



Illinois Adoption Advisory Council
Serving Adoptive and Guardianship Families
Joint Meeting with Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
MINUTES
February 18, 2022 9:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.
WebEx videoconference

IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT	IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Mary Kay Collins	Maripat Oliver	Molly Berger	Stacy Craft
Katie Friend	Shirly Padera	Aneliya Kostova	Gwenn Eyer
Keely Giles	Danny Tolliver	Julie Yelverton	Sylvia Fonseca
Alex Montgomery	Karen Wardlaw		Michelle Grove
Crystal Rekart	Mark Werner		Kara Hamilton
Elizabeth Richmond			Kelly King
Danielle Sanders			Jen Marett
Cara Siebert			Gayla Webster
Brittany Sprouse			Kim Willis
Karen Taylor			
Amy Trotter			

Welcome/Introduction

Council members and staff logged on early to network. Keely Giles, IAAC chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and Katie Friend, co-chair, conducted an IAAC voice roll call. Present: Mary Kay Collins, Katie Friend, Keely Giles, Alex Montgomery, Crystal Rekart, Elizabeth Richmond, Danielle Sanders, Cara Siebert, Karen Taylor, Amy Trotter. Brittany Sprouse joined the meeting following the roll call.

Approval of January 14, 2022 Minutes

Council

MOTION: Alex Montgomery made the motion to approve the January 14, 2022 minutes. Mary Kay Collins seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously through roll call vote.

Vote for approval: Mary Kay Collins, Katie Friend, Keely Giles, Alex Montgomery, Crystal Rekart, Danielle Sanders, Amy Trotter, Karen Taylor. Opposed: none.

**Update from Office of Caregiver and Parent Support Michelle Grove,
 Associate Deputy Director**

Michelle introduced Kim Willis, the new administrator in the OCPS. Michelle then invited the council to join in the upcoming Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council meeting for Julie Barbosa’s presentation on the Illinois Progress and Services Report (APSR). The APSR is a five-year service plan developed in conjunction with the Children’s Bureau. The “stakeholder voice” is one component in the development and Michelle commended the council for the great work they have been doing, recognizing that their work needs to be included in the report. She invited the IAAC to join the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council meeting at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, February 25, for Julie’s presentation to the councils. Michelle noted that there may be opportunities for council members to participate in small groups working on this in conjunction with the state’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Michelle talked about the statewide council collaboration group. Michelle represents the IAAC,

SWFCAC, and the Birth Parent Council. Sylvia is co-chair of and represents the Adoption Registry - Confidential Intermediary Advisory Council. The joint council's goal is to break down the silos, share information, build relationships and work collaboratively. Michelle referenced their work on procedure part 428, reviewing the way boards and councils are conducted in Illinois. Michelle described the Asian American Council newsletter. We will send the newsletter to council members for their review.

Discussion:

- Do we need a separate council for guardianship families?
- The Adoption Advisory Council is designed to be inclusive of adoption and guardianship families.
- The Membership Committee has reached out to workers to request guardianship family recommendations, with no response.
- Sylvia Fonseca stated that the Department has moved in the direction that permanency is permanency so just putting guardianship in the tagline is not fully inclusive, and might show the implication of bias, including racial bias.
- It is good that guardianship is now gaining in importance within the Department and will be treated more equitably.
- IAAC committees have been working on ways to share information with guardianship families. The council can share with workers, but need strategies to ensure that we are engaging guardianship families.
- Staff messaging includes ongoing information about services available to guardianship families.
- The council will add the topic to the agenda for the next meeting to reconsider ways to engage guardianship families.

Statewide Adoption Update

Sylvia Fonseca/Kelly King

There is no new guardianship legislation. Our language in Illinois legislation is being updated to match federal standards. Adoption should now reflect guardianship and adoption outcomes. Language now fully reflects best interests of the child, family connectedness, extended relationships with the birth family, etc. rather than "rule-out" language. With guardianship, there is no need for termination of parental rights. It also takes the caregiver's perspective into consideration. They continue to hold quarterly staff meetings via WebEx. Council members have been involved in workgroups, and they are moving forward with recommendations. Sylvia enthusiastically welcomed Kelly back to work.

Adoption Center of Illinois Programs and Resources

Molly Berger

Adoption Community Connection offers a safe space for families to come together and share resources. These web pages include adoptive parent bio's, reading list recommendations, resources including mental health support, etc. These are designed to help adoptive parents recognize that they are not alone and help them stay connected to a network of other adoptive families. Their long-term goal is to offer sub-groups based on location. Sylvia noted that foster families need a clear directive re: posting photos of their children on the website to avoid predator activity. The only access is via direct invitation from Molly. Intake calls are used to screen families and others. It is a safe space. There is no space for families to free-write or share information. Molly acknowledged the need to remind foster parents about restrictions re: posting photos. Sylvia noted that the Department has strong support groups that are approved and asked about the vetting process for postings on this page. Molly follows up on all postings, checking out all credentials, etc. Molly said that their plan for expansion includes promotion through social media and adoption groups. They are focused on Illinois first, and their own agency, before going wide. We will distribute their flyer to council members.

Family First Services

Stacy Craft and Jen Marett

Stacy is the Continuous Quality Assurance Manager and Family First Manager. Her role is to help monitor things for the implementation support specialists located throughout the state. Jen runs the IPS and SASS programs with the Division of Clinical and Child Services. They have made connections with Post-Adopt, working with

providers who are implementing the five evidence-based interventions. Triple P is a parenting program designed to fit the needs of each individual family and supports parents or caregivers of children 6-12 years old. It's an in-home approach that includes support in the office. It typically includes 8-10 sessions over 4-5 months and gives caregivers a curriculum of treatment and a roadmap to address challenging behaviors.

The Nurturing Parent Program (NPP) is a parenting program. Parents receive support in the areas of parenting that are the most challenging for them to increase empathy, bonding and attachment with their child(ren) This program is used the most.

Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - This program is really focused on trauma that has occurred in a child's life. It focuses on helping each family member overcome the impact of traumatic events and manage trauma triggers, replacing negative thoughts with positive affirmations and improving problem-solving skills to promote a safe home environment and increase the child's sense of safety.

Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) is a trauma-informed, play-based therapy. It's designed to help parents address emotional and behavior problems in infancy and early childhood in the context of the child's primary attachment relationship(s). It supports children's healing from trauma and decreases the risk of developing emotional, behavior and attachment difficulties. It helps caregivers provide both physical and emotional safety for the child.

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) is a community based, family driven intensive therapy serving youth 12 – 17 years old. Families have access to in-home and community support. This program provides interventions for youth who are involved in the Juvenile Justice System, or are at high risk of becoming involved. This program brings in the community to provide additional supports. Therapists work with youth, caregivers and members of the youth's treatment team which may include school personnel, court services, vocations support and other supports. It coordinates well with Child & Family Teams.

There is no gatekeeper. Referrals are received if families are in the target population and providers are in their community. Staff may refer caregivers using the 507-referral form or the provider's form. Their role in Implementation Support is to support the connections. Jen noted that there are some challenges when dealing with the post-adoption /guardianship population. They designed this to assist a wide range of ages over vast geographic areas. Council members were invited to continue to request services.

Discussion:

- Is this a “preventative” program? Is the capacity there to share these services with new adoptive and guardianship families? Jen said that we need to be available throughout the continuum.
- How to parents access these services? Parents should go through the PATH site for referrals. The IAAC may share information with their networks.
- They would like to use a promotion like “Back to Sleep” to promote this program.

Council Mission and Vision Statements

Strategy Workgroup

The Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, in consultation and advisement with the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services dedicates itself to building, improving and sustaining quality adoption and guardianship services for children and families in the State of Illinois.

Value Statements

- Every adopted child or child in guardianship deserves access to resources and services to ensure safety, stability and well-being within their families.
- Every adoptive or guardianship parent deserves access to resources and services enabling them to provide the best lifelong care for the child they adopt or provide guardianship for.

- Every adoptive and guardianship family deserves a voice in adoption/ guardianship child welfare service delivery, policies, rules, guidelines, procedures and practices.

Council members are excited to have this new focus for work going forward. The council discussed proposed revisions including language around private adoptions and subsidized guardianship. This will go back to the Strategy Workgroup for revision and presentation at the next IAAC meeting.

Permanency Workgroup

Alex Montgomery

Alex reported that she will be setting up meetings with Sylvia and Kelly.

Bylaws Committee

Mark Werner

No current work is necessary now.

Legislative / Public Policy Committee

This committee did not meet and needs a chairperson due to Jeremy Wheeler's recent resignation.

Membership Committee

Karen Taylor

Karen reported that they have been following up on pending applications, interviewing applicants. The committee will meet one more time to discuss the applicants to make recommendations. There will still be open slots, even after engaging qualified applicants. We are looking for a diverse council representing children and families served throughout the state. Council members up for renewal should submit applications for consideration. New council members will be expected to be actively engaged in council meetings and actively participate on at least one council committee. Once positions are filled this committee will develop a recruitment plan and a sustainability plan. New council members filling incomplete membership slots will begin immediately after receiving their appointment letters.

Communication Workgroup

Elizabeth Richmond

Elizabeth reported that Annie Kostova has been doing some great work on the website, providing a refresh. They plan to change some of the tabs and make it easy to navigate. They have been working on a poster to share. They are developing a standardized elevator speech to share a brief introduction to the council. They are also looking at ways to add some color to the logo on the website. Elizabeth also noted that they are still looking for applicants for the Adoption Guardianship Support Specialists, especially in Cook.

Data Workgroup

Julie Yelverton

They have been addressing the question whether Illinois is required to track adoption disruptions and dissolutions. They have determined that the Adoption Act requires the collection of this data. The committee plans to meet with Kelly King on March 3 to address this issue.

Adoption Services Workgroup

Cara Siebert

Cara reported that they also discussed the work on the website, making it more easily accessible and the colorization of the logo. They discussed the Adoption Readiness Training handouts and edits that may be required. They discussed how training notices are being distributed and how parents are notified of the opportunity. They discussed sharing CORE Teen training opportunities with ASAP providers.

Training and Support Workgroup

Keely Giles

They discussed the review of the Adoption Readiness Training during the last council meeting. They discussed pulling out and offering only certain sessions as a freestanding refresher course for in-service adoptive parents. They discussed providing a similar overview of this training to staff and how that might look. They discussed addressing issues raised by adoptive parents on social media which begs the question as to whether these parents completed the training and what the requirements are.

Strategy Committee**Keely Giles**

In addition to the Mission Statement discussed earlier in the meeting, the committee discussed the “ask” of council members to attend an ASAP workshop. They are working on the logo for business cards, etc. She asked that the council members go to the PATH website and the DCFS website to check out resources. Is it possible to locate local ASAP providers? Go to their websites and see what services are available. Michelle noted that the Stakeholder Workgroup is examining the DNet to identify ways to make it more user-friendly. Council members expressed concern about accessibility to adoption resources on the DCFS external website. Keely mentioned the council issue form and council members will review this form.

Stakeholder Comments

None

Public Comments

None

MOTION: Cara Siebert made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Danielle Sanders seconded, and the motion was approved through roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m. Voice Vote: Approved by: Keely Giles, Katie Friend, Crystal Rekart, Karen Taylor, Danielle Sanders, Cara Siebert and Mary Kay Collins. Opposed: none.

Next Meeting: March 11, 2022, 9am – noon, via WebEx, for the safety of council members.