



# Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

## MEETING MINUTES

October 8, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.

IAAC Members Present	IAAC Members Present (continued)	AAC Members Absent	DCFS Staff
Mary Kay Collins	Cara Siebert	Maripat Oliver	Gwenn Eyer
Katie Friend	Brittney Sprouse	Shirley Padera	Kelly King
Keely Giles	Karen Taylor	Crystal Rekart	Sylvia Fonseca
Alex Montgomery	Amy Trotter	Danny Tolliver	Gayla Webster
Elizabeth Richmond	Mark Werner	Karen Wardlaw	
Danielle Sanders	Jeremy Wheeler		<b>Guests</b>
			Julie Yelverton

### Welcome/Introductions and Roll Call

**Keely Giles / Katie Friend**

Keely opened the meeting at 9:02a.m. and conducted a voice roll call. She reported the recent loss of council member Laurel Meade, honoring Laurel’s contributions to the council. Keely noted that she left a tribute on behalf of the council on the obituary web site.

### Approval of September 17, 2021 Minutes

**Council**

*MOTION: Cara Seibert made the motion to approve September 17, 2021 minutes. Danielle Sanders seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously through roll call vote.*

### Office of Caregiver and Parent Support Update

**Michelle Grove**

No Report

### Statewide Adoption Update

**Sylvia Fonseca/Kelly King**

Sylvia Fonseca reported that many policies are being updated so language is consistent with the Social Security Act and the Children’s Bureau language. They are updating staff training to reflect the changes. They are waiting to update the website and phone bank while they determine the best method to do it to make the system user-friendly for parents and guardians. She noted that they asked early to be on the list for work to be done. Blog posts, etc. can be done by adoption staff. However, the adoption website is currently connected to Do It and they are limited in ways we can update to make it mobile-friendly, etc. CCWIS will replace SACWIS and that update influences the work on the adoption website. They are looking at contracts to see if they can increase and expand recruitment efforts for children who do not yet have an identified home. Kelly King said that things are pretty much status quo, currently. They are having ongoing conversations with Dave Thomas Foundation to determine ways to share resources. The council continues to press for updates to make it easier to navigate to find information needed.

### Potential Council Name Change

**Council**

Keely stated that the council began to address a potential name change at the last meeting, to encompass “guardianship” in the name.

## Discussion:

- Everyone recognizes the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council and council members were cautioned against changing the identity totally.
- It might be possible to add a guardianship tagline.
- When focusing on branding the council, the message should be consistent throughout, including “guardianship” as a primary component, promoting both inclusion and diversity in membership...
- In some ways, people are used to things changing, so if the council is working on rebranding, it will not be a total surprise.
- There needs to be a clear distinct way to include guardians so that they will not pass by when they read Adoption Advisory Council, Path Beyond Adoption, etc.
- Things change in the real world, with changes occurring day-to-day. There is strength in numbers, and recognizing guardianship opens the door for extended involvement from both adoption and guardianship parents.
- The council was developed to speak for both adoption and guardianship parents.
- If the council wishes to make the legislators buy in to legitimizing the council they need to fully include guardians.
- Consensus is that no one opposed adding a tagline or name change.
- Suggested update to the name: Illinois Adoption and Guardianship Advisory Council. Council members should submit additional suggestions to the bylaws committee.

## Council Goals

**Keely Giles**

Keely shared the draft goals the co-chairs recommend on screen, revising as the council discussed each one.

## Discussion:

- Check policy to be sure that it reflects the number of hours in Adoption Readiness training.
- Language should reflect Adoption/Guardianship Support Parent.
- A sixth goal was added to improve communication with adoptive/ guardianship parents statewide.
- Language should be changed to reflect post-adoption/guardianship services throughout.
- Acronyms will be clarified throughout.
- Council name will show as Illinois Adoption Advisory Council (IAAC).
- Include both pre-and post-adoption in the goals by addressing service delivery in Goal 1.
- Reflect that they are focusing on membership, strengthening and enhancing the council through committees and workgroups.
- Focus on expanding community awareness of the adoption and guardianship experience.
- Refer to adoption and guardianship families or adoptive families and guardians.



Illinois Adoption  
Advisory Council Goal

*MOTION: Karen Taylor made the motion to accept the goals as presented and revised. Mary Kay Collins seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.*

## Strategy Workgroup

**Keely Giles**

Keely introduced the strategy discussion, reflecting on past council discussions regarding recognition of the council statewide. She discussed the following: expectation of members re: representing the council, Workgroup members include: Mary Kay Collins, Elizabeth Richmond, Katie Friend, Karen Taylor, Cara Seibert, and Keely Giles.

## **Meeting Calendar**

**Katie Friend**

Katie reported that there were discussions earlier this year regarding the monthly meeting schedule. She asked the council to consider plans for the remainder of the fiscal year. It was noted that December is traditional a month heavy with family commitments and obligations.

### **DISCUSSION:**

- They discussed cancelling the December meeting and starting back in January or February.
- They don't want to meet so much that council members do not have time to fulfill their committee obligations or overwhelm volunteer members by taking advantage of their time commitment.
- They want to be respectful of council members' time.
- They have never held December or January meetings in the past.
- Any recommendations the council wants to put forward for legislation will require a summer meeting to prepare and present recommendations to the DCFS Director.
- October has traditionally been a conference call to plan the Adoption Month celebrations.
- Council members need to maintain the momentum and keep up with the continuity and consistency of outcomes.
- Participation might increase with fewer meetings a year.
- Membership might increase with an adjustment in the meeting schedule.
- Use a mix of in-person and virtual meetings.
- Even when meeting in person, a virtual meeting option should be offered. Consider the constraints of the hybrid format reducing the in-person numbers and the ability to maintain our standard meeting set up.
- Recommendation: Meet in July, September, October, November, February, March, April and June. No meetings in August, December, January and May.
- Recommendation: Offer four to six in-person retreat type meetings per year.
- Funding will be an issue to be addressed when legislating the council in the future.

*MOTION: Cara Siebert made the motion to cancel the scheduled December meeting. Danielle Sanders seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.*

## **Committee / Workgroup Reports**

### **Adoption Month Committee**

**Katie Friend**

Katie reported that the very small committee met in September. They are working with DCFS Communications to plan virtual activities that they can do as part of a virtual celebration, i.e., a photo collage to share through DCFS and private agencies. They are looking at the Children's Bureau activities for ideas. Cook County is trying to do an in-person adoption event, finalizing one adoption in November. The hope is that planning will start early for 2022 for an in-person celebration. Sylvia noted that Northern and Southern regions often do Adoption Month celebrations, but those will not happen this year.

### **Bylaws Committee**

**Mark Werner**

The bylaws committee met and recommended the following. Review bylaws annually in September or October and recommend any changes at the November meeting. More than a simple majority is required for a bylaw change. They discussed sending an annual report to the DCFS Director. Revisions will be presented at the November meeting.

### **Communications Workgroup**

**Elizabeth Richmond**

They discussed their dreams and hopes for the Path Beyond Adoption website and will work with DoIt and DCFS Communications for support. Their goal is to improve ongoing communication and drive people toward the Path Beyond Adoption website. They have discussed pre-approved posts that may be shared in the future. They noted the void left when Vanessa James left and shared their appreciation for Annie Kelly, support staff clerical. There was discussion of making this a workgroup so that they can gather input from outside the council.

*MOTION: Alex Montgomery proposed making the committee a workgroup. Mary Kay Collins seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.*



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### **Legislative / Public Policy Committee**

**Jeremy Wheeler**

The committee met September 29, 2021. They are working on a new federal Adoption Program PIP. The issue to be addressed is that the subsidy should not be terminated, except in rare cases when the child is no longer with the adoptive parent/ guardian. They noted a reference to a “national CANTS check” and they are discussing that option, along with out-of-state medical coverage for adopted children. They noted that Illinois was just improved for the Kinship Navigator Grant for grandparents working to take private guardianship, providing resources without children coming into care. They discussed steps for the council to becoming an official council. Jeremy noted that there has been a huge delay in Social Security benefits post-adoption.



Legislative

Committee 9-29-21 N

### **Membership Committee**

**Katie Friend**

The committee met to discuss six vacancies on the council. They discussed the application process and a potential need for streamlining the process. They discussed a potential interview process to get to know potential members and sharing the role and expectations. Katie noted that Elizabeth Hunter submitted her resignation and she will receive a letter and certificate as a council member in good standing.

### **Data Workgroup**

**Julie Yelverton**

No report. The group has not met recently.

### **Permanency Workgroup**

**Alex Montgomery**

They are information gathering to see where the gaps are. They are focused on improving inefficiencies and improving timeliness for permanency. They are collaborating with Kelly King to gather information, reviewing what’s available on the web site. They are considering connecting with an Agency Performance Team to see how their work links together.



SWFCC and IAAC

Permanency Workgro

### **Post Adoption Services Workgroup**

**Cara Siebert / Amy Trotter**

Amy reported that the workgroup met earlier this month and discussion surrounded training and education and the Path website, issues that were addressed earlier in this meeting. They suggest that DCFS use the newly-designed PRIDE training along with the NTDC training. They believe that council member’s individual social media accounts are the best way to disseminate the information about resources available to adoptive parents and guardians. They discussed methods being used to recruit, support and retain qualified staff.



Post Adoption

Committee Minutes.p

## **Training & Support Groups Workgroup**

**Keely Giles**

The workgroup met September 30, 2021. They discussed the NTDC training and what will be available in Illinois. They discussed collaborating with the council to offer feedback as stakeholders on training. They are very interested in being involved in the transition of Adoption Readiness training to a virtual version. They discussed the challenge of navigating the Path Beyond Adoption website as was discussed earlier.



Training Work Group  
Minutes 9-30-21.pdf

## **Review of Committee Membership / Leadership Keely Giles / Katie Friend**

Keely and Katie will review and revise the committee list based on council work prior to and during this meeting.

## **Stakeholder Comments**

None

## **Public Comments**

None

*MOTION: Mary Kay Collins made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Brittany Sprouse seconded and the motion was approved through roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:20a.m.*

**Next Meeting:** November 5, 2021, 9am – noon, joint meeting with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council via WebEx, for the safety of council members.