

Task Force on Strengthening the Child Welfare Workforce for Children and Families
WebEx/Conference Call

June 17, 2020 – 10:00-11:00a.m.
MINUTES

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

I. Welcome and Call to Order

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

The June 3, 2020 minutes were approved.

III. Update on Research Components

Michael Braun from CFRC provided an update on the employer survey. The survey was distributed to approximately 90 people/contacts at POS agencies, via a list provided by DCFS. One reminder has already gone out, and follow-up went to those who had not opened the survey. The email service can tell if someone has opened it. CFRC has responses from 11 of 95 people thus far, which is a low response rate. If responses do not increase, CFRC will send 85 individual emails to those who have not responded. Michael noted that some servers have restrictions on some emails.

Deb McCarrel suggested that the survey be sent to the agency’s POS email vs Illinois.gov emails. Stefanie, Michael and Deb will connect to determine where updated addresses may be needed. Rep. Edly-Allen asked if CFRC had the manpower to do follow-up phone calls. Michael stated that will be the strategy, to first send individual emails, then after that do a follow-up call.

Michael also provided an update on the literature/policy review. It has been drafted and is with Dr. Fuller for review and editing. There will be a draft by the end of the month for the task force.

Deb asked what CFRC was looking for – peer-reviewed articles, other state systems – and what was scope? Michael stated that they were primarily looking at the highest standards of evidence for predictors of turnover and things that support retention, mostly academic articles. In cases where there are state reports, commissioned by outside entities, they can come in handy when identifying programs to increase retention.

IV. Discussion on Recruitment and Retention Issues/Recommendations

Senator Morrison reported that previously, there was a discussion on student loan forgiveness between herself Director Smith, Senator McGuire, Meaghan Jorgensen and others. A forgiveness program would incentivize students to finish their social work degrees and go into child welfare. Senator Morrison stated that POS agencies do a lot of recruitment and training, and then DCFS recruits those staff.

The idea is that loan forgiveness would be for student committing to work at POS agencies for a number of years. Senator Morrison stated that Director Smith thought it was a good idea, and that Title IV-E funds can be used for this for this (for every \$10,000 from the state, the state can recoup \$7,500 in federal dollars).

Meaghan stated that DCFS' Budget and Finance Division put together an outline of a potential plan, and she discussed the program with Sens. Morrison and McGuire on 6/16. It could be introduced as a pilot program with a smaller number of students initially.

Denice Murray asked about data collection, and whether there was an idea of what numbers of students would look like. Denice asked if this can be done on a geographic basis.

Sarah Tucker (DCFS Budget and Finance) stated that in the first year, the pilot would be \$500,000 for 10 students at each of 5 universities, to a \$2M program at end of five years. They did not look at certain areas of state. They looked at what universities had Bachelor/Master's social work programs, but not beyond.

Meaghan stated that they can look into how many students are graduating. Initially they looked just at social work but can look at degrees beyond that.

Mark Stutrud stated that he had been hoping something like this would go through for awhile and asked if this changes the relationship with DCFS.

Sen. Morrison said that hasn't been discussed yet, but the POS perspective is important. She suggested that Mark talk to some POS colleagues and express questions/concerns to Royce and Meaghan. There will be some ups/downs with a pilot.

Denice stated that there were some similar programs at DCFS in the past. Deb agreed and stated they were housed at the Inspector General's office

Paola Baldo stated that this is an interesting idea and asked if there is data in terms of retention for programs like this. Deb noted that it was a long time ago at DCFS and may be in old personnel records or OIG records.

Betsy Goulet reported there is a lot of info on university-child welfare partnerships, particularly looking at retention/turnover using IV-E, and suggested CFRC share that.

Regarding next steps, Meaghan stated she would circle back with Sarah, talk to the Office of Legal Services about drafting an agreement, and go through the list with the Director about what universities to reach out to for pilot program next week

Sen. Morrison encouraged anyone on the call to chime in with perspectives as we come up with new ideas.

Rep. Edly-Allen stated she agreed on the need for substantive, actionable recommendations. It is reminiscent of convos about class size and needing data to show that reduced class sizes improves delivery of services. It seems like a no brainer. Some of these things – trainings, incentives – are no brainers.

Sen. McClure stated that the program is a great idea. He reported that one of the issues with higher education programs like this in committee is that sometimes requirements are not specific enough or not long enough. Proposals get rejected because they are not meeting end goal in a specific way.

Denice noted that the pilot provides both the academic and practice perspectives. Denice asked about the timeframe for the pilot, because in order to make a determination around retention, that indicates a period of time. Denice noted the need to be thoughtful about measures of success regarding retention.

Royce stated that after Budget and Finance works with the Office of Legal Services, he will share language with the task force for review.

Denice recommended looking at current retention rates vs. pilot students.

Sen. Morrison pointed out that the pilot will happen with or without the task force and highlighted what Sen. McClure said regarding expanding and adjusting degrees and experience to come up with what we're looking for (what allowable degrees, commensurate experience), to get to where we want to be with the workforce.

Denice recommended breaking the work down into subcommittees.

Rep. Villa stated she is excited about the prospect but noted concerns about criminal justice degrees and police training, noting the need for more social work and less police.

Mark Stutrud suggested that these new hires have a longer period of time for training and onboarding, while working at lesser level than the maximum caseload size.

Rep. Villa highlighted that teachers have had to go through rigorous evaluation processes, supervisors being with teachers and seeing what's happening in classroom. She asked what the current caseworker evaluation process looks like.

Deb noted that DCFS has a structured onboarding process per the union. Denice reported that there is a 3-6-month assessment of new staff performance; in few instances staff are not retained. On an annual basis, there is a formal evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, goals and objectives for the upcoming evaluation period.

Mark stated that his organization has been experimenting with having lead workers who are not supervisors and asked how something like that could be structured contractually.

Betsy explained how training connected with the field in the past.

Denice suggested that instead of a new position, the lead worker could have a salary adjustment. There would also need to be a look at the impact across caseloads, as the number of cases would need to be reduced by 1-2 to account for time spent mentoring.

Rep. Edly-Allen stated that with teaching, teachers have an instructional coach, and within the contract they have stipends. She agreed with reduced caseloads.

Sen. Morrison stated that the idea of a senior caseworker with a mentee is another action item to put into play. She asked how important caseloads are for retention and suggested giving new caseworkers reduced caseloads. Sen Morrison also highlighted the SIM lab, and the need to prioritize DCFS and POS supervisors for SIM training.

Betsy reported that during the stay at home order, they have been doing a pilot for supervisors. Thus far they have done two pilots with Aunt Martha's and Camelot in Springfield. Sen. Morrison stated that it seems POS supervisors need to be trained even before DCFS workers.

Rep. Edly Allen asked what POS training looks like. Mark stated that if onboarding and caseload increases are gradually ramped up, agencies can fill in the lead/mentor/supervisor process. He highlighted the need to create space and time for this.

Mark pointed out the need to consider diversity, particularly of African-American workers. Denice asked whether it was a worker shortage or a dearth of African-American leaders and managers. Sen. Morrison stated that there is a need to increase the number of Black social

workers and leaders, so we can put this on the task force agenda. Sen. Morrison asked about DCFS recruitment at colleges.

Tammy Grant (DCFS Office of Employee Services) reported that DCFS does a lot of recruitment at colleges. Because of campuses being closed, DCFS has been doing WebEx and Zoom recruitment w/colleges. DCFS also recruits with IDES. Tammy reported that to measure diversity, DCFS has an underutilization report provided by IDHR, where the state is broken into ten regions, demographics, professional/leadership, and other categories. In 4/10 regions, DCFS is underutilized in a specific category. Regarding caseloads – the DCFS protocol in Operations is that after someone completes Foundations, there is a 16-week program that outlines specifically the allegations a new investigator can get in each week. There is an evaluation in each week, and workers can stay at a week if they are having trouble.

Rep. Edly-Allen asked for clarity on the term parity as it was used to describe DCFS diversity. Tammy reported that IDHR uses census data to determine the demographic makeup of a region’s population and whether an agency has met parity for that region.

V. Public Comment

None

VI. Adjournment

Mark Stutrud motioned, Rep. Villa seconded. Meeting adjourned at 11:14a.m.