

**Joint Meeting of the
Illinois Adoption Advisory Council and
Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Doubletree Bloomington, 10 Brickyard Drive, Bloomington Illinois
March 6, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
APPROVED MINUTES**

IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT	IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Kathleen Bush	Crystal Rekart	Gladys Boyd	Kimberly Coniglio	William Adams	Janet Wokas Ahern
Keely Giles	Cara Siebert	Arrelda Hall	Katy Cotts	Lamont Boswell	Geneva Byrd
Beth Hunter	Danny Tolliver	Rachel Hoyt	Mary Savage	Christine Feldman	Jason Cummins
Laurel Meade	Karen Wardlaw	Ken Keefe	Carol Sheley	Debbie Freke	Barb Crandall
Natalie Miller	Jeremy Wheeler	Harriet Kersh		Viviana Jimenez	Greg Donathan
Maripat Oliver	Linda White	Maya Maclin		Stevie Knoblach	Gwenn Eyer
Elizabeth Richmond		Kate Monte		Maria Levengood	Jen Florent
Danielle Sanders		Susan McConnell		Nicki Roelfs	Michelle Grove
Brittney Sprouse		Kellye Norris		Alyssa Ross	Marsha K. Jones
Karen Taylor		Samella Taylor-Lewis		Katie Friend	Karen Moredock
Amy Trotter		Stephanie Tesreau			Nancy Reeves
Mark Werner					Elaine Schmidt
Julie Yelverton					Rebecca Thomas
					Carlene VanDyke

Welcome and Introductions – Elizabeth Richmond

Elizabeth Richmond welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all present to introduce themselves.

Central Region Welcome

Greg Donathon, RA

Greg introduced himself and stated that he was excited to meet the councils. He reported there are now three regional administrators in the Central Region: Maria Miller, Child Protection; Chris Kelly, Intact; and Greg in Permanency. There are three area administrators, as well. The idea behind the new structure is that they can focus more directly on their assigned areas, while still collaborating to meet needs, overall. He has been attending regular meetings throughout the region and noted that meetings are open, with dates posted on the internet. The Central Region is solidifying the process of partnering with POS agencies throughout the region by meeting with their supervisors. They are committed to providing an extra layer of support to help maintain placements throughout the region. Greg may be contacted by Email at Greg.Donathan.@illinois.gov.

Legislative Update/State Guardian’s Report

Janet Ahern

Janet noted that Meaghan Jorgensen provided participants with a handout with the current bills that might be of interest to the councils.

HB 5338 Amends the Child Care Act of 1969.

HB 5452 Amends the Child Care Act of 1969

SB 3481 Amends the Department of Human Services Act. Moves all licensing, with the exemption of foster care licensing, to DHS.

HB 4672 Amends the Children and Family Services Act, requiring the Department to provide replacement travel or tote bags to all foster youth on an as-needed basis. Effective immediately.

HB 4906 Amends the Juvenile Court Act of 1987, providing that all records and information acquired, reviewed, or produced by a court appointed special advocate during his or her appointment shall be deemed confidential and shall not be disclosed except as ordered by the court.

SB 2559 (Chicago Bar Association Initiative) Amends the Adoption Act, providing that a judgment for adoption of an adult may be entered at any time after the adult has consented to his or her adoption; or a child as to whose adoption a State-licensed child welfare agency, or person authorized by law, has the right of authority to consent may be entered at any time after placement and completion of investigation. Makes other changes.

SB 3306 Amends the Abandoned Newborn Infant Protection Act, expanding the definition of "relinquish" to mean to voluntarily leave a newborn infant, who a licensed physician reasonably believes is 30 days old or less, in a newborn safety device.

Janet presented information regarding the needs of some of our youth in care to obtain a passport and how the Office of the Guardian is working to facilitate this process. Also, Janet shared a reminder that this is the time for college scholarships and how our youth in care are eligible for these scholarships. An emphasis must also be placed in the census reporting for children in foster care. If a child was in a home on 04/01/20, the child should be reported as residing in that home. The Office of the Guardian is also making special accommodations for children in residential and group homes to be counted in the census.

Recruitment and Retention

Barb Crandall

The Director sent out the 2020-21 recruitment plan at the beginning of the year. The recruitment office is to have 31 recruitment staff with four supervisors. Currently there are only 13 specialists and four supervisors. The office is relying on foster parents to help recruit. Foster parents are a great support, and are included in the recruitment plan. There are 9000 combined homes, but that number is still not enough given the trauma and circumstances of our youth. The recruitment unit uses social media and local publications to help get the word out about the work that foster parents do, along with helping with recruitment. The office must do a better job of engaging the community, providing a network of resources and support, and empowering foster parents. We initially must identify the level of care need of our children and make a better effort to promote keeping sibs together and close.

The overall goals must be:

- 1) Place children in the most appropriate and less restrictive placement. Implement child care recruitment, adoption matching, and keep a sense of family with split sib groups.
- 2) Develop training curriculum with foster parents being an integral member of the team.
- 3) Increase the retention of foster parents (five-year retention goal).

They plan to implement a training curriculum utilizing foster parents as key players and support. They will implement an annual foster parent survey. The office is also looking to increase the support and communication through quarterly meetings and work with the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support and SWFCAC to address grievance process issues.

Managed Care/ YouthCare

Lamont Boswell

Lamont reported that they continue to refine the YouthCare program for former youth in care. This program is a collaboration between DCFS, HFS and YouthCare and they have been working out the issues that arose during the roll-out. They are working out systemic issues that have been identified, in order to make a smoother transition for youth in care. IAAC members shared supportive comments and concerns and staff continue to focus on improving communication. Some parents did not receive cards or received incorrect cards, and some were told they were not enrolled. Their current goals include working to strengthen staff training, to achieve more open communication with providers, and to strengthen support for caregivers.

Communications

Jen Florent

Jen reported that more mailings are going out than ever before. Subjects include health care, coronavirus, cannabis laws and use, and other hot topics. Jen does Twitter and Facebook posts twice a day. Our 5th Annual Illinois Foster Youth and Alumni Legislative Shadow Day is planned for Wednesday, May 6 at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield. Current and former youth in care aged 18 and over are invited to the State Capitol to connect face-to-face with legislators, get a behind-the-scenes look at the legislative process, share their stories and remind legislators of the real-world impact their work has on reforming the child welfare system. They must register by March 31. Two major league baseball events are planned. The first Friends and Family event is on May 31st with the St. Louis Cardinals and the second one is with the Chicago White Sox on July 25th. These events offer reduced ticket prices to these games. April is Child Abuse Prevention month. Kickoff events are planned on April 1st in Chicago, Decatur and Edwardsville. This will be followed with another kickoff event on April 2nd in Springfield and on April 3rd in Belleville. April 3rd is also Wear Blue Day. The Illinois State Fair runs August 14-23. DCFS will invite currently licensed foster parents to the State Fair and details will come later. Statewide Day Care Town Hall Forums are tentatively scheduled for April 20-24. Locations will be through the four regions and the specific locations will be firmed up closer to those dates. Council members addressed increasing the use of other forms of communications in addition to mass mailings for DCFS to share information in a timely manner.

PRIDE

Veronica Sanchez

Veronica indicated she has been the Associate Director for the past year. Hybrid on-line and in-person trainings will not be offered. Only in-person training is being offered in the pilot areas. NTDC, regular PRIDE, and on-line Pride will all be offered in the Central Region. In July, there will be a “new redesigned” PRIDE training in Southern Region (classroom only). She stated that there have been complaints about the on-line training presentation and how participants miss a lot by not going through the in-person classroom training. She indicated that her office has heard the issues, but on-line will still be offered due to the needs of a more convenient training. Veronica indicated she is pushing for relative caregivers to also go through the training. She said there is a 6-hour training offered in classroom and there is also “DVD” training for Home of Relative (HMR) foster parents, as opposed to the in-depth that licensed foster parents received. She stated that they are also in the process of revising this HMR training which will include at least two additional hours of training for HMR foster parents. PRIDE training will also be offered in Spanish, without translation. In the redesigned PRIDE training, there is emphasis on offering additional training and other supports to be placed on a “resource portal” for foster parents to access after training. A council member suggested posting information or a link on the VTC to update information and resources, not only for foster parents to access, but to give adoptive parents access to training. Veronica offered her email Veronica.Sanchez2@illinois.gov for any concerns, recommendations or comments.

National Training & Development Committee Update

Christine Feldman

The National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) is now in year three of the federal grant. Illinois is one of eight sites that have been selected to pilot this state-of-the-art training program to prepare foster and adoptive parents to effectively parent children exposed to trauma and to provide these families with ongoing skill development needed to understand and promote healthy child development. Spaulding for Children is the recipient of this grant and is in partnership with Dr. Bruce Perry and the Child Trauma Academy, the Center for Adoption Support and Education, the North American Council on Adoptable Children, the National Council for Adoption, and the University of Washington, which is the evaluator. At the end of the grant, September 2022, Illinois will have access to a free, comprehensive and thoroughly evaluated curriculum that can be used to prepare, train and develop foster and adoptive parents. They have been working closely with DCFS Caregiver Support and DCFS Training to plan the staff training and the implementation of this pilot in the Northern Region and Cook Central, and the comparison area in the Central Region. They just held the Train the Trainers. Melinda Lis and Leslie Cohen from Spaulding flew into Illinois to train our PRIDE trainers on the NTDC so that they can train this curriculum in the pilot areas. Christine reported that Melinda and Leslie were very impressed with the knowledge and skills of our trainers. Part of the training evaluation is surveying the prospective foster/adoptive parents who take the NTDC training in the pilot areas and also the prospective foster/adoptive parents who take PRIDE training in the Central Region. The purpose of the evaluation is to put together all the best training ideas from all the sites into one comprehensive training that will be available to all states. They plan to offer the NTDC training beginning in April 2020 to prospective foster/adoptive parents in the Northern Region and Cook Central. This training has been developed to provide “content layered learning” which includes self-assessment before and after the training, classroom-based training which has podcasts, video clips, articles, discussion, and tools on 19 foundational themes, and right time training where parents can avail themselves of information on 15 different themes at a time when they need the information. Christine noted that they are excited to be presenting the NTDC to our Illinois parents and will keep us updated on the progress of this project.

Office of Caregiver and Parent Support

Michelle Grove

Michelle reported that there is a statewide Foster Parent Support Specialist Program that offers support to all DCFS licensed foster parents and to some POS foster parents. There are currently 31 Support Specialists, and the program is not fully staffed. Southern region has a huge need, as there are four vacancies. Each Support Specialist has an onboarding training, mentoring and a matrix supervision and support is available for the staff. The staff have quarterly meetings and they are training in topics such as Mental Health First Aid, coping and supports, and topics that include Trust-Based Relational Interventions. There is a TOT in Texas this spring and Michelle and some coworkers will be attending to allow additional trainings statewide. She and her office will be working with Kathleen Bush at Baby fold to support and provide this training to all FPSS staff. The training is broken into four groups over four days including overview, connection, empowerment, and correction. They will also be working with the NTDC group to have staff trained Teen core and other evidence-based practices. The work on an FY'21 schedule has been drafted. There are applications coming into the Office of Caregiver and Parent Support to fill the vacant spots on both councils. Council members must be approved by the Director along with filling certain criteria to be a member (set by legislative action and must be changed through legislation for SWFCAC members). The process of and the need to have confirmation of attendance for lodging and catering was discussed along with the use of each council's respective email box.

Lunch Break

SWFCAC Breakout

Approval of the February 21, 2020 Minutes

Kate Monte motioned to approve the February 21, 2020 minutes. Samella Taylor-Lewis seconded, and the motion carried.

Final Report to the Director

There were no final reports to the Director. The monthly Director's Report was submitted as required by law.

906 Processing / CAPU

Corey Weigand, Cynthia Hodges

Corey noted that this was his first time to present at a council meeting. He addressed the activities that his unit is responsible for, noting that the Central Payment Unit was established in 1995 when there were changes to home of relative. When he started working there, they had nine reimbursement staff for 35,000 children. There are now four people who cover payment as well as answering the phone calls and doing the day to day work. There are nine staff in central. The major work is processing the board payments, reimbursing foster parents. They run board process twice a month. The information is sent to the Comptroller's office, mailed out or sent for direct deposit. It is expedited at the Comptroller's office vs. a manual billing process. They process about 20 thousand a night. They get weekly reports from licensing and CAPU each week.

There is an additional step for spec homes. For every spec foster parent entry, they must contact the caseworker if it is a home of relative or something else. They have to know specific things before they can approve, which may cause a delay. If it does not match what is on the 906, they have to follow up. There have been some 906's in question. Sometimes the private agency will pay the foster home. They must bill under the contract to show that they served the youth the prior month. If they don't bill properly, 200-300 may be wrong each month. If it is not corrected, each month will build up with no payment until it is fixed. Due to delays from staff shortages, sickness, etc. they are about 3 weeks behind. This is in addition to communication going back and forth. They are looking at overtime to get reports caught up. Staff are being asked to refrain from taking off during this period to concentrate on the back log. They can take some of the transitions and prioritize them to get payment out the door. The ones for tracking, they can do later. They know they are behind but are trying. For back payments, they will ask the worker for the money they are getting. They do not pass it to the next foster home. Once the correct 906 gets entered, they start paying the foster parent. They will get the money from the first foster parent, but DCFS cannot process this. By cashing the check, it can be garnished.

Krista Bergschneider is the collection worker. She can verify the current amount. Before you send a check in, see what the balance is. Bed holds staff do them once a week. Workers call the hotlines for payments, but they cannot get through. Corey said to contact the worker and the CPU unit or him. Contact Corey at Corey.Weigand@illinois.gov

Cynthia Hodges discussed the next steps to get the payments. Staff are responsible for data entering 906's Payment Authorization Forms. This is a small unit, but an essential piece toward permanency. It is vital for tracking. Additionally, they open and assign cases, transfer cases from agency to agency, and update legal. They update legal and data record 906s, which are payment forms. Her unit impacts and is responsible for data entry. They record the history. They record all child movements. They are responsible for recording the legal needs, such as a child needing a passport. They are responsible for

ensuring that the legal history is updated. This unit processes 906's and they have 48 hours to process those requests. Currently, the unit is short-staffed.

DISCUSSION:

Q: The foster parent's 906 is not back dated when they take the children. A: Cynthia stated that the date payment is initiated should be the date the child was placed in the home. The date on the 906 has to correspond with the date that custody was granted. If the 906 has a different date, the worker needs to correct the date. DCP fills out the first 906. If it is assigned to the private agency, the agency updates the form assigning their agency. Every date must be established to show where the child was and/or is located. DCFS has to know where the child is at all times.

Q: Why are the foster parents accepting the child without a 906? A: Sometimes the foster parents do not understand they need this. In order to protect themselves as a foster parent, something should be signed.

Q: Why are there payment issues with the 906? A: The kids are in the home up to three weeks before a payment is processed. The unit cannot create a service record without the paperwork. The lag time is 48 hours to send the paperwork to the unit after custody has been taken. Electronic 906's are sent to a dedicated 906 mailbox, dcfs.cpudcfsmailbox@illinois.gov. There is also a toll-free number. Self-selected payments and adoptive ready homes are processed by the Central Payment Unit. A lot of those are handled among the other 906 entries that are sent to CAPU. They get mixed in and they go back to the caseworker if there is a problem or sent to Central Payment Unit for processing.

Q: What are the parents supposed to do when the worker shows up without a 906? A: Something should be said to bring the 906. This is your proof of what you have.

Q: Home of relatives are not getting anything. They may not get what they need. How can we hold staff accountable? The investigator accountable? The foster parents are not aware of this, especially the first time around. A: One of the groups to advocate for foster parents is the advocacy office at DCFS. Cory gets called all the time and is taken to task when something is not going correctly. Call the Advocacy Office.

The council recommended that this information should go in the newsletter. DCP administration would have some language and could improve this.

Foster Parent Implementation Plan Scores

Rachel Hoyt

Rachel reported the scores and the council approved them.

Grievance Procedure Update

The council will continue to work on reviewing Foster Parent Law grievance procedures from DCFS and private agencies. They will discuss and make recommendations at the April meeting.

MOTION: *Stephanie Tesreau made the motion to adjourn. Maya Maclin seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 2:31 pm.*