

**Illinois Adoption Advisory Council
Approved Minutes
Friday, September 6, 2019
Crowne Plaza Lombard Downers Grove, 1250 Roosevelt Rd. Glen Ellyn, IL
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

AAC Members Present	AAC Members Absent	Guests	DCFS Staff
Kathleen Bush	Beth Hunter	Lamont Boswell	Janet Ahern
Alice Couch	Crystal Rekart	Tiffany Desroches	Julie Barbosa
Keely Giles	Keisha Robinson	Glenn Eyer	Kathy Berry
Natalie Miller	Danielle Sanders	Christine Feldman	Barbara Crandall
Maripat Oliver	Brittney Sprouse	Linda Fiore	Gwenn Eyer
Elizabeth Richmond	Danny Tolliver, Jr.	Katie Friend	Jen Florent
Cara Siebert	Jeremy Wheeler	Rachel Hoyt	Sylvia Fonseca
Karen Taylor		Bernita Johnson	Michelle Grove
Amy Trotter		Elizabeth Kepler	Meaghan Jorgensen
Karen Wardlaw		Kathryn Marker	Norma Machay
Mark Werner		Laura Molina	Stefanie Polacheck
Linda White		Nancy Rolock	
Julie Yelverton		Dawn Saphir	
		Jen Walbridge	
		Pam Winsel	

Welcome and Introductions –Mark Werner

Mark welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members and guests to introduce themselves.

Approval of July 26, 2019 IAAC Meeting Minutes Council

Motion: Karen Wardlaw made the motion to accept the minutes. Maripat Oliver seconded and the motion carried.

Welcome from the Northern Region Kathy Berry

Kathy Berry, Area Administrator, welcomed the council to the Northern Region. She noted that Robert Schmink is acting RA in Northern right now.

Statewide Adoption Update Sylvia Fonseca

Sylvia thanked other stakeholders for their support in the eight regional workshop presentations. They conducted PATH Beyond Adoption workshops for these staff in all the regions. Workshops were well publicized, and many attended, including some Adoption Advisory Council members. Sylvia recognized the agencies that hosted and noted that a lot of work went into the workshops. She also reported that they are still working on the items required in recent legislation including adoption support stickers and magnets.

Legislative Report

Meaghan Jorgensen

Meaghan introduced herself to the council. She is an attorney with a legislative background and noted that she was adopted as a child. She reported that everything that was presented to the council in the prior meeting has been signed by the Governor. A council member asked about Illinois State Board of Education guidelines that indicate that all adopted children with Medicaid coverage should have school fees paid. Meaghan will follow up. She will also follow up on a question about substance abuse information being distributed in the stickers/magnets required in current legislation and another about the use of the term “guardianship” in the bill to determine if it refers only to subsidized guardianship.

Adoption Celebration

This year’s goal is to make adoption very visible, remove the stigma, and normalize adoption indicating that it is about the whole family. Karen has ordered the wrist bands that read “Adoption, What’s Your Connection?” The council will offer a descriptive kit to promote normalizing adoption for adoptive parents, adoptees, therapists, educators, etc. Jen Florent and DCFS Communications will use social media to promote the project. Staff may consider offering local Embracing Adoption Resource Fairs.

Council Member Reimbursement

Gwenn Eyer

Council members are encouraged to turn in completed travel forms as soon as possible. A folder will be sent around at the end of each meeting to collect important materials. The Office of Caregiver and Parent Support is committed to submitting completed travel forms within seven days of each council meeting.

QIC AG Update

Christine Feldman

Christine Feldman, the Illinois Site Implementation Manager for the QIC-AG (National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption & Guardianship Support and Preservation) federal grant and Nancy Rolock, PH.D., one of the Evaluators for the grant, made a presentation to the council which reviewed the highlights of the 5-year grant in Illinois. The grant is ending September 29, 2019. A special note of thanks was made to the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, as well as DCFS administrators Cynthia Richter-Jackson who had oversight of this grant in Illinois, Jennifer Marett who contributed invaluable support to the TARGET project and Sylvia Fonseca and Kelly King, who have supported the work to make it sustainable. The QIC-AG team for Illinois also included Stephanie Hodge-Wolfe, the site consultant from Spaulding for Children, who was not available to attend this meeting.

The first part of their presentation covered the overall purpose of the grant which was to implement and evaluate an intervention for its effectiveness in supporting permanency for adoptive/guardianship families. Topics included a summary of the work that went into the selection of the intervention to be implemented and evaluated, a description of the intervention, TARGET (Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy), a description of the outreach and recruitment of families for the project, information about the TARGET experience itself, and what they learned from families from this project. Additional speakers included Jennifer Walbridge, a TARGET outreach coordinator and facilitator for the Central Region from the Baby Fold, Tiffany Desroches, a TARGET outreach coordinator for Cook from Metropolitan Family Services, Laura Molina, supervisor of TARGET facilitators at Catholic Charities, and

they also heard from IAAC members Kathleen Bush and Cara Siebert as to the experiences of their respective staff. Throughout this presentation, it was noted that the continuing advice and support of the IAAC was instrumental in making this project progress well.

After Christine's introduction of the TARGET project, Nancy Rolock reported about the initial findings of the evaluation. Some promising results included reduction of school-based behavioral issues as a result of participation in TARGET sessions. It was noted that more time is needed to look at long term benefits of TARGET.

After the evaluation portion of the agenda, Christine acknowledged the other accomplishments of the QIC-AG project here in Illinois, also due to the involvement of the IAAC. An important part of this grant was the development of the Strategic Communication Plan: Connecting Families after Adoption or Guardianship, including the PATH Beyond Adoption Website; the Adoption/Guardianship Support Line; the Caring and Sharing training video and Connections to Count On training video, both on the VTC; short videos currently in development for the PATH Beyond Adoption Website; the PATH Beyond Adoption business cards and the SMART Start Flyer. It was noted that all these activities will help DCFS comply with the requirements of HB3587, effective 1/1/2020. Special thanks were given to Jen Florent of Communications and Karen Taylor of Training for their assistance with the communications and training aspects of the grant.

Finally, the sustainability of the work of this grant was discussed. TARGET continues to be offered in Central Region and Cook. Instead of scaling TARGET for statewide use by the Adoption/Guardianship Support and Preservation programs, they introduced START, a new approach for offering services early to adoptive/guardianship families. Kathleen Bush, one of the creators of the START (Start early; Trauma-informed; Attachment-focused; Resiliency-building) approach, presented on its components, purposes, implementation, and value. START workshops were held in all regions for ASAP (Adoption Support and Preservation) and DCFS staff. They held PATH Beyond Adoption workshops for these staff in all the regions.

Christine stated that the underlying premise of this grant in Illinois is that discontinuity will be decreased if they connect families to services and supports early. Throughout this grant, they all have worked to promote prevention. Their message to families and professionals is beginning to be disseminated. They have established that seeking services early and at different developmental stages is normal, valuable, and a strength, and that Illinois has excellent services which are trauma-informed, adoption-competent, and easily accessible. She said that thanks to the inspired and steadfast guidance and support of the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, the activities of this grant will be sustained, and families will greatly benefit from this work.

Discussion

- Were there any differences in responses between relative and non-relative adoptions? They have not yet examined that detail, but they will examine the data.
- Are they examining the length of time a child was in the home prior to adoption, how many placements were they in prior to adoption, etc.? They will continue to look at data.
- Another angle to look at would be the faith-based families that have that as a support.

- What are the next steps? The project has ended, but Nancy will continue to analyze the outcome and work to understand it.

Mark Werner, co-chair, recognized Christine's work and contribution to the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council. He acknowledged and commended the sustainability of the grant. Christine reflected on the council's support throughout the life of the grant.

Christine announced that Illinois was selected for the National Training and Development Curriculum grant, also through Spaulding. This grant addresses the continuum and will develop a new state of the art curriculum like PRIDE. Foster and adoptive parents will be trained together during in-person core training, with support activities provided.

MOTION: Maripat Oliver made the motion to recommend that IAAC be considered as a state grant stakeholder for the NTDC grant. Julie Yelverton seconded, and the motion carried.

Managed Care Organization

Lamont Boswell

The HealthChoice Illinois YouthCare initiative will offer enhanced support for Illinois foster and adopted youth, including the following:

- Specialized staff - Adoption Advocates/Specialists available to discuss family needs
- Trauma trained adoptive parent facilitated support calls
- Training and education on the path to adoption, and after
- Partnership with the council and other adoption-focused organizations
- Establishment of an adoption-competent network of therapists to support the different phases of adoption and child development.
- Value added benefits such as school uniforms and after school programs
- Expanded vision and dental benefits

The DCFS program has a dedicated phone line with dedicated call center staff. They will have a Rapid Response Team with core providers who can answer questions about benefits, etc. Adopted children and youth will have a dedicated care coordinator. Substance abuse resources will be covered. Illini Care will pay the bill for Medicaid covered services. The HFS representative stated that there are certain services that are not currently covered under Medicaid services and will be billed a different way. If not paid by Medicaid, DCFS will continue to fund under retained services.

They are actively recruiting providers and resources. Registered providers may elect to only serve youth in care and parents are encouraged to forward referrals and Illini Care will follow up and reach out to them. Another added benefit is providing practice visits to the dentist. They are trying to streamline access for youth coming into care. They will assign cases based on the level of care required. The dedicated line for youth in care will be live in November. Call 866-329-4701 to let them know that you have a provider that is interested in a contract, plus recommendations for providers. They asked for participants on their focus group and stakeholder committee.

State Guardian Report

Janet Ahern

They are working on celebrations for Adoption Day. They will not utilize the Children's Museum of Chicago this year. They are looking to Rockford for the Adoption Celebration. They held an event at Sox Park from the National Toy Foundation to distribute 7,000 toys to youth in care. Some of these toys may be used at adoption celebrations. Families may opt out of immunizations for medical reasons, per doctor's orders, and for religious reasons based on the completion of a specific religious exemption form. There will be a new policy guide issued. The parent holds the right. They are working with youth pre-citizenship. We do not want pre-adoptive parents to be discouraged from adoption by fees required to enable a youth to become a citizen.

There were no stakeholder comments or Public Comments

Karen Wardlaw made the motion to adjourn. Keely Giles seconded, and the motion carried.

NEXT MEETING: Friday, October 4, 2019, Crowne Plaza, Burr Ridge, Illinois.

Potential Agenda Items:

- Illini Care / Managed Care
- Org Chart update
- Follow up on mental health bill and Specialized Family Support bill / ICG
- SSI update for families interested in adopting youth who will be in SSI eligible group homes and adult living centers. It's priority for SSI kids in foster care, but once adopted they are in the general population.
- Family First