

**Meeting of the
Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Sheraton Lisle Naperville, 3000 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois
September 14, 2018
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
APPROVED MINUTES**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	STAFF PRESENT	GUESTS
Erica Baird	Katy Cotts	Janet Wokas Ahern	Diana Blackburn
Gladys Boyd	Gordon Hannon	Ashley Deckert	Julie Cebulski
Donna Gregory	Ken Keefe	Dierdra Davis	Debbie Freke
Arrelda Hall-Johnson	Mark McDaniel	Carlene Erno	Suzanne Shirley
Rachel Hoyt	Kellye Norris	Gwenn Eyer	Terry McGlothlin
Harriet Kersh	Rachel Pruess	Michelle Grove	
Maya Maclin		Angela Harris	
Susan McConnell		Voiri Kiheunis	
Kate Monte		Alexa Koziol	
Mary Savage		Norma Machay	
Carol Sheley		Gail Mayer	
Denise Spires			
Lesley Stuart			
Samella Taylor-Lewis			
Stephanie Tesreau			

Welcome and Introductions - Carol Sheley

Chairperson Carol Sheley welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:02 a.m. New council member Erica Baird introduced herself. Carol thanked everyone for their commitment to this council.

Approve Minutes from 6/15/18

Donna Gregory made the motion to approve the minutes from the June meeting. Denise Spires seconded and the motion carried.

Approve Minutes from 07/20/18 SWFCAC Meeting

Rachel Hoyt made the motion to approve the minutes from the July meeting. Maya Maclin Seconded and the motion carried.

Final Report to the Director

Carol Sheley

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

Northern Region Update

Angela Harris for Carole Ruzicka

Angela is a program manager that oversees agency performance and she gave an update for the region. The Northern Region has identified staffing needs and they continue to recruit and fill open positions.

Stakeholder Reports – None

State Guardian's Report

Janet Ahern

Janet stated that we all know Managed Care is coming and we're wondering when it's coming. She noted that Director Walker is very detail-oriented and until Illini Care has all their systems in place, the program will not be launched. It has to be done right. The delays are cautionary delays and very positive delays on our part so that our kids are served in the best way possible.

Adoption Day is November 17th and it will be celebrated in several different counties. Winnebago and Will Counties will hold big Adoption Day celebrations. In Cook County they invited adoptive families for a free day at the Children's Museum and will provide breakfast and wrist bands for families to come and go throughout the day. This year's program will be more family-friendly and less time-oriented. They are trying to work with Cook County Court to hold an official Adoption Day on November 16 to finalize adoptions and celebrate with cake. Other celebrations are held throughout the state. Janet stated that local adoption specialists may have access to some finances for local events.

Janet will spend September 24-28 downstate visiting children and families. She is doing hospital visits, training, etc.

Janet said that the Department is working hard to meet the needs of the LGBTQ youth, particularly focusing on the needs of transgender youth. The Department maintains a list of youth that identify as LGBTQ and Janet asked foster parents to call her whenever youth in care fit in this category so that the Department may specifically support them. Policy guide 302 appendix K explains Department support. With regard to transgender youth, the Department makes sure they are with a caring family that is willing to call them by the name they wish to be called and identify them by the pronoun they wish to use. They also discuss school settings with the youth and make sure they are in the appropriate setting when in a residential unit. The Department counsels and provides supports. The big things youth talk about include two things the Department can consent to. Puberty blocking, the first, is taking hormones to block puberty. It can begin as early as age 9 or 10 and is totally reversible. It has not yet been authorized for anyone. The second, hormone therapy, is used when youth are transitioning from one sex to another and there are irreversible results that impact reproduction. At 18 they may make their own decisions, but while in care they receive therapeutic consultations and medical, mental health and general evaluations at gender affirming clinics. An audience member asked about LGBTQ training. Janet said that training is not yet available. Carol stated that the SWFCAC Training Committee and the council would like to be involved in developing this training. It was noted that agencies must be trained, as well. It was also noted that the curriculum for Healthy Sexual Development touched a bit on LGBTQ issues and would be a good place to add information. To add youth to the list for resources and supports contact Janet.Ahern@illinois.gov or call Janet or Lisa Robinson at 312-814-8600.

Council discussion:

- There may be a way to add a box on licenses to indicate homes that are LGBTQ-friendly. The council has discussed it in the past, and we will follow up.
- Carlene Erno, Licensing, reported that agencies have to provide an additional 12 hours of training per year for spec care for medical or mental health issues. This may be in-person training or joint counseling appointments.
- Deirdra Davis stated that if a specialized child is placed in a traditional home the field doesn't always know whether the foster parent is willing to take in specialized foster children or meet needs of LGBTQ youth.
- They might be able to add a column to the Statewide Vacancy List to address it in the matching process.
- There are differences in the way referrals are handled in private agencies and DCFS homes.

DCFS Update

Michelle Grove

Michelle stated that a lot of issues have been brought forward re: Emergency Foster Care and they will hold a meeting on September 24th in Bloomington. Arrelida Hall-Johnson and possibly Carol Sheley will represent the SWFCAC. It was suggested that Darrel Johnson and Ashley Deckert might also be willing to participate.

Moving from Law to Policy and Procedure

Alexa Koziol

Alexa works with Gwen Walsh in the Legislative Office. She reviewed the steps a new bill works through before being presented for approval and signature by the Governor. She walked us through steps we can take as individuals to comment on bills, including how to file a witness slip. www.ilga.gov gives a bill synopsis, sponsors, progress etc. Alexa discussed several laws and the Council collected the following input for Policy.

HB 4796 – The State Guardian answered questions regarding the distinctions between civil orders of protection, protective orders and no contact orders. The council recognized the importance of adding the language to policy and procedure regarding the additional “family or household members” added to those already covered by law.

HB 4887 – The council strongly supports this bill regarding providing documentation to youth and recognized the importance of revising the language in policy and procedure.

HB 5122 - The council strongly supports this bill regarding providing post-secondary tuition and fee waivers for amounts not already covered under the Pell grant and recognizes the importance of revising the language in policy and procedure and providing the information to foster parents.

HB 5155 – There were no specific council comments regarding this bill.

Council Paperwork

Gail Mayer

Gail asked council members to please try to turn in paperwork the day of the meeting, if possible. If you cannot do that, please turn them in within 5 days of the meeting.

Immersion Sites Update

Norma Machay

Norma stated that the Immersion Sites have moved into the research and development stage. She stated that they are now referred to as Innovative Sites. She showed the Allegheny County Child & Family Team Meeting video and said that we are now using the same process and permanency has increased. It works. It is a change in mindset. The initial four sites used a Core Practice Model of family engagement through a trauma lens. The family determines what they need and how to achieve their goals. Supports, i.e., family, friends and neighbors, are to be part of the process. Facilitators guide them through the process. Permanency caseworkers and supervisors will have three trainings, Model of Supervisory Practice, Child & Family Team Meetings and Conferencing and Teaming.

Staff are coached to a facilitator position, then coached to a coach position, then coached to a master coach position. 1-1/1 to 2-hour meetings are held. There's not a prescribed number of meetings that have to be held for practice prior to taking on the coaching job. The Department is addressing caseloads. Workers strive to be at the BH level or below, which is 15 cases or fewer. The Model of Supervisory Practice provides individualized support for workers. They really focus on people, looking at their functional strengths. They are actually sharing foster homes between private agencies and DCFS. The second phase rolled out June 1st with Caritas. They work to create a wrap program and "think outside the box" when meeting the needs of families.

Licensing Update

Ashley Deckert

Ashley Deckert is closing out her term as the Acting Deputy Director of Licensing. She started out in Intact Family Services and served in Child Protection and transitioned to Licensing. She is a supervisor in the Central Region. George Vennikandam, a former Licensing deputy, is returning to the role starting on Monday.

Some recent challenges include activities that came from a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that resulted from a recent Federal audit. Leadership issues and a backlog of cases have stressed the unit. Background checks present delays. They do have temporary staff, but it's difficult to train and retain them when they're just in as short-term employees. The U of I Business Consulting Group is looking at their background check processes and help them become more effective. They've hired more permanent staff and along with their strategic planning they hope to be moving forward more effectively very soon. (This impacts things like Day Care licensing, too.)

Discussion:

- It's very difficult to take a license away from a foster home. An allegation may be unfounded in child protection but still substantiated in licensing. Foster parents are able to go under a Protective Action Plan, some don't renew their license, they sometimes might voluntarily surrender their license, and some might have their license revoked.
- Janet Ahern stated that youth may have their juvenile records expunged. Some expunge automatically and sometimes they have to request it. Licensing is now working on supporting youth in expunging records and get a clean start.

Public Comment – None

Committee Reports

Policy/Legislation – Donna reported that the committee looked at the distinctions between monthly Child & Family Team (C&FT) meetings which bring all parties to the table to work on adding supports to the family to encourage success and Administrative Case Reviews which go through the service plan and determine whether they are up-to-date on paperwork and satisfactory progress is being made. The committee determined that we need someone to look at the Core model, especially with regard to the birth parent’s apparent ability to determine whether foster parents are involved in C&FT meetings. The committee noted that the meeting should focus on the child, not the parents, so all stakeholders should attend. The committee would like to have input into the new C&FT model which will roll out in early 2019. There is to be a new C&FT meeting model rolling out throughout the state in March 2019. We need to confirm when this is to happen and find out if we can somehow have input and oversight in the new process. Carol Sheley, SWFCAC chair, will be in charge of investigating this.

The committee also discussed foster parents as Fictive Kin. Foster Parents are not considered a permanency option till one year has passed, and the committee suggested changing the timeframe from one year to 60 days. They noted that after 60 days foster parents have appeal rights for removal of child. The committee consensus was that once you have been fictive kin, you should always be fictive kin, unless there have been allegations, and according to the Foster Parent Law, the caseworker is to return to you as a resource if it is in the child's best interest. It was noted that committee members’ experience tells us that the definition of fictive kin varies depending on the caseworker. The committee recommended having their chairperson write a memo to legislators, emailing it to council members for approval prior to sending.

Council Discussion:

- Concern was expressed that 60 days is a very short term and that the short length of time may be a barrier toward reunification.
- The Department is looking at the definition of fictive kin. Right now, if a child returns home foster parents are not considered fictive kin until after a year in their care.
- The council will bring someone from policy to address this with the council.
- The Child and Family Team Meeting brings all parties to the table to work on adding supports to the family to bring more success.

Disruptions in Foster Care when Adoptions are Pending

The committee expressed concern that siblings are being moved out of successful pre-adoptive placements to be placed with siblings that, in many cases, do not know each other.

Recommendation: Caseworkers should first consider what is in the best interests of the children. Moving a child to be with siblings should not be automatic, especially if the child does not know the siblings.

We need to ask our Council if anyone has a Representative(s) or Senator(s) who will support our legislation. Nick Sauer has resigned.

*Training Committee - Harriet Kersh read the committee’s recommendation to the Director to establish a solid process to include the SWFCAC in foster parent training, beginning with the

proposal of training topics and throughout the development and review of training that impacts foster parents as stakeholders. Carol asked for feedback. Motion: Gladys Boyd made the motion to forward the recommendation to Director Walker. Stephanie Tesreau seconded, and the motion carried. The important note to the council is that if Training follows through on the recommendation council members must review and provide feedback.

*FPSS – Two committee members met during another meeting and asked the council to revise the committee description to include resources who are not called Foster Parent Support Specialists, identifying ways to support the statewide foster parent population as a whole. They suggested renaming the committee Foster Parent Support.

Council Discussion:

- We could call other agencies or read implementation plans to identify ways other agencies support their foster parents.
- Changing the committee name changes the purpose of the committee.
- Michelle Grove noted that Lake County Immersion Site has two FPSS that serve only private agency foster parents.
- Southern region is also looking at how it looks to expand outside DCFS supported homes.
- Carol Sheley noted that there are no FPSS at private agencies to deal with high-end cases.
- Terry McGlothlin stated that in the past the Department tried to reduce the number of FPSS by half, and this committee was formed to support and grow the Foster Parent Support Specialist program.
- This is a statewide council and it needs to support all foster parents in the state.
- The ability to reach out to private agencies is hampered because they don't want FPSS involved within their agencies.
- Michelle suggested that we invite some private agencies to a council meeting.
- Gwenn suggested that we could add "Resources" to the committee description.
- Norma Machay stated that Lake County added specific wording to include all. They started a foster parent support group, a blog and posts on Facebook and Twitter. She noted that once private agencies understand the value, they will welcome FPSS.
- People, including the Director, need to be educated about what the FPSS does and how that support helps maintain stability for our youth.
- The subcommittee needs to know where support groups are located.
- Michelle noted that Operations supports the FPSS program. Michelle and Gail, with the support of the field, are working to tighten the infrastructure with the field.
- Instead of changing the committee name, we need to update the description.

The FPSS Committee will meet at 8pm October 18th at the Wyndham. Stephanie Tesreau was added to the committee.

*Health Care Committee – the Health Care Committee meeting scheduled for 9/13/18 was cancelled by the chairperson.

*Hospitality/Marketing – Donna reported that as a component of public relations a position statement was sent to Vanessa James to endorse the proposed collaboration between Fostering Families Today magazine and Illinois Families Now & Forever.

Reports from Other Councils/ Committees/ Workgroups

*CWAC

Rachel, Mary, Gordon

Mary reported that no additional meetings have been held.

*IFAPA

Gladys Boyd

No report. No meetings have been scheduled although a couple of board members talk monthly. We'll distribute information when a meeting is scheduled.

Regional Reports

Northern – Donna Gregory stated that they hold conference calls the first Thursday of each month 10 times per year, with two in-person meetings per year.

Central – Everyone reported about back-to-school events at the August meeting. Several regional council meetings will take place in September and October and a break for summer.

Cook North – No report

Cook South – No report

Southern Region – Mary reported that they're still working on identifying a contact for supporting the regional council. Council members have started doing quarterly meet and greets with foster parents, providing child care and sharing information. Their first meeting was a success and their next meeting is scheduled for November. They also did a Back-to-School program where they distributed 160 pairs of shoes to foster children they collected by donation. Extras were donated to a local foster care closet.

Cook Central – Denise Spires reported they held a meeting June 26th in the Maywood office. Their regional meetings are open to all foster parents. The licensing supervisor asked to speak to the foster parents and Denise stated that he is very good to share information and work with. They do not meet during the summer. Their next meeting will be Tuesday Sept 25th at 1701 South 1st Avenue in Maywood from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. They'll have a presentation from staff from the Maywood Fire Departments regarding fire safety and will work on their implementation plan. She said they always offer some sort of pre-approved training for two credit hours. They were able to obtain and distribute school supplies for HMR families.

Next Meeting Date: October 19, 2018, joint meeting with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council at the Wyndham Hotel, Springfield, Illinois

Kate Monte made the motion to adjourn. Gladys Boyd seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.