

**Task Force on Strengthening the Child Welfare Workforce for Children and Families**

Department of Children and Family Services  
100 W. Randolph St. Room 275  
Chicago, IL

406 E. Monroe, 7th Floor Conference Room  
Springfield, IL

**March 4, 2020 – 10:00a.m.-11:00-a.m.**

**MINUTES**

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT (in person)</b>	<b>MEMBERS PRESENT (via phone)</b>	<b>MEMBERS ABSENT</b>
Sen. Julie Morrison	Lisa Jones	Sen. Steve McClure
Re. Mary Edly-Allen	Jan Stepto-Millett	Sen. Robert Peters
Royce Kirkpatrick	Anne Irving	Paola Baldo
Betsy Goulet		Rep. Mike Marron
Mark Stutrud		Rep. Karina Villa
Chris Boyster for Deb McCarrel		Rep. Steven Reick
		Rep. Craig Wilcox

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 10:06a.m.

**II. Review and Approval of Minutes**

The February 6, 2020 minutes were approved.

**III. Review of Rate Models**

Jason House of the DCFS Division of Budget and Finance provided an overview of the DCFS and Purchase of Service (POS) staffing and workload ratios. These were reviewed for the State Central Register (DCFS only) and Division of Child Protection (DCFS only), as well as Permanency (both DCFS and POS) and Intact Services (both DCFS and POS). Numbers were current as of January 6, 2020.

Members voiced that they would like to know the POS vacancy rate, as the DCFS rate was presented. It was discussed that there is a difference in how that data is tracked between POS agencies, and the Child and Family Research Center reported they will seek that information as part of their employer survey.

Jason clarified that POS caseloads are sometimes blended permanency-intact caseloads, so the number of children assigned per worker can reflect those blended cases. It was also clarified that there may be supervisors carrying cases due to vacancies, but they are not counted in caseload data.

For investigations (Division of Child Protection), there are 739 child welfare specialists, with a supervisory ratio of approximately 6:1 and an average of nine investigations per worker. If looking at vacancies, there are 35 targeted vacancies, 29 for supervisors.

A workgroup member asked why DCFS is not hitting the same caseload levels, and the response was that it is currently under review.

Workgroup members also acknowledged that if DCFS does a hires a large group of staff at one time, those hires may come from staff currently at POS agencies.

It was noted that for Council on Accreditation (COA), private agencies are required to be at 5:1 ratio. DCFS is also COA accredited.

Intact Family Services are largely provided by POS agencies. Ratios are similar between POS and DCFS. In January 2020 there was an increase to intact numbers, which are expected to continue to increase especially because of new procedures involving intact referrals on subsequent oral reports (SORs). No vacancies are noted on the DCFS side. Based on January numbers, there will need to be an increase in staffing levels.

CFRC confirmed that they were going to get private agency data on Intact as part of their survey as well.

The workgroup requested the number of vacancies at SCR; Finance staff reported they will pull that data.

Sen. Morrison asked if the Intact staff numbers were a calculation or is this a hard number. Jason responded that it's a hard number of workers who have at least one case assigned to them.

Deb McCarrel reported that when she was trying to get to POS data previously, hiring/attrition was hard to get, as agencies don't clean up SACWIS quickly. Royce Kirkpatrick confirmed that there will always be those situations.

The group reviewed demographics and noted that there are younger workers and more experienced supervisors, as well as a diverse workforce at DCFS.

Rep. Edly-Allen noted that as there are over 400 employees with less than 2 years experience, they must be given the tools and training needed as an investment.

Betsy Goulet reported that CFRC (Cross and Chu) is tracking new workers that come in and go through the training academy, using a survival analysis to see when they leave and under what circumstances. This year's analysis looked at those who went through training versus those who don't, and they are starting to see encouraging data on retention.

Rep. Edly-Allen asked about exit interviews and why staff are leaving.

Betsy reported that they are starting to get that info – some are moving around DCFS, some are upwardly mobile, etc.

Rep. Edly-Allen asked about those leaving altogether. Luke Hinds at DCFS gave CFRC info about employment history, so they were able to extrapolate. There was a focus on supervision.

Betsy reported that a lot of what is said at exit interviews is about supervisors. If staff are equipped to use problem-based learning but their supervisor isn't, that's a problem. Supervisors must go through training as the linchpins to this system.

Sen. Morrison requested longevity and caseload data for POS agencies. Royce Kirkpatrick reported that he would check to see what's available, but it may need to come directly from agencies.

Michael Braun at CFRC reported that the employer survey could have this information, it is just not clear POS agencies will have demographic data.

Betsy Goulet asked if POS contracts require annual reports, and the answer was no, those are not required.

Deb McCarrel asked if an exodus of staff or early retirement of the workforce has had impact on why there are so many new people. Royce Kirkpatrick stated that they are not sure on the retirement side but the change is visible in the numbers.

The group discussed salary ranges and differences between DCFS and POS salary.

Betsy Goulet noted that there has been difficulty attracting trainers with experience because the salary is not high enough.

Deb McCarrel noted that the reason why supervisors are longer term may have to do with supervisors becoming unionized in 2008. Per Deb, there were previously be 10 or 12 steps and some supervisors received significant increases to come up to the bottom step when they joined the union. Deb also noted that there is nothing this group can do about that at this moment.

The group noted that all DCFS workers are unionized, and now some POS are also AFSCME.

Rep. Edly-Allen reported concern with union child welfare.

Anne Irving stated that adequate salaries are important part of retention and longevity. She noted that SCR supervisors are not in the union, as legislation during the Quinn administration removed some people.

Mark Stutrud noted that the baseline established when privatization began was lower from salary perspective to begin with, and as POS agencies are revenue based not cost based it is difficult to catch up with no rate increase. He noted that this has caused quite a discrepancy between salaries.

Royce Kirkpatrick reported that the contract has all salary ranges, but averages were provided at this meeting.

Rep. Edly-Allen asked when child welfare was privatized.

Deb McCarrel reported that it was in the enabling legislation that the Department must use private providers, and in beginning community-based organizations stepped up. There was a push in the 1990s to do performance-based contracting, and a lot was done under Jess McDonald, but residential were the only ones who really got it ingrained in their system. Intact was privatized in 2013 because there was a huge budget deficit and there was a risk of laying off hundreds of workers. The administration said instead of laying off 100s of workers, they would move the rest of intact to POS. Anne Irving noted that this was a recognition of inadequate staff at frontlines, so rather than add headcount, the decision was to privatize caseload of intact. Deb stated that there was a budget deficit, not just inadequate staffing and said that Anne is correct, people were repositioned to the frontlines because the Department was short investigators.

The group then reviewed data on POS Foster Care. There are over 10,000 children and youth in Traditional/HMR care, which is the flagship program. The group reviewed rate models and increases in FY20.

The group discussed how Medicaid managed care will change Medicaid carve-outs and the return of funding for recruitment.

Mark Stutrud noted that rates are very important, as agencies live in the volume world as well. They attempt to build out cost to anticipate what they will receive in referrals in a fiscal year, but that does not always happen. For example, if they have 28 vacancies statewide, that also affects the agency's ability to accept cases. If they come in at a really high volume, how can agencies accommodate those because they are not in a position to refuse.

Deb McCarrel added that POS are grateful for the influx but as cases go up, it is zero sum because it does not allow for expansion.

Jason House reported that DCFS is due to update intake goals and invited Mark to give feedback.

**IV. Public Comment**  
None

**V. Adjournment**