

DCFS Workforce Crisis Task Force

February 2, 2022 10:00am- 11:00am

WebEx/ Telephone

Notes (Draft):

Attendee	Title/Agency	Present (x)
Amanda Whitlock	Children's Home & Aid - Senior Vice President, Child Welfare & Behavioral Health Services	x
Anne Irving	AFSCME	x
Betsy Goulet (co-chair)	University of Illinois - Springfield & Child Protection Training Academy	x
Comisa Hamilton	DCFS - Licensing - Acting Deputy Director	x
Deja Lockett	Illinois Community College Board	x
Denice Murray	Ascension Advisory Services - Child Welfare	x
Heidi Farris	Illinois Board of Higher Education	x
Jason House	DCFS - Budget Office	x
Joe McDonald	DCFS - Finance - Acting CFO	x
Lisa Jones	Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity	
Mark Stutrud	Lutheran Social Service - CEO	x
Paola Baldo	Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority - Research Analysis	x
Rep. Tony McCombie	Illinois State Representative 71st District	x
Rep. Dan Caulkins	Illinois State Representative 101st District	x
Rep. Dave Vella	Illinois State Representative 68th District	x
Rep. Maurice West	Illinois State Representative 67th District	x
Sarah Daniels	Illinois Collaboration on Youth - Assistant Deputy Director	x
Sen. Craig Wilcox	Illinois State Senator 32nd District	
Sen. Julie Morrison (chair)	Illinois State Senator 29th District	x
Sen. Steve McClure	Illinois State Senator 50th District	
Sarah Daniels	ICOY - Assistant Executive Director	x
Tami Fuller	Children and Family Research Center - University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign	
Non-Members Present for Meeting		
Ada Tong	DCFS - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	x
Christopher Towers	DCFS - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	x
Daniel Fitzgerald	DCFS - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	x
Gwendolyn Payton	DCFS - Division of Licensing	x
Kimberly Bates	DCFS - Office of Employee Services	x
Jose Lopez	DCFS - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	x
Simone Cameron	Legislative District Staff (Legislative office not noted)	x
Shontee Blankenship	DCFS - Division of Licensing	x

Kate Smith	DCFS - Legislative Programs Manager	x
Helena Buckner	DCFS - Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs	x
Glenda Lashley	DCFS - Special Assistant to the Director	x
Tracey King	DCFS - Deputy Chief of Staff	x

I. Welcome/ Roll Call

Sen. Morrison welcomed the group. Kate Smith, DCFS, took attendance.

II. Introduction – Please provide your name and your professional title

Following attendance each attendee not present at the previous meeting introduced themselves (listed above).

III. Background – Task Force on Strengthening the Child Welfare Workforce for Children and Families

(Jumped to updates from DCFS to address questions from last meeting)

IV. DCFS Updates

Kimberly Bates provided an update on recruitment in detail. As on January 5, 2021 DCFS total active pay count: 2,931. DCFS total vacancies: 784. December 2021 new hires: 41 (27 direct service/ 14 non-direct service) 66 separations. Fiscal year 2022: 279 hires; 195 separations; Net total hire: +84; Recruiters: 139 events attended – 5,694 candidates contacted. Continued efforts of recruitment were discussed as well as outreach to increase diversity within the department. Recruitment is taking place in Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

Q: Has there been an opportunity to rank effectiveness of recruitment?

A: It depends on the time of the year. In winter months social media campaigns are more effective. The positions that are looking to be filled different target audiences: legal, front line, contracts, support, ect. Many different efforts are necessary given how large the scope is.

Q: What does the yield of current efforts compare to the past?

A: I can only measure our success. Fiscal year 2020: 350 new hires. Fiscal year 2021: 496 new hires. I started this position in October of 2020. Fiscal year 2022: 279 new hires (55% of where we were in fiscal year 2021).

Q: Why is Rockford area a problem for hiring?

A: Rockford region is a manufacturing region. There are mainly manufacturing and nursing jobs there. The candidates we are looking for are not the candidates that are attending job fairs in that area.

Q: Would the tuition voucher be applicable in Rockford?

A: We do advertise a university partnership. We encourage the job shadowing positions as well. We are looking for a four-year degree. In that market they are looking for a 2-year program or a certificate program. There are not many candidates in that area.

Shontee Blankenship provided an update on the private sector. Emergency amendments were made to rule 401; 403; and 404 effective December 2021. As a result, a new workforce and a education transcript review committee was established: 7 committee members (2 private sector and 5 DCFS). Purpose of committee is to determine if the educational credentials that not on the list of approved degrees are equivalent as human service degrees. Upon committee recommendations have been sent to the Associate Deputy of Agencies and Institutions for the final administrative decision.

Q: What are some of the challenges in the private sector?

A: They are having a hard time recruiting and hiring with the current qualifications. We addressed that issue by extending the acceptable degrees.

Q: Has there been any impact yet?

A: We do not have numbers as the roll-out was effective in December.

Daniel Fitzgerald provided an update concerning Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: working closely with recruitment, OES throughout the state. We have gone to recent activities including: Porto Rican fest, Native American pow wows, Chinatown Moon festival, Alpha Fi Alpha, and many others in bordering states. Focus is being put on bilingual recruitments. A needs assessment is in the works concerning bilingual staff. The last time we did that was in 2020.

Q: At our next meeting would you be able to provide an assessment of the need for bilingual employees?

A: I will make every effort. I believe that we will be able to do that.

Glenda Lashley provided an update on safety. We now have a safety workgroup. It consists of ISP, our union partners, employees, and DJJ. A few of the objectives are safety equipment, training, and access to law enforcement, and have safety measures at DCFS office sites, as well as a assessment of what other states are doing for their staff.

Q: Office sites? Administrative offices? Can go into detail?

A: We are stated to have armed guards at any of our sites. Some do not at this present moment due to CMS licensing. We are working with them on that.

Q: We don't have this in place for the frontline?

A: We do. If the worker going to the home thinks they need to have law enforcement, that is done. It is self-assessment. We are working on increasing this safety in our safety workgroup. We are looking at increased law enforcement and in-person training.

The group discussed ideas of how to address safety measures with use of retired and off duty police officers. This may be handled county by county. Tracey King provided an update on the current efforts taking place.

The group discussed in-person training sites and simulation training centers. Glenda Lashely provided an update on the current effort to expand training state-wide.

Q: The workforce safety committee – when can we expect recommendations?

A: We have the large group. Small groups have been meeting as well. The first meeting with everyone will be next Monday. We are already working on all of these items in the small groups, but we have not discussed it as a full group. I will be able to provide an update at the next meeting.

Q: I would like to learn about specific strategies related to safety you will be implementing in rural counties where there are fewer officers available. What can be done in the meantime? Will there be additional training for law enforcement that have to go to those home visits?

A: We are looking to enhance our panic buttons, boost the cellular connection, and we are thinking of situational awareness and de-escalation, and processing after a de-briefing of that. Our lead situation is our law enforcement that give our direct staff the landscape of what they may encounter in that home – the criminal background of individuals in that home. That used to be a 5-day turnaround and now we have gotten it in under an hour. We have other strategies that we are moving forward with. Concerning funding there is a lot we are able to do with our current situation. We will turn to you if we find there are things, we are not able to do with our current funding situation.

V. Recommendations for Next Meeting

- Immediate short-term steps need to be taken.
- Earlier pipeline through the community colleges.
- Review minimum requirements for hiring

Follow up reports:

- Assessment of need of bilingual employees (Daniel Fitzgerald – DCFS)
- Update from Safety Workgroup (Glenda Lashley – DCFS)

Virtual Chat Room Comments:

from Amanda Whitlock she/her (privately): 10:03 AM

This is Amanda with Children's Home & Aid. I am sorry I was a few minutes late. But I am present

to Julie Morrison (privately): 10:24 AM

Heidi Farris has her hand raised. Just letting you know in case you did not see.

from Heidi Farris to everyone: 10:29 AM

My apologies, I was speaking about trying to work with Rockford Univeristy to work with tuition waiver programs.

from Mark Stutrud to everyone: 10:47 AM

I have my hand up

from Heidi Farris to everyone: 10:58 AM

Is it possible to review minimum requirements for DCFS jobs? Possible to refigure to help recruitment efforts?

VI. Adjournment

Future meeting dates (10:00am – 11:00am)

- 2/16/22
- 3/2/22