN EYER

Gwenn said the IL Respite Coalition is looking for representatives from AAC to help get the program moving again. She said they tentatively plan to gather in late May at Starved Rock. Members who volunteered were Gwenn Eyer and Amy Clark. Elizabeth Richmond mentioned that Diane Dominguez should be invited to attend and participate.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT – CARLA AMATO

Carla gave an update on the Integrated Assessment Program that is targeted to be rolled-out statewide in the next few months. The Division of Clinical Services is now in the process of interviewing for clinical screeners for each region who will be Licensed Clinical Social Workers or Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors. Carla also spoke about the role of the intake coordinator and the clinical screener. She summarized by saying that the clinical screeners will write an integrated assessment report within 45 days of case opening (which will be shared with

the court) and will be present at the first family meeting which also takes place within the first 45 days of case opening.

Carla also talked about the National Ad Council Recruitment Campaign that will initiate a national ad campaign in May to recruit families who are willing to adopt children currently in the child welfare system. She said the focus is on adopting foster children eight years of age and older. Carla also said the Office of Foster Parent Support Services is currently involved in planning for this effort.

AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Follow-up with Youth Advisory Council on sibling rights' issue
- Follow-up with Health Policy on Medicaid and health issues
- Update on criminal bars
- Arthur Bishop to introduce Regional Administrators
- Michael Byrd to update on the recruitment project, Wednesday's Child Video
- Deb McCarrel to update on Adoption Subsidy forms
- June Dorn to speak about the Budget Plan
- Restructuring of the Post Adoption Unit

ADJOURN

The Adoption Advisory Council meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.