



Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

MEETING MINUTES
June 4th, 2021
WebEx videoconference
9:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

AAC Members Present	AAC Members Absent	Guests	DCFS Staff
Mary Kay Collins	Natalie Miller	Christine Feldman	Jason Cummins
Katie Friend	Maripat Oliver	Gabriel Foley	Gwenn Eyer
Keely Giles	Shirley Padera	Gayla Webster	Sylvia Fonseca
Beth Hunter	Danielle Sanders		Kelly King
Laurel Meade	Karen Wardlaw		
Alex Montgomery	Jeremy Wheeler		
Elizabeth Richmond	Danny Tolliver		
Cara Siebert			
Crystal Rekart			
Karen Taylor			
Amy Trotter			
Mark Werner			
Wheeler			
Julie Yelverton			

Welcome and Introductions

Elizabeth Richmond / Mark Werner

Elizabeth Richmond called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. She noted that this is her last council meeting as chair. She and Mark both stated that they will still be around to provide support as needed. Jason Cummins conducted a voice roll call.

Approval of February 5th, 2021 Minutes

Council

Motion was made by Mark Werner to approve the February 5th, 20201 minutes. Katie Friend seconded the motion. The motion to accept the meetings passed unanimously.

Approval of April 23rd, 2021 Minutes

Council

Motion was made by Keely Giles to approve the April 23rd, 20201 minutes. Katie Friend seconded the motion. The motion to accept the meetings passed unanimously.

Quality Improvement Center/National Training Development Committee

Christine Feldman

Christine listed the accomplishments over the past seven year. She recognized the contributions of the council and members during the last seven years. She listed the following benefits from the collaboration:

- Implemented the TARGET intervention showing the range of adoption/guardianship supports. It was piloted in Cook and Central regions. They determined that it was too expensive to scale TARGET in Illinois, and developed the Smart Start program, including toolboxes.
- They renewed the Adoption Support phone line and developed the Path Beyond Adoption website.
- They filmed four videos demonstrating post adoption concerns, services, and supports. Spanish subtitles are available.
- They filmed a web-based training called Caring and Sharing that is available on the virtual training center. This training is targeted to teachers and health care providers.
- Committees including council members wrote an Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP) Program Manual, with Sylvia Fonseca and Kelly King's valued oversight. The template from that will be beneficial to DCFS.
- Obtained a grant for Core Teen grant to provide training to foster and adoptive parents for children with behavioral and emotional concerns. They have trained 40 Foster Parent Support Specialists and 40 adoption support specialist staff.
- They held a series of Path Beyond Adoption workshops.

Office of Caregiver and Parent Support Update

Michelle Grove

Michelle echoed the accomplishments of the council with the leadership of Elizabeth and Mark. Also recognized the years of service that both Mark and Elizabeth have given. The council will celebrate their service and accomplishment in November when an in-person celebration can occur.

The schedule will be sent to the council members for review. IAAC will still meet jointly with SWFCAC for a couple of meetings. She stated that a change is that we will use the same meeting site for a couple of other meetings, planning for councils to join together for lunch.

Adoption Guardianship Support Specialist (AGSS) application will be sent out to council members. Michelle's staff will be looking to hire one lead with four specialist. Interviews will be set up this month. There will be 2 in Central Region and 2 in Cook Region. Michelle requested that the applications be sent back to the IAAC mailbox or call Michelle. Mark requested to also include the job posting to the council. Michelle clarified it is a contractual position part-time/full-time and will not be DCFS posted. The job responsibilities will be sent with the application. Gwenn Eyer read the proposed responsibilities:

- High School Diploma or GED
- Must have knowledge of child welfare adoptions, impact of abuse and neglect and/or dependency, and issues that are specifically related to adoption and guardianship, such as trauma, grief, loss, separation and attachment, and the youth's developmental needs as they change and resurface over time.
- Must never have been indicated in an abuse or neglect report. CANTS and sex offender registry checks are to be completed prior to any contract being written or approved. A full background check, including fingerprinting, must be completed prior to any contract being written or approved.
- Must be/have been licensed as a foster parent and have legally completed an adoption or guardianship at least one year prior to hire by DCFS, exhibiting a stable/successful placement. Exceptions to licensure may be made upon approval of program administrator/monitor.

The program will start initially in Central and Cook due to the numbers of adoptive and guardianship home. The program is modeled off the Foster Parent Support Specialist program. Mark thanked Michelle for her advocacy of the Adoption/Guardianship Support Specialist program.

**Statewide Adoption Update
Post Adoption Phone Line Update
Transcultural Adoptions Update**

Sylvia Fonseca/Kelly King

Sylvia Fonseca indicated that much of information has been covered by Christine in her report. The adoption unit is gearing up to move the children into permanency and guardianship is an area of focus. Putting numerous programs in place. The phone bank is still waiting the status of the updates for improvement. Recently hired a clerical position to help provide the needed service to the phone bank. There is movement to get these positions filled. Additional staff in the Adoption Unit will help permanency staff move the children to permanency and looking to provide services to the private sector also.

Kelly King provided stats in regards to phone line. Kelly indicated the numbers are not correct due the lack of staff. Since 2018, there were 2,600 calls. The post adoption worker/staff are now utilizing this more. The numbers should increase with the addition of the new staff. Sylvia noted that the staff are bilingual which will help service this population.

Sylvia also reminded everyone that now is the time to get into state government as there are plenty of jobs opening throughout all divisions.

Sylvia answered a question regarding the length of time to permanency. Sylvia indicated the goal is 120 days- from the time it enters the Adoption Shop. Sylvia stated on average it is below 120 days. Sylvia stated prior to her arrival it was 526 and it is now under 120. Sylvia indicated that these numbers do not include the delays experienced to COVID.

Kelly indicated that Bob Blackwell recently retired and Dagen Brown is the new administrator. Pre-adoption and Post adoption are working with Adoption Support and Preservation agencies to incorporate transcultural adoptions. Looking at outcomes regarding these transcultural adoptions. Working with Christine and Stephanie to help address services to these families.

Adoption Photo Listing for Illinois Update

Katie Friend

Going well with the Adoption listing. There are on average 5 to 6 referrals per month from both the private agencies and DCFS. One issue is obtaining the home assessment, but this is being addressed. There are still numerous questions from parents about becoming licensed foster parents. Exploring issues on the areas where families might experience delays in the foster parent licensing process. Currently received about 150 -200 calls monthly regarding on how to become licensed foster parents. About the same number of calls for those wanting to be adoptive parents. Still have the hard gallery of photos. There were some difficulties due to restrictions of COVID. Did interview many youths virtually and that did eliminate some barriers if youths were nervous about in-person meeting.

There was a question if the number of referrals has increased due to involvement from ACR. Katie indicated she has not seen an increase in referrals. ACR staff are aware they should be including Katie in those referrals.

The policy is not being well utilized. It would be good to add this information to training and it might be possible for council members to promote it with foster parents who are unwilling/unable to adopt children in their home. Gabriel Foley, SYAB, noted that worker turnover is a heavy burden for youth to carry. He stressed that advocating for permanency in some way, with the common goal, helps everyone. The mental stresses caused by delayed permanency is a big challenge for youth. Sylvia suggested joining with the SWFCAC to address this issue. Elizabeth reported that CWAC has identified the issue re: getting answers to council recommendations for change. They have developed a new standard for submitting concerns to administration.

Foster Parent Handbook Update

Elizabeth Richmond

Trying to do an overhaul of the FP handbook. Been a long time since the revision. Elizabeth Richmond will set up a workgroup to do the work on Chapter 7.

Committee reports

Membership Committee

Mark Werner

Mark indicated there are four adoptive parent positions that are open: 1 at-large statewide; 2 from Cook county; 1 Southern region

One professional candidate opening, and no adult adoptee positions

Mark requested that all candidates apply even if positions are not open. They will be kept on file. Michelle also indicated that these positions will be posted in the Foster Parent newsletter.

Data Committee

Julie Yelverton

Julie indicated they have not received any data so there is no update. Kelly indicated she must ask for data and received limited information regarding this. Julie asked about the barriers from the legislature. Kelly indicated she continues to receive no response. Kelly sends regular emails.

Permanency Committee Update

Alex Montgomery

Alex Montgomery reported that Gwenn Eyer is working to set up a meeting with representatives from the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council to establish a joint workgroup.

Bylaw Committee/Bylaw Approval

Mark Werner

Changes to bylaw:

The elimination of appointed co-chair positions, moving them to membership election

Elimination of the National Adoption Committee position since it no longer exists.

Co-chairs are elected to a two-year term with alternating years. There can only be one co-chair from the following positions/never two from the same position: adoptive parent, adult adoptee, or professional staff.

Clarified language similar to the SWFCAC-workgroups and committees. Committees are internal. Workgroups have outside members.

Also added virtual meetings as a means to conduct a meeting.

Motion was made by Alex Montgomery to approve the revised bylaws. Katie Friend seconded the motion. The motion to accept the revised bylaws passed unanimously.

Nomination Committee/Election of Officers

Mark Werner

Two candidates from the Nomination committee were presented by Amy Trotter. These were previously reviewed by the nomination committee. The two members willing to accept the nominations of co-chair were Keely Giles and Katie Friend. Nominations were opened to the floor. There were no other nominations.

Mark suggested that since there were only two candidates for the two co-chairs positions that the slate of Keely Giles and Katie Friend be presented for election to the co-chairs.

Laurel Meade made a motion that Keeley Giles and Katie Friend slate for the position of co-chairs be accepted by affirmation. Beth Hunter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by vote.

According to the revised bylaws, since this was the first election of co-chairs that a coin flip would decide who would serve a one-year term or two-year term. However, Katie Friend indicated that she accepts the one-year term if Keely Giles would accept the two-year term. There was an agreement between Keely Giles and Katie Friend to accept this. Keely Giles' term will end June 30, 2020 and Katie Friend's term as co-chair will end June 30, 2022. This is effective July 1st, 2021.

Stakeholder Comments

- Mark Werner noted that thanks to Karen Taylor's connection with the Elks, IAAC has committed \$500 to the 2021 Adoption Celebration. Greenlight has agreed to be the fiscal agent for funds received by the council.
- Karen Taylor asked Kelly King to follow up on the two-hour training credit for ASAP providers.
- Elizabeth mention there was a 3% COLA increase for foster parents.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Next agenda times

Discussion of Rapid interaction with Director's office- SPICE process.

Adoption readiness curriculum

QIC update

Budget update

Adoption month in November

Adjournment

Mary Kay Collins made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Karen Taylor seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: July 9th, 2021
Location/Type: WebEx videoconference