



**Illinois Adoption Advisory Council**  
*Serving Adoptive and Guardianship Families*

**MINUTES**

**July 8, 2022, 9:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.**  
**WebEx videoconference**

| <b>IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT</b> | <b>IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT</b> | <b>GUESTS</b>      | <b>STAFF</b>   |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Samantha Coleman            | Heather Breems             | John Hall          | Godwin Aluyor  |
| Mary Kay Collins            | Kelly Duda                 | Elizabeth Richmond | Gwenn Eyer     |
| Nancy Farquhar              | Maripat Oliver             |                    | Michelle Grove |
| Keely Giles                 | Crystal Rekart             |                    | Tiffany Norton |
| Aneliya Kostova             | Danielle Sanders           |                    | Kim Willis     |
| Kendra Larimore             | Brittney Sprouse           |                    |                |
| Alex Montgomery             |                            |                    |                |
| Cara Siebert                |                            |                    |                |
| Karen Taylor                |                            |                    |                |
| Julie Yelverton             |                            |                    |                |

**Welcome/Introduction**

Council members and staff logged on early to network. Keely Giles, IAAC co-chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. She welcomed everyone and noted that this meeting is being recorded. Karen Taylor conducted an IAAC voice roll call. Present: Samantha Coleman, Mary Kay Collins, Nancy Farquhar, Keely Giles, Aneliya Kostova, Kendra Larimore, Alex Montgomery, Cara Siebert and Karen Taylor. crazyhouse15?? Crystal Rekart joined during the meeting.

**Approval of June 2022, Minutes**

**Council**

*MOTION: Karen Taylor made the motion to approve the minutes. Mary Kay Collins seconded the motion. Discussion/Correction: Under recognition, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence: revise to state that Crystal Rekart, an active council member, will retain council membership until her positions is filled. The revised minutes were approved unanimously through roll call voice vote.*

**Update from Office of Caregiver and Parent Support**

**Kim Willis and Michelle Grove**

Kim reported that two parent co-chairs were appointed at the last Birth Parent Council meeting. Michelle noted that the PIP requires that we give birth parents a strong voice. We have developed a statewide council along with local chapter/support groups. We are expanding the program and Ada S. McKinley will handle the program. We will mentor a statewide administrator and coordinator for this program. We will engage with the Birth Father Initiative, the courts, and other resources. Ray Gates, past administrator, will work to grow and enhance this program. The birth parents have submitted an issue form to the stakeholder group to refine before sending to the SPICE Committee. The two issues they are addressing is 1) Being treated with respect and 2) Visitation. They will represent the council and support recruitment efforts. This program works with birth parents that are currently navigating the system and those that have successfully navigated the program. They have another great program with birth parent mentors supporting parents in court. They hope to expand that program in Cook this year and hope to expand it downstate.

Michelle reported on the Incarcerated Parents program. She stated that the former administrator, Matthew Gray, did an outstanding job with research and data collection. Molly Hardwick will be the new administrator and the OCPS will keep the council apprised of work being done. Molly will work on building relationships, following up with workers in the field when notified of incarcerated parents. This program will be forward looking re: discharge and fictive kin.

Kim reported that they will host a Foster Parent Support Specialist (FPSS) training and support conference on July 13 and 14. They currently have 48 FPSS and 6 open positions. One Adoption and Guardianship Support Specialist will attend the conference, as well. Regional Administrators will attend and will work with FPSS to focus on work within the regions. Michelle noted that the conference will celebrate 40 years of the program.

Michelle referenced the Emergency Foster Care (EFC) homes. One of the resources this administration is working on is partnering with private agencies to bring back shelter bed and build up the number of EFC homes. DCFS currently has only two EFC homes, both in Cook Region, but the goal is to have four in each region. They will reshape the program addressing the issue of moving them from EFC homes to other homes. They have hired an administrator and other staff to manage the program and they are finalizing the program plan now. They will conduct information sessions next week for prospective EFC homes and council members were invited to participate.

The Core Teen program holds weekly development meetings. Summer Core Teen sessions are being offered in June and July. Training is open to adoptive, guardianship and foster families. It is currently being offered as a virtual training. Registration is still open for the Monday morning session beginning July 11.

Job postings related to these programs have been shared via the IAAC mailbox and announcements will go out again. They are working with DCFS administrators for this work.

### **Training Required of Council Members**

**Kim Willis**

Kim stated that required trainings include Ethics Training and Harassment Training. Michelle noted that council members are required to take several trainings. Council members will be notified via the mailbox.

### **Council Meeting Schedule**

**Keely Giles**

There has been ongoing discussion about the meeting schedule. Keely noted that the calendar has been revised. September, November and April meetings will be held in person.

Discussion:

- The council always have a lot to talk about.
- Keep virtual meetings on the calendar and plan to complete the posted agenda, closing early, if needed.
- Holding meetings too often limits the opportunity for committees to do work between meetings.
- When the calendar had fewer meetings, they were held in person, and were significantly longer meetings.
- Virtual meetings are very different.
- Keep the frequent virtual meetings until a time when there is nothing to discuss.

Conclusion: Keep the August 5, 2022 meeting and maintain the current schedule unless the council votes to make a change later.

Locations will be determined based on council preferences. Traditionally, meetings moved from region to region. Michelle noted that council meetings are a great opportunity to bring in local adoptees, adoptive parents, etc. to observe council work. The meetings may result in prospective members. The council prefers to start with Lisle Naperville area. They plan to use social media to share meeting announcements. The Adoption Month Committee was asked to identify a location for November's in-person meeting.

## **Committees and Workgroups**

### **Keely Giles**

Karen opened a discussion about committees, introducing each chairperson. Each one described the work and the goals of each committee/workgroup. Office of Caregiver & Parent Support staff will set up meetings as needed and will use the mailbox to share meeting information. We will send out the committee interest form for council members to sign up for committees/workgroups. Keely noted that council members are expected to serve on at least one committee or workgroup, and hopefully two. Meeting dates are set by each committee following each meeting.

## **Adoption Month Planning Committee/ Workgroup**

### **Mary Kay Collins**

Mary Kay opened a discussion of how this committee operated in the past. Historically, the committee was large in number. Past celebrations have included Governor's proclamations, specific Adoption Day adoptions in collaboration with the courts, social media support, bracelets, ribbons, paper chains, photo frames, library exhibits, family gathering with the DCFS photographer, utilizing the premier of Instant Family by hosting an information table. It was suggested that the council look for support from the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). The committee currently holds \$1000 and will likely add another \$1000 this year. These funds for are held by Greenlight.

*Motion: Mary Kay Collins made the motion to change the planning committee to a workgroup. The motion passed via voice vote. Keely Giles, Alex Montgomery, Samantha Coleman, Kendra Larimore, Aneliya Kostova, Karen Taylor, Mary Kay Collins, Karen Siebert, Nancy Farquar, Julie Yelverton.*

## **PATH Letter Update**

### **Cara Siebert**

Cara gave a quick overview of this work and will discuss it more thoroughly in August. The post-adopt workgroup had done a study re: Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP) provider websites. They looked at access, service availability and other issues. They plan to take their letter to the council for approval to reach out to the ASAP Agencies, making specific recommendations re: way to better serve adoptive families via their website.

## **Statewide Adoption Update**

### **Sylvia Fonseca/Kelly King**

No report.

## **Committee Reports**

Legislative / Public Policy Committee

Karen Taylor

Karen has reached out to have the OCPS to initiate the connection with a DCFS Legislative Liaison.

Bylaws Committee

Karen Taylor

Karen reported on the committee recommendations. This is the first reading. The second reading will be done at the August meeting with a vote at the September meeting.

Committee Recommendations:

- 1) Add a preamble to the bylaws to state the council's mission and vision statements.
- 2) Add a phrase under Membership to read "adults who were adopted *or placed in DCFS subsidized guardianship.*"
- 3) Limiting membership representation to one professional per agency/ one family member per family.
- 4) Co-chairs: If the co-chair still has remaining time on their term, they will return to their original membership position.
- 5) Officers: may include adoption or guardianship representation

Discussion:

- The goal of the changes is to ensure the council has diverse representation.
- Clarify council co-chair membership position.
- Clarify wording to limit to one professional per agency/ one family member per family

## Membership Committee

Karen Taylor

Karen reported that we still need to recruit more members and she asked council members to make recommendations. The committee is looking for adoptive parents/guardians to fill vacancies in Northern two in Southern. They are looking for an adult adoptee in Southern. She stated that the council needs guardianship parents. They plan to share the posting on social media. They also need adults who are former guardianship youth through DCFS.

## Workgroup Reports

### Communication Workgroup

Elizabeth Richmond

Elizabeth is anxious to build the committee. They will finalize the business cards. Central Region ASAP lunch time flyers have gone out encouraging attendance at the 1-hour meetings in the ASAP agencies.

### Data Workgroup

Julie Yelverton

No report.

### Post-Adoption Services Workgroup

Cara Siebert

Cara would like to schedule a meeting for July 20 at 10am. Keely will send a meeting announcement via the council mailbox. A letter is being created to be sent about these issues. The letter will be shared at the July meeting to be approved by the council.

### Training and Support Groups Workgroup

Keely Giles

Keely will send a meeting announcement via the council mailbox.

### Permanency Work Group

Alex Montgomery

Alex referenced her minutes from the last meeting. She will announce upcoming meetings via the mailbox. They would like to collaborate with the Data Workgroup.

### National Adoption Month Workgroup

The committee set a planning meeting for 10am – 11:30 on July 15. It is important to start planning for National Adoption Month so special things can be planned for November. There are funds set aside for National Adoptive Month.

Keely asked council members to consider the committee description/ goals at their first meeting and make any needed changes.

## Stakeholder Comments

None

## Public Comments

None

*MOTION: Julie Yelverton made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Cara Siebert seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously through roll call vote. Ayes: Keely Giles, Alex Montgomery, Samantha Coleman, Kendra Larimore, Aneliya Kostova, Karen Taylor, Mary Kay Collins, Cara Siebert, Nancy Farquar, Julie Yelverton. The meeting adjourned at 11:09am.*

**Next Meeting:** August 5<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. – Noon via WebEx