

**ILLINOIS ADOPTION ADVISORY COUNCIL
160 N LASALLE STREET, CHICAGO
OCTOBER 3, 2003
10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.
MINUTES, APPROVED AS AMENDED 11/21/03**

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF	GUESTS
Davis, Art and Zee	Ami, James	Alston, Janise	Clark, Amy
DeBose, Mary	Ami, Sharon	Byrd, Michael	Freeburn, Linda
Eyer, Gwenn	Blasingame, Felicia	Dorn, June	Hussian, Sheila
Hall, Brian	Chaytor, Diane	Gates, Ray	Lukacek, Carol
Hay, Tammy	Cooper, Pat	Hudson, Addie	McCoy, Krista
Hinshaw, Diana	Davis, Claudia	James, Vanessa	Moore, Donna
Howard, Jeanne	Davis, Ronald	McCarrel-Haacke, Deb	
Johnson, Vance	Dominguez, Diane	Moreno, Cynthia	
Jones, James	Flaherty, JoAnn	Pence, Judy	
Loss, Susanne	Jackson, Tharecea	Thompson, Nancy	
Matthews, Dave	Jones-Green, Barbara	Williams, Velma	
Panichi, Marilyn	Lambert, Gigi		
Schulert, Gretchen	Richmond, Elizabeth		
Solomon, Terry	Scott, Joyce		
Terry, Cleo	Winn, Carol		

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS – James Jones

James Jones welcomed the members and guests. Each introduced themselves.

MINUTES OF AUGUST 1, 2003 MEETING

Cleo Terry made a motion to accept the minutes from the August 1, 2003 meeting. Terry Solomon seconded the motion. The Council members agreed and the minutes were passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Gwenn Eyer is working on the National Adoption Day Celebration to be held November 21. She said Jill Manuel is putting together packets for the Council and others to use to promote the celebration. Jill suggested to Gwenn that we contact local news outlets to focus on what Illinois is doing in the area of adoption. Brian Hall, Ray Gates and Gwenn will touch base with Jill about the materials and about putting them on the DCFS website.

Gwenn said the Recruitment Committee has reviewed a program that was developed with the Legacy Project. She said Michael Byrd would be presenting an update on this program.

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

Ray Gates said the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council now has a presence on the DCFS website. He felt the website has increased awareness and stimulated interest for people to become members of the Council. Ray said one of the weak areas on our membership roster has been adult adoptees. Ray introduced two guests at the meeting who were interested in becoming new members, Krista McCoy and Amy Clark, both of whom are adoptees.

Krista McCoy introduced herself. She described herself as bi-racial (Caucasian/African American), born in Joliet, and placed for adoption at birth. A Caucasian couple adopted Krista and raised her in

Chicago in an African-American neighborhood. She said adoption was always promoted in her household, and her parents let her know from the beginning that she was adopted. Krista feels that her life history has enhanced her qualifications to be successful in her career. She has been in child welfare for 12 years, which included work at Columbus-Maryville, Lutheran Child and Family Services as a licensing specialist and also at LifeLink. Krista is currently working on getting her Masters in Social Work degree at UIC, concentrating on serving children and families.

Amy Clark was in the Babyfold for a few months before her parents were contacted. She said her adoptive parents are awesome! Her parents, too, told her she was adopted. Amy has three adopted children and four birth children. She feels her background and experience equip her to be able to answer so many of the difficult questions adopted kids have, including tough questions about their birth parents. Amy demonstrated an eagerness to be a member of the Adoption Advisory Council.

Ray Gates told prospective members they need to be committed and focused on adoption issues. He also told potential members that DCFS will cover travel expenses and reimburse members for child care, if necessary, to enable them to attend Council meetings.

Ray also gave names of several people who had shown interest in being members of the Council or who were suggested to work on the Council:

- Jeanette Berger, Adoption Coordinator for Children's Home Association of Illinois in Peoria. Jeanette is an adult adoptee. Ray called Jeanette and explained that the slot for an adoptee from Central Region is already full.
- Kent Tracy was a referral from the Mt. Vernon area. Mr. Tracey has not yet contacted Ray about the Council.
- Kim Johnson, an adoption worker from Chaddock, is interested in one of the expert slots on the Council; however, Ray has not received any follow up from this contact.
- Julia Johnson, from the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program at Hull House, is also interested in being on the Council. She has not returned Ray's call.

Jim Jones asked for a motion for the two candidates in attendance to be recommended for appointment to the Council. Gwenn Eyer made a motion to nominate Amy Clark and Krista McCoy. Dave Mathews seconded the motion. The Council was in favor of the nominations. Jim Jones asked Ray to make a recommendation to the Director.

WEBSITE FOR IAAC – RAY GATES

Ray encouraged members to look at the information on the IAAC website. He said Medicaid provider contacts are now on the site, in addition to the list of IAAC members, bylaws and meeting minutes. Ray also said the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is on the website.

CONTINUE WORK ON OPERATION PLAN – JIM JONES

The Council had a discussion about the Operational Plan that lists goal analysis for two sub-groups: Respite Services and Developing Support Services for Parents and Children, including Advocacy. Jim said we are trying to develop a plan that can be implemented across Illinois. He asked members to make suggestions to improve the plan. He asked that members look at the framework of the analysis and focus on the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats. Jim said the Council should understand the infrastructure of how we can move ahead and support the Adoption Advisory Council's objectives and operational plan.

Susanne Loss said she has checked with other states to ascertain whether and how they provide respite to adoptive families. She said North Carolina gives each adoptive parent \$2,400/year to be used for respite or for expenses that are not covered by subsidies.

REVIEW OF CRIMINAL BARS IN CHILD CARE ACT – JAMES JONES

Ray Gates said he had a phone conversation with June Dorn, Lori Gray, Camille Sleet and representatives from Randy Wells' office regarding the Child Care Act. He said the outcome of the call was that the Council should review the Child Care Act before proceeding with further discussions with the administration. The Council should decide what if any changes they want to suggest.

Ray summed up the concerns of the Council: Should some non-violent criminal offenses committed by a person in their youth serve as lifetime bars that would prevent that person from becoming an adoptive parent later in life? Rev. Davis also stated we need to make sure these bars do not unfairly prevent people from the African American community from becoming adoptive parents.

Council members discussed the need to look at many issues that relate to the Child Care Act. Members stressed the need to identify problems with licensing, policy and procedure issues, worker assessment tools, and the Department's waiver process – important factors that affect the recruitment and retention of adoptive parents.

The Council divided into two groups. One group looked at the Child Care Act to make recommendations about what crimes that currently result in lifetime bars ought to be considered for either a more lenient waiver process or elimination from the statute. The second group was asked to focus on a Report from the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance, entitled "Understanding Criminal Records Checks for Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents."

Group One: Cleo Terry talked about pages 6 and 7 of the Child Care Act, that lists 27 offenses for which there is no waiver. These are offenses that prevent a person from becoming a licensed foster or adoptive parent. Following this list is a second list of offenses for which a person may be licensed, including the criteria for a person to get a waiver even though that person has been convicted of a crime. Cleo said we need legal interpretation of some of these crimes, such as theft, burglary, robbery, and home invasion. She also said the waiver process should be reviewed by the Council, especially in the area of drug offenses. She said the group was not uniform on what they thought about these issues. Jeanne Howard said there was a general agreement that having only one decision maker with authority to sign off on waivers in the Director's office is something we should examine. She mentioned that there should be a panel or some other mechanism so decision-making is not restricted to one individual.

Group Two: Rev. Davis stated that the group discussed the federal and state record checks. He said that some states report the arrest and the purpose of the arrest without a conviction, which means that information remains in the record. He said the group was concerned about the type of offenses that should remain as a reason for denial and would block an individual from receiving a license, specifically with childcare and endangerment issues. Council members expressed concerns that the Department does not make rules readily available and clear to families so they know what to expect in terms of licensing, home studies and the waiver process. Gwenn Eyer said there was a difference between problems experienced in Cook County versus downstate. James Jones reminded the group that they were charged with seeing how other states differ from Illinois.

James Jones said the Council would form a committee to work on this issue and bring a recommendation to the Council. The Council would then make recommendations to the Department. Members who volunteered were: Cleo Terry, David Mathews, Reverend Davis and Zee Davis, Mary Debose, Krista McCoy, Vance Johnson and Terry Solomon.

**SPRING 2004 RESOURCE CONFERENCE PLANNING – PRE-CONFERENCE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

Ray Gates led a focus group discussion related to the types of issues adoptive parents might like to see at the resource conference. He asked for input regarding what kinds of classes, gatherings, speakers, resources, etc. the Council would like specific to parenting. Members made many suggestions:

Topic	Possible Track
A workshop to help <u>professionals</u> understand what it is like to be separated from your siblings. April Curtis & the Youth Council were suggested as a resource to make this presentation.	Support
Information on how adoptive and sub-guardianship families can access services in the community and services w/in DCFS, including respite.	Support and Services
Information on teen issues: How do we deal with teens who are close to graduating from high school and are faced, at the age of 18, with the loss of adoption and sub-guardianship support. Where do these families get money for higher education?	Youth Track
Employment training needs for youth.	Youth Track
An explanation of the CHAFEE program and educational services available for current and former wards.	Youth Track
An update on subsidized guardianship.	Adoption/Guardianship
A workshop on the scholarship program. Members suggested that Dwight Lambert, Sharon Freagon and Dr. Latiker could be contacted to talk about the details of the scholarship program.	Support and Services or Youth Track
Information on children diagnosed with CAPD (Central Auditory Processing Disorder), autism, and fetal alcohol syndrome.	Clinical
Information on mental health issues as youth reach maturity.	Clinical
A workshop on children diagnosed with ADHD and ADD.	Clinical
A booth or “blue ribbon panel”, staffed by managers/administrators in the Department, where people could come with specific questions related to the expertise of the manager.	Support

Ray then asked adoptive parents what would cause them to attend this conference, and what would it take to get others who have not attended recent conferences to attend this conference.

- Provide buses from all over the state.
- Provide timely respite reimbursement consistently in every region, to pay for childcare.
- Provide childcare at the conference.
- Make sure everyone gets the conference announcements in a timely manner.

FEDERAL REVIEW – STATUS REPORT & STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION – JIM JONES

Jim said Illinois just completed its final review with reviewers from across the country. He said we have not yet received results from the federal government, but we should hear back in early November. He

said we should begin to plan for the performance improvement process (PIP). Jim also said DCFS plans to have several sub-committees for the PIP. Jim and Erwin McEwen are in charge of putting the PIP in motion for Illinois. Jim said IAAC and Statewide Council members would have the opportunity to join a sub-committee. He noted that several members were interviewed during the course of the review, and they gave comments about the interview process. Members said the meetings were sometimes intense and emotional, but members said their responses were honest and positive concerning departmental practice and policy issues.

LEGACY PROJECT/WEDNESDAY'S CHILD VIDEOS – MICHAEL BYRD

Michael presented an update on the project. He distributed a revision of the project outline and guidelines. He said he had gotten feedback from four recruiters: Diana Hinshaw, Elizabeth Richmond, Brian Hall and Vance Johnson. Brian provided a handout of points to make in presenting a child to an individual or family. During the review period, Diana Hinshaw found a couple for a sibling group of three in Decatur. Tammy Hay volunteered to take the folder for Leo.

Janise Alston, Adoption Advocate for the Wednesday's Child Program, spoke about the statewide video program to introduce children who are waiting for permanency. She contacts families, caseworkers, and family workers in an effort to facilitate an adoption for some of the longest waiting kids in the system.

STATUS OF LAN-BASED ADOPTION GRANTS – JUNE DORN

June said Family Centered Services had a good meeting September 5 with all FCS statewide providers. She said this was the official handoff meeting from Bobby Hall's unit, and June said the providers were looking forward to being linked more closely with the preservation program. She also said Family Centered Services would be included in the January 28th statewide meeting, an annual adoption meeting that also includes Midwest Adoption Center and Adoption Information Center of Illinois. June said they would be monitoring the programs and reviewing quarterly reports in order to work out better efficiency and effectiveness in the programs.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT – VELMA WILLIAMS

Deputy Williams spoke about the new screening program for children who come into care. She said they are currently interviewing and hiring staff for this process. Deputy Williams also spoke about adoption assistance training. She asked for volunteers from the Council to assist a committee from the training division in developing adoption assistance training curriculum. Vance Johnson, Judy Pence and Gwenn Eyer volunteered to help. At a future meeting, she plans to update the Council on adoption assistance and subsidized guardianship rule and procedure changes.

AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

The November 21st meeting will combine the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council and the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council in order to participate in the Adoption Celebration Event in Chicago. Members suggested that criminal bars and recruitment issues be part of the agenda for the joint meeting of the councils that will occur prior to the adoption celebration on 11/21/03.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING NOT ON THE AGENDA

Marilyn Panichi from Adoption Information Center of Illinois was recognized by James Jones. AICI was nominated for the Congressional Angels in Adoption award in Washington, D.C.

Addie Hudson was given two awards. She received one of six Adoption Activist Awards from NACAC. Addie also received the One Church One Child Award, presented by the Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Oklahoma Chapters of One Church One Child.

Council members who attended the NACAC Conference in Vancouver told of their experiences at the conference. Members said the conference was rejuvenating. The conference focused on kinship issues, support of older caregivers, post adoption services and other issues that relate to adoptive parents and the unique characteristics of children in care.

Vanessa James asked members to let her know of any “family Christmas traditions” that she might include as articles in the holiday newsletter.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

cc:

Director Samuels	June Dorn	Tom Berkshire	Velma Williams
Bamani Obadele	Jill Manuel	Pat Schrodt	LaPrisca Mims
Mary Sue Morsch	Debra Kinsey	Vanessa James	Ray Gates
Cynthia Moreno	Michael Byrd	Diane DeLeonardo	Bridgette Glickman

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