

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
MINUTES
March 18, 2022 9:00 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.
WebEx videoconference**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Gladys Boyd	Kathryn Adrian	Tina Haynes	Gwenn Eyer
Kelly Elleman	Kate Monte	Maria Leavengood	Michelle Grove
Arrelda Hall	Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond	Brenda Marshall	Charlotte Gallagher
Tiffany Johnson		Solange Morrissette	Kim Willis
Harriet Kersh		Roxana Ortiz	
Samella Taylor-Lewis		Crystal Rekart	
Susan McConnell		Elizabeth Richmond	
Audrey Reynolds		Matthew Schaad	
Mary Savage			
Phyllis Summers			
Rebecca Thomas			

Welcome/Introduction

Arrelda Hall, SWFCAC chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. She welcomed everyone and noted that this meeting is being recorded. Susan McConnell, vice chair, conducted the IAAC voice roll call.

Approval of January 21, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mary Savage made the motion to accept the Feb 25, 2021 meeting minutes. Harriet Kersh seconded. The motion carried via voice

**Update from Office of Caregiver and Parent Support Michelle Grove,
Associate Deputy Director**

Discussions regarding on going hiring within the Department and POS. New positions are posted to support DCP and Placement. Youth in care and the management/placement of the youth was discussed. There is an active court order that there should be no youth sleeping in the offices. Data has been gathered since December on the number of youth in the office, BMN and other high risk areas. Data from December and January identified that Central and Cook regions have the highest numbers. Foster parents have reported multiple phone calls for placement and is a source of frustration. Leadership is meeting regularly to identify solutions to support foster parents. Foster parents have expressed concerns that they do not get the required paperwork from the field and need resources, including staff, more readily available. The Department has put out calls for services and are working diligently to develop resources for youth placement. This includes shelter beds, EFC homes and other supportive and residential homes.

There will be a new Birth Parent Council and there will be a new chapter in Central Region. Amber Jones and Tiffany Sisk out of the Springfield Field Office will be running the new Birth Parent chapter in Central. The Southern region will have a chapter starting in July.

The steering committee will be changing into the Statewide Parent Advisory Council (SAPC). There were focus groups which identified numerous of concerns, but the two primary concerns were being treated with respect by workers and visitation. The statewide parenting council will meet quarterly. This committee will work to plan and implement an ongoing statewide structure to provide birth parent input into the larger child welfare CQI system. Information from the chapters will be presented to the birth parent council and to identify common themes that imply a need for systemic change.

Crystal Rekart from the Statewide Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) presented the most recent information from their meeting with the director. The SYAB has numerous initiatives that were recently finalized. These include: achieving permanency, strengthen communication with caseworkers, strengthen siblings contact and visitation, healthy food options in foster homes and implementation of the GAL Law. The GAL law is where the youth and foster parents have ongoing contact with the GAL assigned to the Youth in Care. There are flyers currently being made which explain the process and how to contact the Advocacy Office to get in touch with the GAL. Matthew Schaad is a youth on the SYAB and spoke about his experience working with the director. Matthew stated that it went really well, and that the director was very responsive to their ideas and concerns.

Scoring Implementation Plans Update

Gwenn Eyer

All score sheets for implantation plans need to be turned in ASAP. The comments will go out to the agencies and directors. The council will need to vote to approve the plans. Nominations for awards will be distributed so the council may give out awards for the top three plans.

Required Training for Council Members

Kim Willis

Open Meetings Act (OMA) training needs to be completed by all council members. If there are issues, contact the help desk. This is a virtual training and there is a paper version available. Training is to be completed by March 21. I would say 3/21/22 and be consistent with the dates in the document. Ethics and Harassment training will be distributed soon. Council members should scan all completion certificates and forward to the council mailbox. I would list the council mailbox. OMA is required within the first 30 days? There are two trainings that are due – I would list the proper name for each training so they know how to find it. If they do not know how who do they contact? The mailbox?

Providing Input in the Annual Progress & Services Report

There has been ongoing discussion about the council developing input into the APSR to give foster parents a voice. A work group needs to be established and Susan McConnell stated she was willing to sit on the workgroup.

Day Care Workgroup Report

Rebecca Thomas I would have Rebecca

edit her section to assure the language is correct.

The last meeting was on 3/17/22 and the change management form has gone to the SPICE committee, with no update, yet. Stacey Mixon is consulted for input regarding changes and support. There is a recommendation for training for workers on the exceptional payment form. This would include

information about what the required documentation is needed and how to get this information out to the workers and foster parents. The big concern is the required documentation for the exceptional payment. There was a request for the Legislative committee to work with the Daycare work group to get the current rate up from \$20 per day or \$10 per half day. This rate can only be changed by legislature. There is need for examples of how this low rate is barrier for foster parents. There is an ongoing debate regarding the process of getting the exceptional payment form from the foster parent to Stacey Mixon and a lot of misinformation of who would approve the Exceptional payment form. There is still not a direct answer on the correct process. The foster parent needs to go through the correct chain of command and get the required documentation and if that is not successful then go to the supervisor and then the RA. An exceptional payment form can be shared to give an idea of what the process starts with and more concrete examples are needed on how this continues to be an issue. Daycare is very time sensitive and making it a smoother process is essential. Otherwise, the placement could be disrupted. There has been a newsletter sent to foster parents in the past, but it was stopped due to change in positions. There was discussion about restarting the newsletter and possibly using social media such as a Facebook page for Statewide to share information. Social media and the newsletter would be up to the public relations committee, if approved by the Department.

Reports from Other Councils/Committees/Workgroups:

Council Reports:

CWAC

Harriet Kersh/Mary Savage/Phyllis Summers

There was no CWAC meeting since the last Council meeting.

IFAPA

Gladys Boyd/Arrelda Hall

On a personal note, Gladys described issues she faced with getting children medical service in a timely manner.

IFAPA will still be meeting with the director and they are still developing an agenda for this meeting. Topics include: After hours workers and getting in touch with them and receiving the 906 and no medical card. Hot topics have been placed on hold for a long time. They want to expedite the hold process for foster homes, noting the 20 day hold process and fast tracking them. There was a request for Licensing to come speak in the future. We need to ask for licensing to come and give them prep as to why they need to come. This time it is too soon but for next month.

Regional Administrators Update

None

Regional Reports:

Northern Region

Rebecca Thomas

- Support groups are going well and providing direction to foster parents with the court process.

- Multiple foster homes are full or relinquishing their licenses due to ongoing issues with either caseworkers or investigations.
- SASS is not returning calls or providing services in a timely manner to youth in care.
- Continued lack of resources and respite for foster homes.
- Foster parents are not being treated with respect from caseworkers and continue to be threatened with a hotline call. The caseworkers are not held accountable to anyone and there are no consequences for caseworkers. Foster parents are not willing to file a grievance due to concerns about backlash.

Central

- Regular trainings and support groups are being very successful.
- There are private foster parent supports.
- Lack of respite.
- Trainings that focus on de-escalation techniques for youth are needed
- Ongoing concerns in regard to placing specialized children in traditional foster homes that are not equipped or wanting to take children with extreme behavioral issues. The traditional homes are not appropriate for these children.
- Many foster homes are being asked to not be called for placement.

Public Comment

None

Stakeholder Comment

None

MOTION: Mary Savage made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Harriet Kersch seconded, and the motion carried by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:58am

Next Meeting: April 22,2022 9:00-noon, via WebEx for the health and safety of our members.