

**Meeting of the  
Illinois Adoption Advisory Council  
Friday, June 5, 2020  
Conference Call  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Conference Call: Dial: 888-494-4032 Passcode: 953-069-6277#  
APPROVED MINUTES**

IAAC Members Present	IAAC Members Absent	Guests	DCFS Staff
Kathleen Bush	Laurel Meade	Shawnte Alexander	Jason Cummins
Keely Giles	Maripat Oliver	Christine Feldman	Jamie Dornfeld
Beth Hunter	Crystal Rekart	Katie Friend	Dee Eastep
Natalie Miller	Danny Tolliver, Jr.	Christine Herman	Gwenn Eyer
Elizabeth Richmond	Jeremy Wheeler	Rachel Hoyt	Jen Florent
Danielle Sanders	Linda White		Stefanie Polacheck
Cara Siebert			Gayla Webster
Brittany Sprouse			
Karen Taylor			
Amy Trotter			
Karen Wardlaw			
Mark Werner			
Julie Yelverton			

**Welcome and Roll Call**

IAAC Chairperson Elizabeth Richmond welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Staff and guests introduced themselves as they come on the call.

**Approval of April 17, 2020 IAAC Meeting Minutes - Council**

***MOTION:** Karen Wardlaw made the motion to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2020 IAAC meeting. Danielle Sanders seconded, and the motion carried.*

**Quality Improvement Center/National Training Development Committee      Christine Feldman**

Christine QIC-AG extension grant – they continue to work with the ASAP providers to develop a standardized manual to be used by all agencies. This includes all the historical information as well as program innovations. They continue to revitalize the Caring and Sharing one-hour training that is now part of the Adoption Conversion training, repurposing the recent videos and strengthening the training. They are building enhancements into the ASAP phone line this summer. Core Teen Training: they are enhancing a training about dealing with issues re: raising teens that have moderate to severe behavioral and emotional issues. This is a 14-hour training. They have a Train the Trainers and will also conduct a Train the Trainers for the ASAP providers. They will distribute the extensive manual throughout the state. Jason mentioned that Teen Core TOT will be held June 17 and 18.

NTDC was designed as an in-person training. Due to the COVID pandemic restrictions they have worked very hard to put together an alternative style training, a virtual training on Zoom. The issue they have is that it was to be evaluated using an in-person platform, so that is a barrier. The Children's Bureau is nearing a decision as to whether then can conduct the virtual training and have it evaluated. (Illinois is waiting for approval prior to releasing the training.)

### **Communication Update**

**Jen Florent**

Jen reported that she has continued to promote the Path Beyond Adoption phone line and web site across social media, with great response. Jen indicated they created and released 3 of 4 videos on social media addressing various issues. The fourth video will address school related issues due to COVID protocols. They continue to distribute information about COVID. They distributed a two-page newsletter last week for Foster Parent Month. The State Fair is still not scheduled to happen, but if there is a change they will invite foster families to participate.

### **Council Liaison Update**

**Stefanie Polacheck**

Stefanie reported she has changed positions with the Department. She accepted the position of Deputy Chief of Staff but is continuing her role as DCFS council liaison. Required trainings are now open for Sexual Harassment and Ethics. An email will go out about the Ethics training, soon. Brett Angelo's is now the DCFS Ethics Officer. She also stated that they are looking at the Open Meetings Act and how COVID has relaxed some of the requirements for open meetings, including the use of virtual meetings. Stefanie said that at the Department level they are working toward uniformity across the councils. They are revising Rule 428, ensuring that all councils have up-to-date bylaws. She recommended that all areas are covered, noting that they will review council bylaws, ensuring that term-limits are in writing for members and officers, etc. DCFS administration is also looking at councils to include a diverse membership group.

### **Greenlight Family Service**

**Maria Nanos**

Katie Friend reported that Maria apologized for a last-minute conflict, and she reported in Maria's absence. They have changed the name from Center for Law and Social Work on May 1, 2020. Despite everything that is going on, they continue to provide the adoption listing service, post-adoption services, etc. Services that were previously provided through the Center are now provided through Greenlight. LaShay Gibson replaced Danielle. The phone number remains the same, 773-728-7800. They service families throughout the state. A council members asked about Educational advocacy resources for families that have started home-schooling during the COVID outbreak.

### **Membership/Recruitment**

**Mark Werner**

Mark reported three vacancies in Cook for adoptive parents, two vacancies at large for adoptive parents, two professional slots will open. All adoptee positions are filled. They are looking for people who are willing to be active attending meetings and who will contribute to the council.

### **Adoption Support and Preservation update Trotter/ Cara Siebert**

**Kathleen Bush/Amy**

Kathleen reported that Babyfold is utilizing internet platforms, moving toward Zoom since it is easy for clients to access. The host several groups, including a new single parent support group. Support groups have been an effort for Babyfold for a while, with some clients three hours away.

The virtual connection to supplement in-home services will continue after the pandemic. They are covering issues, i.e. George Floyd, safety of their clients, and social justice issues. They're connecting them to podcasts, books and other resources, including membership in NAACP. They've been hiring and training new staff in areas, including ARC to foster resilience through Attachment Self-Regulation and Conflict Skills. Many will engage in the Core Teen TOT. When they meet in-person they will use safety standards like masks, etc., for client protection. Their main goal is to support families, meeting their needs.

Amy reported that Holt is using a lot of tele-health services. They will conduct caregiver training via Zoom. They have ordered protective shields, etc. for use in the office.

Cara reported that Metro Family Services encourages clients to use Zoom, supplementing with phone contact, as needed. They are reaching out into extended areas and can offer groups at various times, perhaps offering a weekend group. They have had an intake drop-off. They are starting to see it pick up again, and the outreach team is utilizing open houses, reconnecting with foster care agencies, distribution information at food banks, etc. Some clients have dropped just due to the pressure from the COVID situation. They recently purchased a Go Zen app that will help address anxiety through mindfulness. They are starting a transracial adoption group for parents and look forward to growing that out. Although it needs to remain a small group, they are looking at ways to open that group to others around the state.

Elizabeth reported that Linda White submitted the following written report.

They are still working remotely through June at Children's Home & Aid, and staff are doing a tremendous job providing services by video. This includes new and existing families. We are starting an open group format to teach parents TBRI. This will happen during June, and we may offer it moving forward if it goes well. We are also providing families with much needed items during this pandemic crisis: groceries, PPE, hygiene items, cleaning supplies, and recreational activities at home while sheltering in place. We are not only helping families process any current adoption dynamics but also the impact of the pandemic. Our staff are also giving families/children the opportunity to talk about how they are feeling about the death of George Floyd and the impact on our communities. We have families living in the midst of potentially harmful areas and want to do everything that we can to reassure them during this time.

Concern was expressed about the risk of continuing with virtual contact. Parents who participate virtually often have children in the home who might overhear confidential and personal and emotional statements.

### **YouthCare Managed Care Service Update Dornfeld/Rachel Hoyt**

**Shawnte Alexander/Jamie**

Kishonna Long, HFS, account manager monitoring the overall implementation of YouthCare. Shawnte, VP of YouthCare, reported that they are trying their hardest in care coordination, promoting tele-health, receiving impact summaries to identify success and needs to additional support. There is no difference in reimbursement for providing tele-health vs. in-person. Care coordinators are contacting families to be sure that they have access to pharmacies and medications, ensuring members have access to services and supports needed. They work with

different transportation services to get medications delivered so there is no gap in care. New YouthCare membership cards will be issued.

Shawnte addressed issues raised in the last meeting:

- Gym membership benefits use Fitness Coach.com to search gyms that are available
- School uniforms
- Boys and Girls Clubs provide after-school program support
- These are basically discounted “added services” rather than full benefits as readers might assume through reading the membership booklet. They will go back and look at messaging and perhaps send out clarification.

Rachel Hoyt is the Adoption Supervisor. A to A, Adolescent to Adult program, doing more self-direction, self-care, identifying their own resources to take ownership of their own health care. The program helps them find resources within their own community and via calling YouthCare and a targeted approach to identifying their needs as they make the transition to adulthood. Care coordination is an optional benefit offered since the youth population served is at risk, offering a preventative approach rather than waiting for a crisis to provide support. This program will be used for both adoptees and foster youth, starting at age 17-1/2. YouthCare connects them to governmental programs, including cell phone access. They will reach out to the adopted youth and those moving toward adult guardianship. Domains include education and employment, housing and finances, sexual identity, medical and mental health, including depression, self-harm, rate of hospitalization, safe sex practices, etc.

The adoption team is moving that the initial 90-days used to complete the health risk screenings, etc. They are working on some targeted initiatives. They are making referrals for online adoptive parent support groups via The Attached Network, offering support group conference calls hosted by foster and adoptive parents. Parents may self-register. Confidentiality is ensured. Calls are scheduled twice a month with a monthly topic and they cater to issues at hand as people call in. The IL YouthCare website offers available online trainings.

YouthCare is contracted with the Boys and Girls Club and will connect the member with local resources. Rachel stated that this is still a developing benefit and they currently refer inquiries to member services rather than to the care coordinator. There are financial limits to after school care and children will not be covered full time. They will consider options to expand some of the added benefits moving forward, i.e., downstate providers.

Adoptive family council members were asked to go through their care coordinators to test out the YouthCare provisions, how things work, and the effectiveness and efficiency of this program, reporting back in July.

There are concerns re: the name change to Youth Care May 1, 2020, and council members are finding conflicting information from providers re: the program name. The name needs to be standardized to prevent questions and prevent the denial of services. YouthCare sent out name/brand notices to providers and they continue to resolve issues as they arise. Christine Herman said that HFS is working on programming to resolve this, as well.

Council members should have the opportunity to review and give input into the messaging that goes out.

Concerns were expressed about adopted children assigned to Medicaid while choosing to use private insurance. They will send specifics to Elizabeth who will forward to Christine.

### **Adoption Month Celebration**

**Karen Wardlaw**

Karen asked for feedback regarding the theme, noting that we are all connected. She reported that there will be more limited funding this year. Reach a little higher for the visibility and include the kids. Jen noted that social media posts were well received and they had a lot of solid media coverage on the press release. Karen will do a conference call with the planning committee prior to the next meeting. Mark Werner, Karen Taylor, Beth Hunter, Katie Friend, Karen Wardlaw, chair. Karen will

### **Stakeholder Comments**

- Elizabeth Richmond recommended that the council conduct meetings via WebEx until the council may meet again in person.
- Julie Yelverton reported that there is a private Facebook group to share posts for IAAC members. This will be changed to an open group, with the understanding that there is likely to be a way to make it an open group and moderate posts and comments. Staff council members are restricted from participation.
- Jason Cummins reported that Michelle Grove's father passed away early in the week. She will be out of the office for a few days. Mark is going to coordinate council support for Michelle.
- Stefanie Polacheck discussed return to workplace planning. DCFS is following CMS and advising POS re: planning for return to the workplace. They are discussion who needs to return to the office environment to perform the job, they want to ensure that they have adequate protections for staff and families entering the offices. If staff can fully do their jobs remotely, the expectation is that this will continue indefinitely. Guidance around in-person family visits should be out within the next several days.

### **Public Comments**

None

**11:30 am      Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:**            **July 10th, 2020**    Location/Type: WebEx/Teleconference

### **Agenda Items:**

Report from the Statewide Adoption Administrator, Update on adoption numbers

DCFS report about staff return to the workplace

Budget update – State of the Illinois budget and DCFS budget

Greenlight Family Services – Educational advocacy in the home-school environment

YouthCare - council member reports on access and use of YouthCare resources

QIC update from Christine Feldman

National Training Committee Update

Communications update

Core Teen update

ASAP program meeting cultural needs of clients

Caring for children and maintaining privacy/confidentiality in support groups, training, etc.

Cara Siebert - Strategies for confidentiality in virtual training and support groups and offering hybrid options.