

**Illinois Adoption Advisory Council  
Minutes  
Friday, June 7, 2019  
Holmes Student Center, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois  
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

<b>AAC Members Present</b>	<b>AAC Members Absent</b>	<b>DCFS Staff</b>
Beth Hunter	Kathleen Bush	Gwenn Eyer
Natalie Miller	Alice Couch	Sylvia Fonseca
Maripat Oliver	Keely Giles	Angela Harris
Elizabeth Richmond	Crystal Rekart	Kelly King
Danielle Sanders	Keisha Robinson	Gail Mayer
Cara Siebert	Danny Tolliver, Jr.	
Brittney Sprouse	Amy Trotter	
Karen Taylor	Jeremy Wheeler	<b>Guests</b>
Karen Wardlaw	Julie Yelverton	Christine Feldman
Mark Werner		Katie Friend
Linda White		

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Elizabeth Richmond**

Elizabeth welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members and guests to introduce themselves. Beth Hunter, Linda White and Cara Siebert were welcomed as new members.

**Approval of March 8, 2019 IAAC Meeting Minutes**      **Council**

*Maripat Oliver made the motion to accept the minutes. Natalie Miller seconded and the motion carried.*

**Approval of April 5, 2019 IAAC Meeting Minutes**      **Council**

*Danielle Sanders made the motion to accept the minutes. Mark Werner seconded and the motion carried.*

**Welcome from the Northern Region**

**Angela Harris**

Angela welcomed the council to the Northern Region on behalf of Carole Ruzicka, Regional Administrator. Angela works with Agency Performance and oversight. She stated that they are working hard on permanency in the Northern Region.

**Adoptions Update**

**Sylvia Fonseca and Kelly King**

Quarterly meetings are being held this week with private agency and DCFS staff to ensure consistency of the messaging of what we are trying to do, and to make sure that they are aware of the impact of what they do. They are dedicated to preparing families for adoption. They are focused on the turnaround timeframe from 356 days to permanency to 163 days once it hits the Adoption Unit. (Children whose goals were changed since July 1, 2019.) We are achieving permanency in a more expedited manner. The meeting leads are the adoption supervisors and their goal is consistency in sharing information and goals. They are focusing on where the families have already made a commitment to adoption, recording it officially. They're promoting

a collaborative effort to secure families for our children. ICG funds will now be FSP funds. If FSP is not approved, it can go through the process of approval for a Director's waiver.

Sometimes residential treatment is requested/recommended for adopted children and youth. The family must be committed to whatever the residential services are. They negotiate how much money and if DCFS is responsible it goes to the Director. It was noted that Director's waivers have not been approved as much as they used to be. Clinical is handled through DCFS, but funding and waivers come through DHS. This is a process that takes some time.

Family Preservation services are for all adoptive families in Illinois. They are working on messaging and giving staff the basis of what adoption support services consist of, normalizing the need for families to make that call for support prior to crisis situation. They have started the process by providing the Path Beyond Adoption cards and letter revisions that include the information. The Department does not interfere with parenting, but they are working to educate every staff member that touches people along the path to adoption to provide a consistent message.

1849 children and youth have achieved permanency in FY'19, with 1586 adoptions.

They have staff that are willing to do an information fair for adoption support in Central Region. It will be used to develop a sense of community within the adoption community. Sylvia pressed the council to assure families that support services are available and to encourage their use. Parents are the only ones that hold legal authority and they need to be encouraged to utilize resources.

When asked about Managed Care, Sylvia stated that there is no new information on any transition. She also stated that they are revamping the Medicaid coverage on nursing care hours and families may see reduced hours. She noted that, when necessary, adoptive families need to appeal the decision/denial.

Sylvia, Kelly and others participated in the Four Disciplines of Execution training. The council was trained on 4DX last year and may need a refresher.

### **Post Adoption Phone Line**

### **Kelly King**

Kelly reported that the phone line has been in use since April 2018. They have documented 1530 phone calls, 663 in 2019 and 279 calls since April. Documented calls include the following purposes: 287 were about contacting the adoption worker, 229 callers were seeking services, 411 calls were subsidy updates/inquiries and 244 calls were for "other" reasons. They have started documenting calls regarding disruption. It was noted that staff have been retrained to focus on capturing and entering information from every phone call.

Legislation has been updated that sets the standard. HB3587 amends the adoption law and legislates the distribution of stickers or magnets to promote adoption support. There is also a piece about families in crisis that require residential. They've been working to share information about the process. They are collaborating with partner state agencies to be sure that what is being developed is consistent with state agencies.

The web site is coming along with many recent updates including the support line phone number. New blog posts have been posted. TBRI Training information will be added soon. When Kelly speaks at regional meetings, she requests resources for the web site so that regional information is available.

### **Center for Law & Social Work/Adoption Listing Svc. Katie Friend, Danielle Sanders**

Danielle reported that she had been in Springfield interviewing staff. They opened an office in Chicago. New staff are coming on board and programs are being established. Cases are still coming in. The Adoption Listing Service is still waiting for the update for the 309. It is nearing completion. Linda Fiori is a new program director. Six child-specific recruiters and two Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters cover the state. They are expanding statewide, with assessments available for targeted matching. They recognize the difficulty with getting youth listed and working with case managers that are slow to respond to inquiries. Another barrier is agencies sharing homes with the Center. They will eventually be able to take adopt-only families through the licensing process. Katie will meet with Sylvia to talk about how to support foster parents in the transition from their home to an adoptive home. Katie presented to caseworkers in Northern and Central regions regarding their role in taking steps following posting the listing for a waiting child. They are stressing the collective responsibility for permanency for children.

### **IAAC Goals and Outcomes**

### **Mark Werner**

Mark noted that the council has always had goals and outcomes and they are now being pressed to track them more closely. The council's goal is to advise the DCFS Director and make recommendations regarding adoption and post-adoption. The council has influenced adoption and post-adoption services throughout the state. The adoption unit has greatly reduced the length of time it takes to finalize adoption. Staff training is held monthly. Mark and Elizabeth will send a letter to the Director outlining goals, accomplishments and council recommendations.

### **Council Discussion/Recommendations:**

- Recreate a program plan for regional Master Adoptive/Adoption Support Specialists in Illinois, with peer-to-peer support positions similar to Foster Parent Support Specialists. The goal is not to hire people to complete paperwork, but to provide peer support along the path to adoption.
- Implementation of HB 3587 influenced adoption policy and practice. Changes in policy and procedure regarding training needs to be incorporated. The council will revisit this and make a recommendation regarding additional training for adoptive parents, utilizing QIC resources. (None of the new materials developed for the QIC grant have been incorporated to date.) The new legislation includes a strong training component requirement. Connections to Count On has been approved by the Children's Bureau and is with the OLPD. It will roll out as a 1-hour training on demand. Christine stated that grant staff are willing to provide continued support.
- Recommendation to provide adoptive parents with access to DCFS Education Advisors.

### **Adoption Celebration**

The goal is to make adoption really 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?" They will offer a descriptive kit to promote normalizing

adoption for adoptive parents, adoptees, therapists, educators, etc. They plan to use social media to promote it. They will consider joining with local Embracing Adoption resource fairs.

### **Adoption Excellence Awards**

**Elizabeth Richmond**

Elizabeth distributed recommendation forms for Adoption Excellence Awards.

### **Council Member Reimbursement**

**Gail Mayer**

Gail is working with business office staff to complete and submit council reimbursement forms. They are considering revising the travel reimbursement form and will distribute new forms in a timely manner.

### **QIC AG Update**

**Christine Feldman**

Post Adoption Services are available to families who have adopted through the Department and for private domestic/international adoptions. The message used to be to “call if there is a crisis,” but we are now trying to teach the agencies and families to reach out for services before a crisis via the Start Program. Four video shorts have been developed to showcase post-adoption services. The first short, Path Beyond Adoption, highlights the website, the support line and the phone line with a video focusing on supportive services. The three other shorts will address identifying and seeking services early, school-based concerns and the joys and rewards of adoption. Christine is working with Sylvia Fonseca and Kelly King to create and implement Path Beyond Adoption workshops that will focus on getting the word out about post adoption services.

Normalizing seeking services and removing the stigma of seeking services can be addressed through having the parents empowered to identify the risk factors and concerns that they have for their child. Some risk factors include multiple placements or emotional/behavioral regulation difficulties. Through the START program, the ASAP providers will help parents and families address risk factors and use a chart of life domains (physical, mental, emotional development) to come up with interventions that are targeted to help the child and family overcome challenges. Introduction of families to the Adoption Support and Preservation agency staff can also make reaching out for services easier. Also, letting members of the adoption/guardianship community (professionals as well as parents and guardians) know about services by informing them about the Path Beyond Adoption website and adoption/guardianship support line is essential to this goal of normalizing the seeking of services and providing support to families. DCFS monitors and pays for the services, but providers are not DCFS staff and the relationship is different. Path Beyond Adoption Workshops will be held statewide, one in Southern region, two in Central region, one in Northern region and two in Cook County. The ASAP providers will present to DCFS permanency workers and parents about the services offered. CEUs will be offered.

### **Specialized Family Support Program Update**

**Lori Poppen**

Lori works for Children’s Home & Aid in Rockford, providing adoption preservation and respite services. Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP) looks different throughout the state. Lori’s agency employs three full-time and one part-time therapist to work in the ASAP program. The staff are trauma-informed and work with the family and the individual. The clinical team are all master level professionals and must be licensed or able to become licensed within 2 years of hire to work in this program. The agency uses Theraplay and Trust-Based

Relational Intervention (TBRI), up-to-date research, and staff training to meet needs. Issues that cause families to seek services include, but are not limited to: grief and loss, parent/child conflict, attachment issues, school issues, and behavioral issues such as food hoarding, chronic stealing or lying and peer issues. In addition to the ASAP services, respite is provided by trauma trained staff. Respite workers pick the youth up and take them on outings. The focus is more of a fun time with some focus on working toward goals. Respite staff will work with youth on social skills while in the community. Referrals are accepted from DCFS and other service providers and word of mouth. Children's Home & Aid also offers support groups. They have found that membership ebbs and flows but they have been unable to pinpoint what causes participation to dwindle. Children's Home & Aid suspended support groups over the summer and has offered weekend workshops instead. The plan is to restart the support groups this fall. Children's Home & Aid serves nine counties: Winnebago, Boone, Dekalb, Ogle, Lee, Carroll, Stephenson, Jo Davies and Whiteside. Services are provided in the home, in the office, and the school. Children's Home & Aid has a lending library and provides outreach to social services agencies to let them know of the services available for youth moving toward adoption.

Stakeholder Comments – None

Public Comments – None

**Motion to adjourn**

*Danielle Sanders made the motion to adjourn. Natalie Miller seconded and the motion carried.*

**NEXT MEETING:** Friday, July 26, 2019 conference call, 10 a.m. – Noon.