



**Illinois Adoption Advisory Council**  
*Serving Adoptive and Guardianship Families*  
**Joint Meeting with Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council**  
**MINUTES**  
**March 11, 2022 9:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.**  
**WebEx videoconference**

IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT	IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Mary Kay Collins	Maripat Oliver	Nancy Farquar	Gwenn Eyer
Keely Giles	Cara Siebert	Aneliya Kostova	Charlotte Gallagher
Alex Montgomery	Danny Tolliver	Thenesia Williams	Michelle Grove
Shirly Padera	Karen Wardlaw	Julie Yelverton	Kelly King
Crystal Rekart			Tiffany Norton
Elizabeth Richmond, past chair			Gayla Webster
Danielle Sanders			Kim Willis
Brittany Sprouse			
Karen Taylor			
Mark Werner, past chair			

**Welcome/Introduction**

Council members and staff logged on early to network. Keely Giles, IAAC chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. She welcomed everyone and noted that this meeting is being recorded. Gwenn Eyer, OCPS, conducted an IAAC voice roll call. Present: Mary Kay Collins, Keely Giles, Alex Montgomery, Shirly Padera, Crystal Rekart, Danielle Sanders, Karen Taylor, Amy Trotter, Elizabeth Richmond, past chair and Mark Werner, past chair. Brittany Sprouse joined the meeting following the roll call.

**Approval of January 14, 2022 Minutes**

**Council**

*MOTION: Mary Kay Collins made the motion to approve the February 18, 2022 minutes. Karen Taylor seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously through roll call voice vote.*

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

Michelle introduced Kim Willis, the new administrator in the OCPS. Kim is the program administrator for the Office of Caregiver & Parent Support and will work with the birth parent program, the advisory councils and the FPSS program. She has expertise in several areas. Michelle introduced Charlotte Gallagher who worked for the hotline and in Child Protection and has a background in the mental health field. She is a contract monitor and will support OCPS work, including the councils. Tiffany Norton is an Office Coordinator and support staff. Michelle described the use of the IAAC mailbox. Gwenn Eyer noted that *all* communication needs to go through that mailbox, including Email communication about committee meetings, committee reports membership issues, etc. Michelle stated that staff are very attentive to the mailbox and it's a great tool for us to support the council members.

## **Statewide Adoption Update**

**Sylvia Fonseca/Kelly King**

Kelly reported that the adoption support worker title has been changed to PATH Support & Referral Specialist, or PATH Specialist. Sylvia later reported that this is still pending. Kelly said that there are no new updates on the contractual side. She asked Dr. Thenesia Williams to introduce herself. Dr. Williams, who prefers the nickname Dr. T, is the new Adoption Coordinator for Central and Southern Regions.

### **Discussion:**

- Keely referenced the pending name change and the need to change the name in print materials, i.e., the new training.
- Kelly noted that they are already making updates. They are updating the post-adoption workbook and Kelly said that Annie Kostova has been a big support in the revision work.
- Kelly was asked to present a draft of the updates to the council for review. She will provide it to the Communications Committee for review.
- Concern was expressed that neither Adoption nor Guardianship are clearly noted in the new position title.

## **Strategies for Engaging Guardianship Families**

**Council**

The council is working on strategies to engage guardianship families and include them as council members, coming up with engagement strategies that are beneficial to all. These parents need to be engaged prior to permanency. Caseworkers need to make membership referrals to the council. Classes are full of adoptive families and not many guardianship families. This council would be more beneficial after permanency. The challenge is to show the parents that there are services available after permanency. DNet announcements have been posted to help have wider representation on the council and to get more council members. Announcements should be shared on social media which adoptive parents and guardianship parents will see.

## **Council Mission and Vision Statements**

**Strategy Workgroup**

There were concerns brought up regarding guardianship and there is a large range of what this looks like. The Department is providing services to all adoptive parents, including private and international adoptions. Private guardianship arrangements that are not subsidized do not qualify for the services. Overall, everyone really liked the mission statement and vision statement.

*MOTION: Britney Sprouse made a motion to accept the statements and Danielle Sanders seconded. The mission and value statements were approved unanimously through roll call voice vote.*

## **Illinois Annual Progress & Services Report Overview**

**Julie Barbosa, Deputy Director**

### **WebEx Recording**

**Strategy and Performance Execution**

Michelle introduced Julie Barbosa's role, noting that council members will be invited to participate in the APSR process as stakeholders. Julie's presentation provided a summary of major requirements from the federal government for all child welfare systems across the country. There is an overall five-year plan, the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), that is updated annually through the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). She said that every child welfare agency in the nation must submit a five-year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Jurisdictions include all the state systems, tribe systems and territory systems. Plans are updated annually, due on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Accountability to the plan comes through the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and flows through the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP is designed to address any areas in need of improvement that were identified in the CFSR.

Julie noted that no jurisdictions have passed all the outcomes, and DCFS only passed two. This plan has several parts that must be completed. One component is "Family and Community Partner Engagement." This is a part the councils may specifically speak to. Julie shared the graphic showing the remaining items DCFS is currently drafting implementation activities for. The Department has met two of the goals: #1 timely initiation of investigations and #14 caseworker contact with children. The Department has done a "baseline review" more

representative of the whole state. If the Department gets to the end of the PIP measurement without meeting the goals, there will be financial penalties, limiting our Federal claiming that offsets the cost of the services we provide. The Department wants to avoid sanctions from the Federal government, but we also want to provide quality services to children and families. Julie noted that all families we serve deserve services consistent with our goals. During the pandemic, Illinois was one of the only jurisdictions that had a rise in the number of children coming into care.

The qualities the Department focuses on are safety, permanence and well-being. Each division within the Department impacts these either directly or indirectly. Julie went through the core practices. Caseworkers are agents of change, building relationships with the child and family, providing behavior support and linkage to services and supports. This includes advocacy on the child's behalf, trauma-focused education, quality assessments, teamwork and coordinated care, and cultural competence. Core practices are broken down into priorities. The questions they discuss during the Continued Quality Improvement process should be informed by the Department's vision and its mission. The CQI plan should include measurable strategic goals and objectives and measurable program outcomes aligned with strategic objectives. Practice priorities are used to support implementation.

There is a cycle of improvement that supports this process.

- 1) Use data to make observations about performance to identify root causes.
- 2) Implement and monitor the solution.
- 3) Review ongoing data, talking to stakeholders and decision-makers about progress and impact.
- 4) Determine the extent to which the problems still exist.

The outcomes will be to adopt, adapt or abandon it.

Discussion:

Q: Will thought be given to the effects of postponing Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). It is a conundrum. Prospective adoptive parents cannot move to adoption without TPR and the state cannot move forward with TPR without a prospective adoptive family.

A: The paperwork is cumbersome. One way to address this is to gather judges to determine exactly what must be included in legal screening, removing extraneous materials from the requirements. We need workers to be prepared. We need courts to be prepared, limiting continuances. The Department recognizes that it is a partnership and they have points in the PIP that address some of these issues.

Julie addressed the council's role in the CQI process. She asked, "How can we engage foster and adoptive parents in the steps in this cycle?"

- Arrelda Hall, SWFCAC Chairperson, suggested assigning parts of this to the Foster Parent Support Specialists, breaking it into smaller chunks, rotating by region.
- Michelle suggested that council members take some time to absorb what they heard today, then Email the council mailboxes to join in on a workgroup. She noted that birth, foster and adoptive parents are all covered by our office and we need to review the plan to see if others need to join in the review.
- The plan is posted on the DCFS External website.
- The council should provide feedback based on their direct experience with the system. Julie suggested listing the support needs, how to best access those supports, etc.

### **Moving Forward with Meeting in Person**

### **Council**

It was discussed possibly to meet in person in September. There was an open discussion regarding gas prices, Covid concerns and there were no immediate responses about meeting in person. In person meeting discussion will be brought up again in the future.

**Permanency Workgroup**

No update.

**Alex Montgomery**

**Committee Reports**

Legislative / Public Policy Committee

No update.

Membership Committee

**Karen Taylor**

Karen reported that there are prospective new members and possibly onboarding should be conducted for these new members.

**Workgroup Reports**

Communication Workgroup

**Elizabeth Richmond**

Elizabeth reported about the PATH website and possible new tabs for the website.

Data Workgroup

**Julie Yelverton**

Adoption disruptions were discussed and the issues regarding the lack of data to track adoption disruptions.

Post-Adoption Services Workgroup

**Cara Siebert**

There are no good ways to refer families to post adoption services. PATH resources are not on the form required in the subsidy packet. Placing a tab on the DNet for Adoption Support and Preservation is being recommended.

Training and Support Groups Workgroup

**Keely Giles**

None

**Change June IAAC Meeting Date**

**Keely Giles**

Keely is the only chairperson since Katie Friend has assumed employment with DCFS. She has a major conflict with the June meeting date and asked the council to consider moving the date since she's the only one in the leadership position at this time. Following a brief discussion, the meeting date was changed from 6/10/22 to 6/17/22.

**Stakeholder Comments**

None

**Public Comments**

None

*MOTION: Danielle Sanders made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mary Kay Collins seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously through roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 2:21pm.*

**Next Meeting:** April 8, 2022 9 a.m. – Noon via WebEx