

**Meeting of the
Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Sheraton Lisle Naperville, 3000 Warrenville Road, Lisle
April 20, 2018
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
APPROVED MINUTES**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	STAFF	GUESTS
Gladys Boyd	Mary Savage	Amber Ambuehl	Keely Giles
Katy Cotts	Carol Sheley	Kem Bakunas	Amanda Harris
Donna Gregory	Denise Spires	Claudia Dancy-Davis	Sarah Kehl
Arrelida Hall-Johnson	Samella Taylor-Lewis	Carlene Erno	Amy Keller
Gordon Hannon		Gwenn Eyer	David Moore
Darrin Holt	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	Tina Franklin	Katie Myette
Rachel Hoyt		Michelle Grove	Karolyn Needles
Ken Keefe	Maya Maclin	Jill Lautermann	Patricia Pride
Harriet Kersh	Kate Monte	Lisa Massa	Lesley Stuart
Susan McConnell	Trina Rizzo	Sheila Reed	
Mark McDaniel		Kristin Robinson	
Kellye Norris		Lisa Young	

Welcome and Introductions - Mark McDaniel

Chairman Mark McDaniel welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:15 a.m. Mark asked the visitors to introduce themselves. He outlined basic meeting management, including guidelines for public comment.

Approve Minutes from 03/09/18 SWFCAC Meeting

Ken Keefe made a motion to table the minutes per notice that a topic had dropped off the minutes. The minutes will be amended and submitted for approval at the next meeting. Harriet Kersh seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

- Leslie Stuart, representing Metro-East Moms, suggested that caseworkers need to be more “team players.”
- Sarah Kehl from Metro East Moms noted that there is a disconnect within private agencies and that foster parents often have to train staff during the life of the case.
- Keely Giles stated that as a PRIDE trainer she gets called for resources, stating that agencies are not disclosing essential information about children, i.e. why they came into care, etc. She noted that if you’re not privy to that information you’re not able to provide trauma informed care. She expressed a general concern over fictive kin where people hadn’t even met the child before the child came into care. She believes current practice is going to result in multiple moves between people children know before they get to traditional foster parents who are actually prepared to provide the quality temporary care they need.

- Karolyn Needles said that in Madison County they are not allowed to go into court. A SWFCAC member stated that local courts dictate these policies. Karolyn noted that workers encourage foster parents to contact the GAL, but calls are not returned in a timely manner. Sheila Reed, a Licensing Supervisor, said that there are numerous meetings and numerous ways for involvement with the courts, and the supervisors are very aware of the situation. With the new judge and the new State's Attorney in Madison County, they are hearing the concerns and there is a lot more collaboration and desire to make changes.
- Amy Keller's biggest concern is how long it takes to get children to permanency.
- Amber Ambuel's agency just started a recruitment and retention committee with the current focus on treating foster parents with dignity and respect.
- Kem Bakunas stated that she is allowed to go to court in her area. Foster parents are allowed to speak and then they're taken out. She stated that it sometimes appears that our DCFS Regional Counsel is trying to diminish the voice of the foster parent. They've been overheard to say that foster parents should not "bond" with children in care.
- Leslie Stewart said that when she polled other foster parents prior to attending this meeting, she noted that the general feeling among those she asked for input is that they're discouraged and considering quitting. She noted that the invitation to attend the SWFCAC meeting is encouraging, thanks to the realization that there's a link to statewide representation. She said that there are amazing workers, but there needs to be consistency throughout agencies and regions re: alleged service violations or alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law. The fear of retaliation is very real.

Metro Moms will submit a list of concerns to the council. Council member Gordon Hannon, a foster parent, stated that he regularly hears the same issues, i.e., gaps in open communication, lack of sharing medical information, openness in court, and communication with GAL and judge. Mark McDaniel stated that he was somewhat discouraged with some information presented at the last council meeting but was encouraged with the follow-up.

Council Recommendation: Mark McDaniel will try to engage the Southern Region Advisory Council in organizing a Town Hall meeting with administrators from the region and the different agencies represented.

Final Report to the Director

Mark McDaniel

There were no final reports submitted to the Director since the last meeting. The monthly Director's Report was submitted as required by law.

Core Practice Model

David Moore

David commended the council and guests for the passion represented in the room. He stated that he has been working on Core Practice for several years and many of the issues identified this morning are addressed in the Core Practice Model. David said that maybe we've got a start to something different here. The Core Practice Model started with the trauma training about 10 years ago. We recognize that we need to be family-centered, recognizing a child's connection to the community, the feeling of safety, the connection to permanency, etc. When we talk about trauma and the family system, we're talking about foster parents too. We want everyone to step up and advocate for the child. There are family connections that we need to sustain, even if a parent can't parent full time and we need to rely on the system. When a child returns home, the foster parent should be able to remain connected. We started looking at a strength-based approach, building on strengths to build

resiliency. We've faced challenges, including changes in administration. 4DX, the Four Disciplines of Execution is the foundation for moving forward. The key element is setting wildly important goals.

David said that we're not assigning services; we're meeting needs. It's much more collaborative. We want the system to be able to respond. We're not dictating, we're identifying resources and agreeing collaboratively. It's often more of a coaching approach. There are many challenges and it takes a very skilled facilitator to make it work successfully. It's going to be a slow determined process to build relationships building trust and engagement. The council expressed great concern about limiting foster parent involvement, based on the birth parent's determination. The council may take a look at trying to revise Rule 315.

Policy Updates

Tina Franklin

Tina joined the Department in 1982. She was the first DCFS attorney hired in the Southern region and the fifth DCFS regional attorney in the state. She supervised attorneys and worked with the legal department before taking a break and coming back in the DCFS Office of Child and Family Policy.

Tina distributed a detailed handout describing Fictive Kin definitions from the Child and Family Services Act and DCFS Rules. The handout includes the definition of relative, the definition of fictive kin and the definition of permanent connection. Council members noted that there's disconnect between current legislation and policy since it doesn't clearly address foster parent situations. Tina said the biggest piece of advice for advisory groups is "Engage, engage, engage." Foster parents should be aware they can request a service appeal when told of a decision to move a child from their home to a relative's home. Tina said Rule 337.70, What May Be Appealed, indicates that foster parents can appeal placement with a relative. In change of placement cases, the Service Appeal Process begins with a Clinical Review of that decision. (Note: The request for a clinical placement review must be made within three working days after receiving the notice of intent to remove the child. (See Rule 337.30, The Service Appeal Process.) She said that the Clinical evaluation of the foster family-child relationship can be an important factor when the appeal gets to the hearing stage. Also, the decision from the Clinical Review will be enforced pending the outcome of the hearing.

Tina also said that DCFS policy now puts a strong emphasis on family finding and helping children maintain lifelong connections. It is important for foster families to be willing to go along with some level of contact with birth families. Lifelong connections are proving to be critical for healthy transition to adulthood.

Regarding family finding, Procedures 315 requires workers to search for and contact all identified relatives. The council expressed concern regarding the assessment process. Just because someone says they have a relationship with a child doesn't mean they really do. Tina noted there is an assessment process described in Procedures 315. (Note: Procedures 315.60, Identifying, Searching For and Engaging Relatives contain the required steps for identifying and contacting relatives; and Procedures 315.75, Assessment of Relatives as Placement Resources

contain the criteria for assessing relatives who express an interest in becoming substitute caregivers for a related child.) Adoptive placements can disrupt when relatives are identified late in the life of the case. Foster parents should be willing to utilize the Service Appeal Process in that situation, too.

Recap re: Fictive Kin:

- The change in directors changed the direction on appeal rights when a child is moved to a relative placement. Now foster parents can appeal those decisions.
- Changes in federal law changed the direction regarding relative searches and contact. This is a big change for the Department.
- Fictive Kin are considered relatives for placement purposes. When policy references relatives, that includes fictive kin. Procedures 315 has criteria for assessing relatives for placement purposes.
- There is a statutory mandate to place siblings together.
- Review the rules. If something is not clear, call or email Tina at Policy to address it. (email is best, since I work part time. We just were told today our office has a new email address: DCFS.policy@illinois.gov. Our old email address has been phased out.
- DCFS Clinical Staff are involved in the appeal process in change of placement appeals.
- A CFS 151 is the form used for giving written notice of change of placement, i.e., notification.
- Foster parents have the right to be heard by the judge hearing the juvenile court case. (This is in Section 1.5 of the Juvenile Court Act.)
- The Aristotle P. Consent Decree is still in practice to ensure that work is done to find joint placements for siblings.
- New legislation has been enacted for increased contact between siblings, and to encourage continued contact between siblings after an adoption or subsidized guardianship.

Foster Parent Law Workshop

Gwenn Eyer

Gwenn reported that the highest plan score that can be awarded is 108 points. The rating breakdown is 94-108 Acceptable, 75-93 Somewhat Acceptable, and 74 and under Unacceptable. This year every plan scored at least 94 points. All plans received Acceptable ratings.

This year the council determined that conducting agency reviews is no long a critical need. Instead of reviewing one third of the agencies this year, it was determined that a better use of time would be to survey foster parents from every agency about their knowledge of the Foster Parent Law. Gwenn discussed the current survey tool, requesting recommendations that came from the Policy Committee meeting and recommendations from the council. Once revisions are made, survey forms will be distributed along with random-sorted lists of phone numbers for foster parents from every region and every agency doing foster care by contract. Council members were give sample scripts and Gwenn provided a brief training on the process. Surveys should be completed within 3 weeks of receipt of the packet. Results will be tallied, and the council will review the results prior to sending results letters to the agencies and regions.

Each year we recognize the top three plans in identified categories including treating foster parents with dignity and respect, innovations in service delivery and foster parent involvement. Nominations are collected throughout the plan scoring process and council members select the top

three plans. Gwenn distributed the nomination forms, council members voted, and the top three plans include: Aunt Martha's, Children's Home Association and Kaleidoscope.

Networking Lunch

Committee Reports

Mark noted that if council members would like to have reports added to the agenda the council needs to have a summary of the report submitted in advance.

*Policy and Legislation – Darrin Holt/ Ken Keefe

Darrin noted that May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month. He reported on the following pending bills regarding foster care in Illinois:

HB4360 creates a credit in an amount equal to 20% of the gross wages paid by the taxpayer to a qualified youth in care during that youth's sustained employment during the taxable year, not to exceed \$5,000.

HB4909 provides that specified fees for birth record searches or for certified copies of birth records shall be waived for all requests made by a youth in care, or a person under the age of 27 who was a youth in care, on or after his or her 19th birthday.

HB4360 requires DCFS to assist youth in care in identifying and obtaining documents necessary to function as an independent adult prior to the closure of the youth's case to terminate wardship. HB4964 requires DCFS to place youth in care in the least restrictive and most family-like setting that is consistent with the youth's needs and best interests.

HB5076 requires DCFS to place a locked suggestion box in each group home, shelter and transitional living arrangement that accepts youth in care for placement by the Department.

SB2655 provides that in selecting a permanency goal for a minor over age 15 of substitute care pending independence, DCFS may provide services to enable reunification and to strengthen the minor's connections with family, fictive kin, and other responsible adults, provided the services are in the minor's best interests.

SB2846 makes post-secondary education tuition and fee waivers available to youth for whom DCFS has court-ordered legal responsibility, youth who aged out of care at age 18 or older, or youth formerly under care who have been adopted and were the subject of an adoption assistance agreement or who have been placed in private guardianship and were the subject of a subsidized guardianship agreement.

Council members may find more information at www.ilga.gov, the General Assembly web site.

Ken reported that the Respite letter submitted in 2015 will be submitted to the new director, asking for commitment.

*FPSS – Denise Spires reported that the FPSS program plan is being updated. The committee will provide the council with updates on the changes.

*Healthcare – The committee will provide managed care updates.

*Training – Harriet Kersh reported that they are recruiting foster parents on the ground level and will create training. The committee will hold a phone conference with agencies on the board.

*Public Relations/ Hospitality – Donna reported that the committee will continue to follow their goals.

Reports from Other Councils/ Committees/ Workgroups

*CWAC Rachel, Darrin, Mary, Gordon
Council members presented the PowerPoint at the CWAC meeting and it was well received.

*IFAPA Gladys Boyd
Gladys Boyd reported that they held a conference call re: hosting a conference with birth parents. They will bring their recommendations to the council. Gladys had a call from a foster parent in Cook County re: the bed hold policy. She obtained the policy from Gwenn and it shows that caseworkers must complete a form or foster parents won't get paid. The information has been shared on the IFAPA website.

Regional Reports

Northern – Donna Gregory reported that the Northern Region Council will announce nominations for regional officers in May and plan to vote in June. Foster parent support groups are meeting in all areas. RA's are involved in various areas. Concerns have been expressed regarding how long it takes to get a response to a new foster parent application.

Southern – Mark McDaniel reported that there's a SWFCAC position open to represent Southern Region. The region will host a Town Hall meeting in the future.

Central – Carol Sheley reported that there's a SWFCAC position open to represent Central Region. Concerns expressed in the region include moving children and quality of care. There are also concerns about restricting foster parents who use prescribed medical cannabis.

Cook North – Meetings are being scheduled.

Cook South – No report.

Cook Central – Denise reported that they had a meeting March 27th. Arrelda Hall-Johnson presented a 2-hour in-service training for the foster parents on the life of the case. She informed them of what to expect when the case goes thru the system and some typical timelines they should expect. Their next regional meeting is scheduled for April 24th.

Motion: Rachel Hoyt made the motion to adjourn. Gordon Hannon seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: May 11, 2018 – Partnering with Parents Summit, Northfield Center, Springfield

Potential Agenda Items:

Medical Marijuana
Adoption timeline
Service Appeals