

STATEWIDE FOSTER CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
160 N LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL
September 26, 2003
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Minutes – Approved as Written, 10/24/03

Members Present	Members Absent	DCFS Staff	Guests
Baker, Sarah Blakely, Donsetta Boyd, Gladys Chasteen, Ray Cooper, Pat Darville, Heidi Davis, Claudia Jones, James Kazaras, Ellen Kline, Vicky Lane, James Miller, Andrea Rowan, Meta Senz, Uli Stone, Linda Thurman-Green, Jerri Welenc, Adrienne White, Mary Wilson, Geraldine	Edwards, Faye	Candelas, Jose DeLeonardo, Diane Dunning, Judith Eyer, Gwenn Fitzgerald, Daniel Gates, Ray Hansen, Gayle James, Vanessa Maher, Jean McEwen, Erwin Pestana, Ron Thompson, Nancy Weck, Terry West, David Williams, Velma Winkler, Dick	Baron-Jeffrey, Angela Buckingham, Ann Ferguson, Boyd Freagon, Sharon Hussein, Sheila Loy, Joyce Loy, Don Lucacek, Carol Price, Rose Short, Eleanor Turner, Barbara Walsh, Richard Welenc, Jerry Catholic Charities of Chicago: Flory, Sylvia Meshes, Mary Sue Watson, Osanyde Children's Home Association of IL: Allen, Rick Crowley, Bill Cook North Region Bilbo, Kathy Bright, Jackie McGrath, Chris Rowitz, Sari Generations of Hope : Ashe, Rebecca Casteel, Carolyn Eheart, Brenda Lakeside Community Committee: Jones-Green, Barbara Sharp, Jackie Stiffic, Joanne

Adrienne Welenc, Hospitality Chair, welcomed members of the Council. There was no designated guest region identified for this meeting. Adrienne introduced James Lane, Chair.

James Lane opened the meeting at 9:00 AM.

SPECIAL ORDERS – JAMES LANE

James Lane said there were no special orders for this meeting.

ACTION AGENDA

PA 92 0295 – Boyd Ferguson, ISBE, phone 217-782-5589; Accountability Division 217-782-2948

Boyd Ferguson, from the Special Ed Services Division of Illinois State Board of Education, spoke about the implementation of this law. He explained the probe/evaluation documents that regional superintendents use to make their cyclical review for public schools' compliance with record-keeping regulations. Mr. Ferguson said the probe documents are altered every year to ensure that schools are complying with the Student Records Act. He also said legislative updates can be found on the ISBE website.

Many SWFCAC members expressed concerns about the implementation of this law. Sharon Freagon spoke about her concern that information regarding student records would not be kept confidential. Sarah Baker also expressed concern about the mechanism of keeping records confidential, especially regarding sexual abuse issues with children. Diane DeLeonardo suggested that the SWFCAC might work on an audit process to insure that this law is being properly carried out and that record information is protected for each child. James Lane said the SWFCAC wants accountability from each individual school in regard to confidentiality of student records.

Boyd Ferguson said the law provides that a log be kept by a records custodian every time a student record is accessed. The log lists the name of every person who asks to look at the student record. Mr. Ferguson also asked SWFCAC members for questions that could be added to the probe/monitoring instrument that would improve confidentiality of the process. He also stated that amendments could be made to legislation to focus on improvements to the process.

Sharon Freagon suggested that a random, annual probe could be done by SWFCAC and the State Board to see how the process is working.

Ray Chasteen recommended that SWFCAC members could go to local school districts, ask who is the records custodian, and ask to see the student's records in their locked record cabinets. Members would then report findings to the group of the violations discovered or the lack of violations discovered. Mr. Ferguson stated that members could also ask for district policies, notification of transfer of records, and inspection of records. He also provided copies of Part 375 Student Records Act to help prepare members for these visits. Ray Chasteen suggested that SWFCAC members submit recommendations to the legislative office and the State Board of Education with their findings after visiting school districts. Ray Chasteen is going to go to his local school district, and he asked for agenda time at the next meeting to report back on his findings.

Vanessa James will work with Boyd Ferguson to get a newsletter written, listing bullet points of SWFCAC concerns.

Foster Care Summit

Pat Cooper distributed a letter from Jim Meyer, House of Representatives, stating that they would be holding a hearing October 21 regarding problems faced by foster parents. The hearings are part of a foster care summit to be held in Naperville. She asked that members prepare concise letters about specific issues of concern to SWFCAC members. She said she would take the letters to this hearing. Pat, Jerry Welenc and Sarah Baker will work to put together the list of ideas SWFCAC members need to present/speak about at the hearing.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FPSS Committee

Vicky Kline said the Committee is waiting for someone to be appointed from Operations to help them. Ray Gates is working with Operations to accomplish this.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Cook North – Ellen Kazaras

Ellen reported that Cook North had a safety fair where the State Police presented a program on properly replacing car seats. The fair also included food, dances, and fingerprinting/photographing of children. The region will be having monthly trainings that focus on the impact that domestic violence has on children and a follow-up session on the lasting impact that child abuse has on children. Donsetta Blakely said the region was also focusing on recruiting foster parents to attend regional meetings.

Cook Central – Adrienne Welenc

Adrienne said the region had two separate trainings on asthma that included staff. They are working on their 2004 implementation plan. She also said they are working with the Youth Advisory Board, trying to identify host families for holiday visits and to provide monthly care packages to college youth. Adrienne said they are working on increasing membership for the YAB.

Central – Linda Stone

The region is working hard on their Bill of Rights implementation plan. A questionnaire will be given to foster parents asking for their thoughts about the Bill of Rights. On the 15th they will be going to the Peoria regional meeting to sign off on it. The Springfield sub-region meeting included training on confidentiality on the 22nd.

Cook South – Donsetta Blakely

Cook South is doing monthly training on stress issues. In August, Ray Gates came and reviewed their implementation plan. They have had two implementation workshops with a third planned for October 8. On October 16 the education liaison will have a college fair in Harvey.

Northern – Ray Chasteen

Ray said the region is trying to revitalize attendance at meetings. They are also working on a nominating committee to nominate someone to replace Meta Rowan. A speaker presented information on the Schools of Choice Program. The region celebrated their 10th anniversary and the work they had accomplished. Meta talked about revitalizing/developing a form that foster parents could use to present their ideas to the Advisory Council.

Southern – Claudia Davis

Ray Gates spoke to foster parents at the September meeting to let them know that they could bring concerns to the council. Ray invited them to attend Council meetings. He asked for an adoptee to serve on the Council. Bill Peyton, Regional Administrator, suggested we have one meeting a year in the Mt. Vernon area so meetings could be more accessible to people in the southern region. Claudia asked that the Council approve this issue. Claudia discussed issues that foster parents who home school are having with day care. She also said names were submitted, recommending people to add to their meetings as membership diminished. Lastly, she said training was done on the proper use of car seats.

Car Seats

The Council discussed car seats for children and training foster parents about the proper use of car seats. SB0052 for child passengers 4 – 11 years old (which amends the Child Passenger Protection Act) was distributed to the group. Diane DeLeonardo said the Office of Foster Parent Support Services will work with Bobby Hall and IDOT to ascertain whether car and booster seats may be available for foster parents and agencies in the regions by January 1. Diane also said the office would also work with Jean Maher and Joan Langan on training issues.

COUNCIL TRACKING CHART

The chart was reviewed. Ray Gates will update the chart for the next meeting.

MINUTES OF 7/11/03 MEETING - MEMBERS

Meta Rowan made a correction on the reports from the region. She advised that the Regional Advisory Council had taken a summer break, not the region itself.

Ellen Kazaras made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. James Jones seconded the motion. Approval was unanimous.

FINAL REPORTS TO DIRECTOR – RAY GATES

Members said there were no final reports.

UPDATE ON HOST FAMILIES FOR YOUTH – DIANE DELEONARDO

Diane gave an update on the Host Family for Youth in College program. The Office of Foster Parent Support Services is working with the Division of Education and Transition Services to develop and implement the program in the regions. They are working with four universities that have the most youth attending college: Northern Illinois, Southern Illinois, Chicago State, and U of I in Champaign. Diane said they would be working with groups who have similar types of programs in order to recruit volunteers to be host families for a student. She said their goal is to focus on Thanksgiving so youth would have a home for the holiday. Diane mentioned that youth are also concerned about where to go for summer and where to go for Sunday dinner. She said efforts are being made to find resources, and she asked members of the Council to contact her office if they want to be a host for youth in college.

Other Updates from Diane

Diane also talked about training and support for foster parents working with the Runaway program for children and focus groups for foster parents working with teenagers.

Diane spoke about preparation for the Spring 04 Foster Parent Conference. A vision meeting was held to kick off the conference planning. She said the conference planning committee would be meeting

monthly. She asked the council members to let her know if they had ideas for the conference. Diane also said that a needs assessment would be sent out, asking foster parents what ideas they have for the conference.

RECOGNITION CEREMONY FOR BEST IMPLEMENTATION PLANS – DIRECTOR SAMUELS

Danielle Fitzgerald, Assistant to Director Bryan Samuels, presented awards to five agencies who scored the highest on their 2003 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. He thanked the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, James Lane, and Ray Gates for their commitment and efforts in working on the implementation plan process. Awards were presented to: Catholic Charities, Diocese of Chicago; Generations of Hope (Rantoul); DCFS Cook North Region; Lakeside Community (Chicago); and Children's Home Association of Illinois (Peoria).

DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT – VELMA WILLIAMS

Deputy Director Velma Williams gave an update on the accomplishments made by the Department and spoke about strategies being used to help serve children and families in Illinois. She talked about HB2900, which requires the development of a Children's Mental Health Plan containing short-term and long-term recommendations to provide comprehensive, coordinated mental health prevention and early intervention treatment services for children from birth through age 18. She said DCFS is a key player in crafting and working on getting this legislation passed. Deputy Williams also said the Department has been working on building an infra-structure for delivering better, universal services and identifying mental health, behavioral and developmental needs of children in the system. She talked about the new assessment model for Illinois and tools that help gather clinical information on children moving into the system. She said the Department hopes to have the process on track and working within the next six to twelve months. Deputy Williams emphasized that the Department wants caregivers to have the tools, resources, and training they need to properly serve children in their care.

Deputy Williams also spoke about work being done to enhance residential placements, and she noted that more emphasis is being placed on post adoption services. She said the Department is planning to develop intervention services so adoptive families can be linked to people who can help them access services and information they need.

COUNCIL'S INPUT ON DRAFT TRAINING RE: CHILDREN W/SEXUAL BEHAVIOR ISSUES – GAYLE HANSEN

Gayle Hansen and Dick Winkler: 309-693-5400

Gayle Hansen, Ron Pestana and Dick Winkler spoke about the details of the proposed training for implementation of new policies and practice for assessment, treatment and intervention for children with sexual behavior problems. Because Council members had questions about the training, James Lane asked that three volunteers from the Council be included to work on the draft training: Andrea Miller, Vicky Kline and Meta Rowan.

Gayle said she would get information to the SWFCAC for their feedback before training is started. She said training would be connected to the school system to take into account issues of confidentiality.

PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW PILOTS – HEIDI AND JERRY

Jerry Welenc said they choose three agencies to monitor. They interviewed four staff persons and asked them pertinent questions about their implementation plan. People interviewed were the point person for the implementation plan in the agency, a case manager, supervisor and a licensing person. Jerry used

the grading tool for the implementation plan to formulate the questions. He said the goal was to get a reaction to see how easily the questions could be answered. Jerry said the next step would be to interview foster parents and ask them questions about their agency's activities to implement their plan. Heidi mentioned that one theme that runs through the questions is that of dignity and respect in terms of how the organization carries itself in areas such as retaliation. She said the key piece is that people were able to respond readily with examples of what has been going on in their organization. Ray Gates will talk about these issues on a Policy Committee conference call that is set for October 14. Jerry said one more agency would be reviewed, CHASI, before the call. He said a couple more pilots would be conducted before the end of the year. Jerry said the next step would be to train SWFCAC members about how to conduct the reviews.

Ray Gates said a follow-up part of the process will be that SWFCAC members will randomly call foster parents supervised by each POS agency and DCFS region to solicit their experience with their agency's implementation of their Foster Parent Law Plan.

STATUS OF WORK ON RUNAWAYS – JUDITH DUNNING – PAGER 800-602-7643

Judith said much progress has been made in the work of finding runaway children in the system. She said missing children is an issue for both foster parents and the press. She said a unit should be available 24/7 in Chicago, hopefully by October 1, to handle calls about runaways. Judith said she would be talking with foster parents and will be coming to regular meetings of smaller groups of foster parents. She said if a child in care is missing, pick up the phone and call the police, make a missing person report, and then call 866-503-0184, the DCFS help line for missing children. Judith had also met with the FBI and talked about exploited kids on the run.

Judith said that of a core group of 409 missing kids, the Department has found 300 children. She spoke about the importance of talking and listening to our children (even negotiating with them) to achieve successful relationships. She said that the new administration under Director Samuels is committed to finding and serving runaway children.

ADDITIONAL TOPIC DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING

Sarah Baker discussed that IFPA is putting together information to be presented to the Director regarding a cap on adoption subsidies for unknown services needed by children with special needs not covered by the medical card. Diane DeLeonardo suggested that June Dorn should address this issue. Diane suggested that June be added to the agenda to give us more information at our next meeting.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

cc: Director Samuels, Jill Manuel, Velma Williams, Erwin McEwen, Arthur Bishop, Mary Sue Morsch, Diane DeLeonardo, Ray Gates, Sharon Freagon, Tom Berkshire, David West, Vanessa James

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