

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

November 16, 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. Craig Wilcox | Rep. Mike Marron |
| | Denice Murray | Jan Stepto-Millett |
| | Mark Stutrud | Sarah Tucker |
| | Lisa Jones | Anne Irving |
| | Betsy Goulet | |
| | Paola Baldo proxy Erinne Smith | |
| | Deb McCarrel | |
| | Royce Kirkpatrick | |
| | Sen. Steve McClure | |
| | Rep. Karina Villa | |
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I. Welcome and Call to Order

Julie Morrison called the meeting to order at 10:00am.
Helena Buckner took roll call. It was determined that a quorum was present.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

Denice Murray motions to approve minutes.
Deb McCarrel seconds the motion to approve the minutes.
Minutes are approved.

III. Recommendations Discussion(s)

Julie Morrison: Could someone please walk us through the changes? Do we have someone on the call prepared to do that?

Tamara Fuller: This is Tamara Fuller from the University of Illinois. I am happy to walk through all the changes with you.

Julie Morrison: Oh, that is just perfect. Thank you. Could you please do that or us? Committee members please break in if this is something that you are wanting additional changes to.

Tamara Fuller: In general, there were three sets of changes that were recommended. I am going to talk to you briefing about the changes that were made. They were all made using Track Changes and Comments so that everyone can easily follow the recommended changes – and who was making them. The first set came from the Retention Subcommittee. They pretty much changed all the recommendations in their sections, so those you will find at the end. Those changes were all incorporated. The second set of changes were from Anne Irving. I think those start on page 25. The third person to recommend changes was Meaghan Jorgenson – those were just wording changes. Meaghan forwarded me additional changes, recently, that I have not had a chance to incorporate into the document. I believe the new changes came from Monico.

Julie Morrison: Monico, do you want to do ahead and tell us briefly what those changes constitute?

Monico: It was just minor changes to some of the wording. Under 4.2 regarding worker retention – so if you look at page 28, paragraph 2 – Department should engage community college board. So, changes in language to remove any specific University partner. That would be for any of the changes that we did under that section to make sure we don't get in any waters for naming a particular university. Certainly, now it just reads department should engage the Illinois Community College Board and university partners to explore professional certificate programs. Where it says develop basically a certificate program at the community college level may increase - we don't know exactly that it would. One such program to consider is the CAST program.

Julie Morrison: Does anyone have a problem with any of those changes?

Deb McCarrel: Monico, this is Deb. Please tell me again exactly what changes you are making? I see the University of Illinois should come out.

Monico: The last sentence where it says development “will increase” to change to “may increase.”

Deb McCarrel: Okay so you're just taking out the University of Illinois and changing that word “will” to “may”. Okay. Okay.

Monico: And that one such program to consider is the CAST program. Much in alignment with the statement - one of the recommendations where it was saying that the department should look at a model at LLSI. Not that we would use that model, but that is one to look at.

Deb McCarrel: So, you're only taking the University of Illinois Springfield and you're changing a “would” to a “may.”

Monico: And that the department – one such program to consider is the –

Deb McCarrel: Which sentence is that in?

Monico: It starts in the middle of the paragraph. It talks about the certificate program that focuses on maltreatment and it goes on to talk about what the program is.

Deb McCarrel: I need to find it. I don't see what you're talking about, but it sounds logical.

Julie Morrison: Okay, Monico, while you cut and paste for Deb why don't we go on to your next recommended change?

Monico: Okay. I'll just cut and paste this whole section so they can have it to review. Recommendation number five – Changing again to remove reference to any specific university. That paragraph should now read “DCFS should continue to expand the use of simulation training through partnership with universities and to include direct service workers across all service domains ---

Deb McCarrel: I'm sorry. No. I mean you guys build something with the University of Illinois at Springfield. And now you're trying to minimize its impact. I think we are negligent in not recognizing what you guys have build and not expanding on it. I have a problem with making it too generic.

Denice Murry: I have a problem with it being too restrictive, Deb. I think the department should have the latitude. They should certainly recognize the work that has been established with and through the University of Illinois at Springfield and the Child Protection Training Academy; however, if the language is so restrictive that it implies that that is the only entity with which they are supposed to work I have a problem with that.

Deb McCarrel: This isn't legislation. It is just stating what is.

Denice Murray: A recommendation is a recommendation. And I don't know if recommendation should be so restrictive to the funding source that they don't have the latitude to look at other – just as innovative as this program has been the only reason they were able to work – or that we were able to work with the program was because they were innovative and new and they were able to work with the best and the brightest. The doors need to be left open to be able to embrace other things and not imply that because this is the program that started it all that it is the program to be retained throughout.

Deb McCarrel: That's not what it says. It just says that the department should expand their successful simulation training. It doesn't say they have to contract with UIS. It's just saying we should not ignore what we have done.

Rep. Edly-Allen: Is there a way we can compromise? Somewhere in between the two? I believe the program is important enough to be mentioned, but not restricted.

Monico: Well, that would say that basically that we need to include both university partners because we have contracts for two universities. And again, DCFS should continue to expand the use of simulation training partnerships to include –

Deb McCarrel: --to include the Illinois Child Protection Training Academy.

Denice Murray: What would be acceptable and reflective would be to say with the University of Illinois and other universities.

Monico: Okay. I'm making that edit.

Julie Morrison: Is that good, Deb?

Deb McCarrel: I am not happy about it, but I will let the group roll. I am not happy about it. This is your committee Senator. We wouldn't have even had this if we wouldn't have worked with this particular campus to develop this child protection training academy model, which is now a national model for the Children's Bureau. So, whatever the department's problem is with them – we need to put it aside.

Denice Murray: I think we could site programs across the history of the department that have been established and somehow, they have been able to expand and be inclusive of other things and other entities. I do not want to minimize or marginalize in any way the work of this program. I just don't want it to be restrictive at the same time. I think Senator Edly-Allen said we could do a compromise. If we do the compromise, we don't take out the fact that the University of Illinois was the bedrock of how this all began. We just leave the door open for someone else to come through it – the door that they opened initially.

Sen. Julie Morrison: I think that that is a good compromise. Let's make sure that the University of Illinois is named specifically and let's make sure the language states that other universities may be included as partners.

Denice Murray: I had a question or comment. The next section around the keeping it real and the recommendations for Retention – And specifically the academy is developing and hoping to implement that is already underworks and actual development in terms of circular involves more entities than what is being recommended by the University of Illinois Springfield. I am just questioning whether that paragraph is needed.

Betsy Goulet: I want to clarify the University of Illinois was asked to develop that. That is a fair statement. I'm not sure what would not be clear. That was determined by the subcommittee.

Sen. Julie Morrison: We're looking at recommendation number 5.

Betsy Goulet: Was there another university asked to develop the cohort model that I am not familiar with?

Deb McCarrel: I mean, this is a legislative task force report and the members of the general assembly did ask them to develop a model. In my opinion, you guys, the general assembly members on this task force need to make these decisions – not the department, not ICOY, not the university. You guys need to decide what is important to you and include it in this report or not include it in this report.

Denice Murray: I thought they brought other subject matter experts to the table, since I am not a member of the general assembly, and I have worked in the public and private sector – as you have too Deb McCarrel, to help with this conversation. I don't know that their intent was that we not weigh in

Deb McCarrel: I agree Denice. I am with you, but we have a difference of opinion on this.

Denice Murray: It's okay though.

Rep. Edly-Allen: We must depend on those you have been in the trenches for decades. And have that history. The House is a good example of the turn-over where I will not be next January. You all have the continuity and knowledge – so hearing you go back and forth is a necessary and vital component of this discussion. We need all the stakeholders at the table. The core of this conversation is that we need to protect our kids. Sometimes when we boil it down to the basics and get back onto that focus it's a little clearer. We all have the same mission in protecting our children and making it better. We need all of you here at this table for this discussion for your knowledge base. Thank you for all that you do.

Deb McCarrel: This is Debbie. We can agree to disagree. For years and years and years we have worked to establish a training curriculum for child protection that helps the department increase retention, give the workforce a better of an idea of what they will encounter when they hit that front door. And it took a lot of work and a lot of protecting – trying to protect what was trying to be innovated over numerous directors that changed their direction on the way they wanted to come when they hit the department. They have this model. The department worked very hard with the university – they should embrace it. Trying to eliminate where it came from or who created it just doesn't make any sense. Illinois is its own worst enemy sometimes. You have this thing that nobody else had – one of the first to be started and we can't embrace it because of personalities or different directors.

Monico: No

Denice Murray: No, Deb. No. That's not it, Deb. That's not the way it's currently being represented. Know that I still love you, sweetie. The reality is this – language cannot be so restrictive. We are moving at a warped speed – technology and everything. There is room for more than one thing. There can be concurrently evolving models and the door needs to be left open for that. I am not trying to marginalize the work that the University of Illinois at Springfield has done. We already got them memorialized.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Here is what I am hearing. The change that we just made that Deb doesn't like – the change we agreed to was that we would include other universities that partner. I think that that opens the door. This paragraph is just information. It isn't saying anything more than this is what happened. I say we move on because we have more to discuss. We will come back to this at the end if there is something that someone is really driven about. Okay. Other recommendations on Retention?

Monico: There was, again, similar language change on recommendation six, and basically as we already stated – so the first paragraph will read universities and court stakeholders to expand the court simulation training. The next paragraph that DCFS should engage the administrative office of the Illinois Courts. I added and the Office of Legal Services to ensure – so I will cut and paste those right now to send to you now, Deb, so you can look at them. That's all I have.

Deb McCarrel: We have the same issue. It's just that there are members that don't like the University of Illinois memorialized as the only entity that could be partnered with to do this program – to do simulation training, right?

Monico: Right.

Deb McCarrel: Betsy, let me ask you this because I don't know. What if Western Illinois wants to use your program, but they would be the one to run it. Can they use your program?

Betsy Goulet: We don't own the program. We created the model and it has four years of evaluation data and 800 some investigators later. If DCFS wanted to implement the model anywhere in the state – beyond the four regions if they wanted to put it in any other university, we would be in favor of expanding it to anybody that would want it. The issue becomes – for instance – we put in a proposal to implement the program in Carbondale. We partnered with Carbondale. The contract is through UIS so there is fidelity to the model. We know we reached out to Aurora University to implement it in the northern region, but they went with a different model. So, there will be a different simulation training –

Monico: -- that is not correct. I think that's another discussion that we have to table.

Betsy Goulet: I think there is an opportunity to speak the truth just like the truth is---

Monico: -- the truth is that the department will implement that it has created.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Monico. I am going to plea ignorance here. I am not sure who you are representing or what department you are with. Can you tell me that, please?

Monico: Yes. Chief Learning Officer at DCFS. The Office of Learning and Professional Development. I am responsible for any of the contracting with any of our university partners for any of our learning development.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Got it. Thank you.

Betsy Goulet: Okay so at the end of that. There must be some truth to this. We did put a proposal in and that was the Child Protection Training Academy proposal to replicate the model that serves Springfield, that serves Chicago, and will server Carbondale. You did not take that model. I don't know what Northern proposed. That is the truth, Monico. But if Western wanted it tomorrow, we would be happy to replicate it. The Children's Bureau has asked us to do two webinars across the country in December and February to offer this model to anyone else in the country who would be interested in it. That is something that we're trying to do. We would be happy to share it at any point with anyone else that is interested.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Let's have other people weigh in on this.

Rep. Edly-Allen: I don't want us to get into the weeds. I need clarification. We have this model that has been developed. I haven't seen it personally, but I have seen videos and been introduced to it. We all know that hands on modeling is a very powerful training method. I am hearing that this model was not accepted by all regions. Why wouldn't we want a uniform successful proven method replicated throughout the state? Why is there a different model in the northern part of the state than the southern part of the state? We have uniformity in so many other areas. I am confused as to why this would be different.

Monico: I will just say that this is a different interpretation. Of course, the department will continue to have uniformity in terms of the simulation training that we have. Same training that we have for our foundations across the state. This really is a matter of who contractually got the contract to implement it in that area. It is the department's goal to insure fidelity across all training for the state.

Sen. Julie Morrison: So, it's about who got the contract?

Monico: Yes.

Deb McCarrel: I think it's about the model, Senator. I would want to know what they are doing and how it differs from how the Child Protection Training Academy is doing it.

Especially when we're going to try to evaluate. Will it be subject to the same evaluation requirements under the U of I? Will the differences be able to be recognized?

Monico: Yes.

Denice Murray: Deb. You're going through the weeds. The inability of these two entities to have established a collaborative ongoing working relationship is at the core of the whole discussion. We digress when we go off onto these other things. You're going to implement the model with a level of fidelity or you're not – the issue has more to do with the fact that other universities are taking the model and they are implementing. And the loss of the control and oversight by the entity that established the model and promoted it in the first place. The whole notion of lack of fidelity to the model that has not been determined or tested, at all. Do you have any data on that Monico? The only thing the department needs to do is to leave the door open – Senator Morrison said this fifteen minutes ago. Nobody said given the right to anything or oversee or supersede whoever established the model. They should be given the opportunity to bring something to the table.

Sen. Julie Morrison: We have unearthed a sensitive area that I hadn't heard anything about over the past few months. Let's put this aside and move on. I'm not saying it is resolved. Let's get through the rest of these changes. Do you have any other changes?

Monico: No, that was it.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Tamara, you're back in control now.

Tamara Fuller: Okay. If you go to page 25 you will see the first suggested changes from Anne Irving. There is a lengthy comment for what she shared in her email. I do have some thoughts, but I will wait to share them.

Sen. Julie Morrison: There as a quote her that was stricken. Anne are you on? Okay. I don't know how we can cut and paste someone's comment. I wouldn't appreciate it if I had provided comments and some of the words were struck out. That's not right

Tamara Fuller: You cannot change a correct quote just because you don't agree with it. We can't do that. What we can do is remove all the quotes or include all the quotes in the appendix. We cannot just change it.

Rep. Edly-Allen: I move that we put all the comments at the appendix at the end.

Denice Murray: I agree.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Okay that works. Tamara, next one

Tamara Fuller: That's really it. Meaghan just made minor changes. You can let me know if there is any objection to incorporating those.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Anybody? Concerns or comments? Basically, I think there was a sense that I was singling out these two, probably, young women who are very earnest in what they do. I do not retract what I said because I think it needs to be evaluated. That language is in there.

Tamara Fuller: Meaghan suggested some changes. If you look at the Child Welfare Worker Recruitment recommendations. There are some minor wording changes to number one and two. I don't think they change the content – they're just clarifying. Is there any discussion. So, the sentence in recommendation one originally read "DCFS staff lead by Meaghan Jorgenson design – she changed it to designed – and then she added DCFS Child Welfare Stipend Program – it just said Program before and she changed it to Child Welfare Stipend to clarify. ---

Sen. Julie Morrison: Are the rest similar? Just clarifying? No change to content?

Tamara Fuller: Yes.

Sen. Julie Morrison: I trust you that there was no change in content. We don't need to go through each one of those.

Tamara Fuller: Another suggested change from Anne Irving for recommendation 4. The original – I will read it to you for those of you who do not have the document in front of you – the original said -in the course of our conversation with staff, we became aware of two full-time staff positions within DCFS that act as recruiters for new employees of the agency, specifically at colleges and universities. These recruiters attend job fairs, create postings and interface with institutions of higher learning across Illinois. Anne suggested that we add, as the DCFS workforce provides critical services as the agency is currently struggling to fill vacancies and as recruiting social work students from schools expands the workforce in the child welfare field staff recruitment is important. Staff recruitment should be evaluated to ensure maximum efficiency.

Sen. Julie Morrison: I am okay with that one.

Sen. Wilcox: The words that are stricken though kind of eliminate the concern that on the face of it they do not appear to be the most efficient or effective use to DCFS dollars. It does kind of water down your concern.

Sen. Julie Morrison: I do not have the original language in front of me. Would you please read me the words that were stricken, Sen. Wilcox?

Sen. Wilcox: The words that were stricken is it is our recommendation that these positions be critically evaluated because they do not, on the face of it, appear to be the most efficient or effective use of DCFS dollars. So that specific concern is watered down with the change.

Sen. Julie Morrison: What do you think? Give me your recommendation on this.

Sen. Wilcox: This has been your prime focus. I think that our concern of the efficient and effective use of the dollars remain. I don't mind the additional words, but maybe keeping that portion of the sentence should remain.

Sen. Julie Morrison: I agree with you. I would like to keep the original sentence and add the additional two sentences.

Deb McCarrel: I think it's fine. It flows together and the additional language provides more context.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Are there any other specific language changes that we need to over? Or Tamara can we go back to the discussion on the University of Illinois?

Deb McCarrel: Before we do that. I want to talk about the survey results and the turn-over staff which doesn't seem to be congruent with national statistics or with what we have been told by providers in the state. I am afraid this survey might be flawed. Maybe we didn't ask the right questions the right way. Tammy I am asking for your opinion. Our providers are saying their turnover rates are closer to 45-50%. I went through the questions and I take responsibility. Maybe we didn't frame the questions correctly to capture... Or can we put some sort of caveat that says this isn't in line with the national average? I don't know the answer, so that is why I am asking.

Tamara Fuller: There is reason we don't rely on anecdotal information in research. Unless it is systematically collected data, you're going to point out what goes along with your beliefs. I don't think we can say that this doesn't match what we think the answer it. Everyone had an opportunity to answer the question. The response rate was not 100%. We can put caveats saying that everyone didn't answer this.

Deb McCarrel: I'm worried we're going to put a false narrative out. Maybe we didn't ask the questions as clearly as we should have.

Denice Murray: I agree with you, Deb.

Deb McCarrel: I don't want the state thinking that we don't have a turn-over problem because we do.

Rep. Edly-Allen: Tamara, is there – from the statistical point of view is there any type of caveat that can be included to what Deb is speaking of? How many needed to be surveyed to get a clear picture? Do we only have less than half that responded?

Deb McCarrel: What would it take for someone to do a more in-depth look at it? I don't want the university to have to stand on this stat if we do a survey down the road and it shows a different outcome. I want to leave the door open for an additional look at this turnover rate.

Tamara Fuller: I think that that can happen regardless. It is never a bad idea to repeat surveys. There would be no harm in re-doing it and getting completely different results.

Denice Murray: You could happen is that there is some language speaks to the concerns that have been voiced on this call and stipulate to the fact that an additional survey will be conducted at a date to be determined based around some of the concerns that you expressed around this current set of data.

Deb McCarrel: We should have asked for more detail.

Denice Murray: We could have been more specific about who we wanted to collect the information from.

Tamara Fuller: I can make some additions and I will get that sent around.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Do we have anything else with the exception of the issue with the university? Can we go back to the premise of the University of Illinois. I want to make sure that our report really indicates the sense of what our committee wants to put out there. There are two different strong opinions on this.

Monico: I just sent out the edits based on what we did discuss. Deb you do have those when you have a chance to look at them. The changes allow the University of Illinois to be included while keeping the door open.

Sen. Julie Morrison: Let's take a two-minute break and let everyone review.

Deb McCarrel: I am alright with it. It is broad.

Monico: Okay.

Denice Murray: I am good with it.

Royce Kirkpatrick: I don't have any questions from the contractual standpoint.

Monico: I will forward that to Tamara Fuller.

Deb McCarrel: I sent the changes to everyone.

Monico: Thank you.

Deb McCarrel: Do we want to add an additional section on trauma and the pandemic? Or do you not want to include that? We could draft something and send it to the university for review.

Denice Murray: I don't know. I think there should be some reference to it. It is such a significant thing. To not have any reference to it as it related to a trauma informed practice might be an oversight.

Sen. Wilcox: I need to jump on another call here shortly. I would be concerned that I am not sure that we have hard data to inform different options of how difficult this has been. How few children have been seen – how trauma and the potential abuse that hasn't been uncovered... I am not sure how we could word it well. I would gladly review it, but I think would be a very difficult task to take on at this point.

Deb McCarrel: We don't have any way to know on the abuse and neglect side. We're more focused on the effect of trauma and the pandemic on the workforce itself. The weight of that being put on mostly females and having to e-learn kids at home and losing their jobs because they can't go to work. It was just something that was discussed.

Rep. Edly-Allen: Sen. Morrison just called, and she dropped the call. She is on to another appointment. Deb, I hear your concerns; however, I feel like we need a whole study just on COVID. I don't want to gloss over it. I don't know how that would look to put at the end of the report. It would be a disservice to not give it some type of an introduction when we present this material.

Deb McCarrel: I am just fine with that.

Monico: You may want to look at section 4.1 under Worker Retention – I think that recommendation number 7 may be a place to consider some language. Just a recommendation

IV. Next Meeting Dates

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 10:00am – 11:00am

V. Public Comment

None

VI. Adjournment

Denise Murray motions to adjourn the meeting.

Sen. Wilcox seconds.
Meeting is adjourned.