

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
MEETING NOTES
April 16, 2021
WebEx videoconference
9:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Kathryn Adrian	Gladys Boyd	Audriana Aranda	Janet Ahern
Jessica Bullard	Kimberly Coniglio	Lori Benner	Chevelle Bailey
Kelly Elleman	Tiffany Jones	Diana Blackburn	Dagene Brown
Jimmie Golden	Ken Keefe	Debbie Freke	Gwenn Eyer
Arrelida Hall	Maya Maclin	Kara Hamilton	Michelle Grove
Harriet Kersh	Kellye Norris	Tina Haynes	
Susan McConnell	Stephanie Tesreau	Solange Morrissette	
Kate Monte		Rosanna Perino	
Audrey Reynolds		Crystal Rekart	
Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond		Elizabeth Richmond	
Carol Sheley		Carlene Van Dyke	
Mary Savage			
Phyllis Summers			
Samella Taylor-Lewis			
Rebecca Thomas			

9:00 Welcome/Roll Call

Arrelida Hall, Vice Chairperson, opened the meeting in the chairperson's absence. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and a voice roll call was conducted.

Kate Monte made the motion to approve the March 19th, 2020 meeting minutes. Mary Savage seconded and the voice vote passed the motion.

Michelle Grove read the OCPS report.

Gwenn Eyer reported on the Foster Parent Law Award ballots that will be distributed to council members. She noted that the DCFS Director typically joins a council meeting to present three agency awards. Award categories include the following: Innovative Approaches to Service Delivery, Treating Foster Parents with Dignity and Respect and

Foster Parent Involvement within the Agency/ in Implementation Plan Development.

Reports from Other Councils/Committees/Workgroups:

Council Reports:

*CWAC

Harriet Kersh/Mary Savage

Mary noted that CWAC has not met since the last SWFCAC meeting. She reported on the following committee meetings:

Family Finding – is working with a program that Texas uses where CASA assists with finding family members for youth-in-care. They are looking at the possibility of partnering with CASA to do something similar in Illinois. The goal is not to just find foster care placements for youth in care, but to also identify supports – people who might be willing to assist with respite, send cards and letters, chat with the child on the phone, transport to appointments, etc. The idea is to build a support system (other than the case manager) for the child, family and foster parent. This could be very useful when working with kids in residential that will be stepping down.

Retention – is working on what we can do to diminish foster parent turn-over. Discussed at the last meeting was the important role of Foster Parent Support Specialists. Krista Teckenbrock from Caritas Family Solutions joined the meeting to present on Caritas' new Foster Parent Mentoring Program. Updates on the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook continue.

Respite – the group continues to brainstorm for ways to make respite more accessible to all foster parents. Discussion included ways to get respite paid for, for all foster parents. They also held a discussion about the difference between Normalcy and Respite procedures. They reviewed Policy 315.

*IFAPA

Gladys Boyd/Arrelda Hall

Arrelda reported that IFAPA has not met since out last meeting.

SPIDER

Matt Jedlowski

SEE Ppt.

Regional Reports:

*Northern Region Report

Kimberly Coniglio/Rebecca Thomas

Rebecca reported that the Kids in Need group in McKendree County has opened a home for family visitation. It includes a kitchen, living room, etc. Lake County has plans to open one in the future. A Kane County foster parent recently opened a beautiful storefront in Elgin to offer clothing to foster families. Rebecca stated that Northern Region foster parents continue to share their concerns about day care. They also are concerned that they are being threatened with removal if they are unable/ unwilling to transport children and youth.

*Central Region Report Ken Keefe/Kelly Elleman/Kathryn Adrian
*Cook North Kate Monte
*Southern Region Stephanie Tesreau/Audrey Reynolds
*Cook South Maya Maclin/Kellye Norris
No report.

*Cook Central Arrelda Hall/Jimmie Golden
Cook Central has combined with the other cook sub regions for a combined meeting on the third Tuesday of the month. It is invitation only, so foster parents should contact Arrelda for a meeting invitation. The next meeting will focus on recruitment and retention.

Committee Reports:

*Health Care Committee Kimberly Coniglio
No report.

*Training Committee Harriet Kersh
Harriet reported that they meet on the second Thursday of the month at 2pm. They touched base briefly. Harriet met with Elizabeth to discuss the three-part Home of Relative Orientation that is currently under review. The first session is to be completed by DCFS investigators. The second and third sessions are to be completed by relative foster parents within the first two weeks of placement. The committee reviewed the Introduction to Foster Parent Law Training. Comments indicated that it is a concise, interactive on-demand training, and presented well.

*Foster Parent Support Specialist Committee Arrelda Hall
The FPSS Committee has taken on the project of updating the Foster Parent Handbook. (It has not been updated since 2014.) They have divided it up and will update information to reflect current policies and procedures.

*Policy & Legislative Committee Susan McConnell/Stephanie Tesreau
Susan will share committee work

*Hospitality and Public Relations Stephanie Tesreau
Michelle has this info.

*Nomination Committee Kate Monte
Kate will report at the next meeting.

*Respite

Michelle reported that she spoke with the chairperson of the statewide Respite Committee re: the SWFCAC recommendations that have been submitted. The statewide committee has been reviewing existing policies and procedures. Private agencies maintain their own policies. They are asking for recommendations from the SWFCAC to shape these procedures. Arrelda asked Michelle to send out the invite for the next meeting.

*Membership Susan McConnell
Jason stated that there is currently one council vacancy for Cook North.

*Adolescent Issues Kimberly Coniglio
No Report.

*Permanency Susan McConnell
Susan stated that they have read some reports and are establishing the mission for their committee.

Public Comment

- Crystal Rekart with Be Strong Families noted that a Statewide Youth Advisory Board member was on the call earlier. She invited people to ask questions.
- New FPSS volunteered to serve on a committee. Arrelda reminded that committees are council committees and encouraged her to share information with council members.

Stakeholder Comments

- Arrelda reminded council members of the importance of participating on council committees.
- Michelle Grove reported that the council conducted an onboarding session for new and veteran council members. Our Office of Caregiver and Parent Support staff are in place to support the council, including the subcommittees. We will arrange and host committee calls, take minutes, etc. Michelle is a member of a management committee that will be a direct link to the DCFS Director.
- Susan McConnell reported on their new Springboard to Adulthood program for older youth. They are committed to serving about a dozen kids during the first year, providing all the tools they need to be successful. They are looking for a full-time person to manage that program. It will begin in Northern Region and they hope to go statewide in the future.
- Mary Savage indicated that the day care issue is a hot topic in Southern Region.

Closing Council Discussion

The council will put together a team to meet with administration to represent the council re: day care issues. Rebecca Thomas, Mary Savage and Arrelda Hall will participate.

Proposed Agenda Items

- Staffing issues in Southern Region

Harriet Kersh made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Rebecca Thomas seconded and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Next Meeting: June 18th, 2021, 9:00 a.m., Webex