

# African American Advisory Council Minutes

Tracy Marshall, Chairperson  
Keith Smith, Vice-Chairperson  
March 21, 2019

<b>ATTENDEES:</b>
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Robin Albritton  
Tanya Carriere  
Fayette Coleman-Gill  
Renee Heard  
Jacque Johnson  
Tracey D. King  
Rhonda Laye  
Tracy Marshall  
Lori Welcher-Evans

### **Phone Participants**

Shirley Barsh  
Michelle Carter  
Cheryl Dampeer – Ad Hoc Member  
Carole Freeman  
Quincy Washington

The meeting was officially called to order by Chair, Tracy Marshall at 10:00am.

<b>ORDER OF MEETING:</b>
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### **REVIEW OF MINUTES:**

The minutes were reviewed but was not voted on due to not having a quorum therefore the vote was tabled. There were not enough council members in attendance. Corrections: Carole Freeman was present at the last meeting.

### **CHAIRPERSON REPORT:**

Tracy Marshall gave the Chairperson's report and stated the following:

- Kudos was given to Robin for inviting the council into her home and hosting the AAAC bonding event. Tracy praised the hospitality committee comprised of Renee, Veronica and Tracey for catering of the food. Downstate council members received a special recognition and "Thank you" for attending the event. We did acknowledge Cheryl Dampeer who recently retired who was also in

attendance at the Bonding Event. She shared that those who missed it really missed a treat. We will try to do this at least twice a year if possible to help us continue to boost morale and grow more in unison with one another.

- There are a lot of changes going on within the Department and Chairperson Tracy has been attempting to get on the Director's calendar but things have been put on hold since we now have an interim Director. She will be requesting a meeting with the new Director once one has been identified.
- There was a letter sent out by the Joint Councils requesting and increase in funding for the upcoming Conferences/Institute Day. That was submitted prior to Director Walker stepping down. We are hopeful that it will be shared with the Director once the new one is appointed.
- Tracy was approached by Karen Harrington (APT Monitor) about trying to connect the council with Laila Hathaway for the purpose of working collaboratively on an event. We will need a subcommittee to work on this event if we so choose to do so as a Council. Asked members their thoughts and wishes. The members appeared to be on board and it most agreed that it is something they would be interested in doing.
- J.R. and Sherlynn Garrett-Wilson sent Tracy correspondence regarding Dr. Joy DeGruy, who has a wealth of experience, as an author of a book entitled, Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome. They suggested that she would be a great keynote speaker for the upcoming Institute. Tracy shared that we already have our speaker but maybe the council can work collaboratively with the Black Administrators in Child Welfare to see if we can come together to work with Dr. Degruy, and keep these things at the forefront in the future.
- LSSI has a position open in their Peoria office for Program Director. All applications can be forwarded to Ruth Sajko in Des Plaines, and he contact number is 847-390-1412. Tracy will follow-up with Jere to make sure this posting was still open.
- Bob Blackwell sent an email regarding action teams and opportunities, and is just keeping AAAC members in the loop.

#### **NEWSLETTER:**

There is no report. However, Tracy did approach Jennifer Florent in the Communications Department, and had forwarded her the throwback newsletter from when President Obama was initially elected in an effort to try and highlight some articles that were previously featured. Tracy was informed that it wouldn't be approved due to some people highlighted in the old newsletter are no longer employed at the Department. It might be

frowned upon as a hold and the "throwback" theme will be lost. Tracy spoke with Michelle, the Newsletter Chair and agreed to forward her the Winter 2009 newsletter. Her committee will have the opportunity to pick and choose some articles to reflect on and add to our upcoming newsletter. It was stated that the newsletter committee needs assistance securing articles and ideas. If anyone has any ideas or would like to join this committee, please reach out to Michelle Carter.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN SERVICES:**

This position remains vacant and there has not been any additional information given besides the Department is not filling positions at this time. The council has been without a liaison since Rochelle retired in June 2018. The Chair will reach out to Deputy Fitzgerald to inquire again about this position needing to be filled as soon as possible.

**TRAINING COMMITTEE:**

James has been out sick so council members will be keeping him in prayer. Tracy forwarded a list of the council's accomplishments to him but the Fact Sheet still needs to be updated. Rhonda will discuss with James on how they can update the slides and then subsequently update the AAAC Fact Sheet/Accomplishments.

**STATUS REPORT-HOST FAMILIES/CARE PACKAGES:**

Shirley reported that she spoke with our student that is sponsored by the council and she is doing well. The student traveled to Atlanta for spring break. She reported that her grades are ok and that she is trying to graduate on time. Shirley is collecting donations from the council members in support of the student which will be sent to her monthly. Carole reported that she spoke with Carolyn Griggs (retired AAAC Member) who informed her that the student's application for the scholarship had not been received. As a result, she will not be a recipient of the scholarship. The student has reported as having some financial issues but was given an opportunity to send the application in past the deadline. However, it was never received. Mrs. Griggs will inform the council of the next time this scholarship will be available. She would like to see a DCFS youth in care be nominated for it to help them with their academic goals.

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Robin reported that a private agency worker reached out to her as it relates to becoming a member of the council. She informed the young lady that our bylaws state that all council members are made up of only DCFS employees. There is a slot for an ex-officio member but it can only be filled with former members of the council. Robin further reported

that the private agency worker is interested in serving as a volunteer with the council. Robin shared that she can work as an Ad-hoc team member and is more than welcome to attend any of our meetings. She invited her to the upcoming Institute Day. Relunda Washington from the Southern Region would like to resume her membership with the council. Lori made a motion that we vote to reinstate Relunda's membership with the council. The motion was second by Renee. The motion carried, and her membership will be reinstated. Robin will inform Relunda that her membership was reinstated and she will be invited to the next meeting in April 2019.

Tracy reported that Reginald would like to step down from being a council member. He is currently a placement worker and has been struggling with work and not being able to actively participate in meetings or teleconferences. He is going to think it over and has agreed to work with Carole on possibly putting together a "Real Talk" event in Southern Region. He will let Tracy know his final decision in the near future regarding his status on the council.

Tracy reported that James Bracey referred someone in the East St. Louis region who is interested in joining the council to contact the Membership Chair. As of this date, that person has not done so. Carole related that Lolita Dumas, former council member from Central region has returned to the Department. She suggested someone from the council is expected to reach out to her to see if she is interested in returning as a council member.

#### **LEGISLATIVE:**

This agenda item was officially tabled. However, Rhonda mentioned the following bill, "**SB 1909** removes "infant exposed to controlled substance at birth" out of the definition of "neglect" in BOTH ANCRA as well as the Juvenile Court Act. This effectively means DCFS would no longer investigate cases originating from a baby being exposed to illegal drugs at birth and the SAO would no longer have that ground to file petitions under. I'm told this matter is going to hearing in the Senate on Tuesday. I was hoping those in the medical community could weigh in on the impact this will have on infant and family health. An amendment to the bill also adds a requirement for parental consent to toxicology testing at birth for controlled substances." Rhonda related that the doctors got involved and the goal is to have public health involved in this matter. Lori provided to Tracy copies of new laws that went into effect in Illinois in 2019.

**REAL TALK:**

Carole reported that the theme for this year is #Living My Best Life. Carole further reported that she spoke with the manager in Cook County as well as the new person that will be replacing Lynda Swan-McClendon. She also reached out to the YAB contact person in Central Region, Kim Johnson who has not responded back as of today. Carole is hoping to receive a response back by tomorrow. Carole proposed that retired council members could maybe handle the portion of giveaways. Cheryl Dampeer (retiree) agreed to join in and coordinate this effort. The date for Cook County's Youth Summit has changed and is now Thursday, June 20, 2019 at Northeastern Illinois University, located 5500 N. St. Louis. There will be a total of 5 workshops held in the AM and the workshops will be repeated in the PM. REAL TALK is one of the workshops. Carole related that the date for Central Region's Youth Summit is June 14, 2019, however, she will get verification. Reginald is interested in conducting a Real Talk session in the fall, comprised of members, private agencies and community members. Carole will schedule a meeting for the Real TALK committee members.

**JOINT COUNCIL MEETING:**

There are no updates. Tracy will reach out to Juanita (LAC) to ascertain if any feedback was received in terms of funding for future institutes/conferences.

**CONFERENCE:**

The conference planning committee will meet today to develop workshops. Funding from the union has not been solidified. The union is concerned that they are not being supported by its members. The council has a lot of non-union members but are encouraging everyone to be involved if they so choose to do so. Carole suggested a networking event to take place post-conference, however, the council agreed that it is too late to pull it all together. Brooke Taylor (Training Division) is working with the conference planning committee to ensure that everything goes well. We may go with boxed lunches for the conference. The vendor committee is working extremely hard, and the limit for vendors is 25. Letters are expected to go out to the vendors by this Friday. The vendor committee is comprised of Tracey K., Renee, Jacque and Veronica.

<b>BUSINESS UPDATES:</b>
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**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Attire for the upcoming conference
- Council members who do not have AAAC t-shirts, please inform Tracy
- Lori has a binder comprised of all minutes and agendas. If your committee has any meetings, please feel free to forward your minutes to be kept in the binder.
- Council members please keep May 29<sup>th</sup>, the day prior to the conference open
- The Englewood Expo will take place on April 20, 2019. Please encourage youth and young adults to attend. This is a DCFS partnership along with Kennedy King College and there will be job opportunities available on-site. Shirley needs council members to volunteer to assist on the day of this event. Tracy, Robin, Renee, Rhonda and Quincy volunteered to assist.
- Council members want to incorporate food/snacks back into monthly council meetings

The meeting officially adjourned at 11:52am.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on April 18, 2018 at 1911 S. Indiana.

Submitted by:

Lori Welcher-Evans, Secretary