

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
MINUTES
Friday, October 15, 2021 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
WebEx videoconference**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Gladys Boyd	Kathryn Adrian	Julie Cebulski	Gwenn Eyer
Kimberly Coniglio	Kelly Elleman	Tina Haynes	Renee Mays
Arrelda Hall	Kate Monte	Clara Law	Margaret Scotellaro, MD
Tiffany Johnson	Kellye Norris	Maria Levensgood	
Harriet Kersh	Mary Savage	Ashley Nicole Murphy	
Susan McConnell		Crystal Rekart	
Maya Maclin		Heather Risser	
Audrey Reynolds		Carol Sheley	
Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond			
Phyllis Summers			
Samella Taylor-Lewis			
Rebecca Thomas			

Welcome/Introduction

Arrelda Hall, chairperson, called the meeting to order and announced that the meeting is being recorded. Susan McConnell, vice chair, conducted a voice roll call. Arrelda invited members and guests to give brief self-introductions. Arrelda recognized Tina Haynes, a foster parent with extensive experience supporting adolescents. Tina will join as an ad hoc member of the Adolescent Issues workgroup.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Arrelda Hall, council chair, asked if there were any questions about the minutes, or any concerns that needed to be addressed. Gladys Boyd stated that she felt like everything was supposed to be recorded and sent to the Director. She noted that he has not been receiving any reports from the SWFCAC. She said that we are not meeting our policies, and he's not getting invitations to come to our meetings every month. She stated that he is to know the meeting location, date and time, even though we are conducting virtual meetings, so that he has the choice to decide whether to attend. She stated that the minutes are incomplete. Gwenn Eyer noted that the reports were changed some time ago and that Rule 340 indicates only that the council is required to submit monthly reports about the collection and processing of the implementation plans. Gladys disagreed. Gladys questioned the part of the minutes where it addressed a draft report that would be sent to council members for review and comment. Gwenn noted that all communication should go through the council mailbox. Gladys reiterated that the minutes were incomplete because the meeting time was missing in the "Next Meeting" section at the

end. Gwenn asked if that was the only revision she was requesting, stating that she would make the correction and would list the meeting start time in future minutes. Gladys said that she believed it necessary, because, “I do not want to feel unimportant as we were called at the last meeting. We are important. He (the Director) does need to know what is going on. He does need to know that. We’re not just sitting around doing nothing. And if our rules state that he has to know everything, then I feel like that’s what he should know because we are someone. We are the Statewide Advisory Council.”

Harriet Kersh said she didn’t think the statement that was made at the last meeting was saying that the Statewide is not important; it was more to break down how things work with the Directors because they have so many meetings to attend. She said it’s not that ours aren’t important, but it is up to him to decide which meetings to attend. He gets information from his team. Harriet said that she did not understand that he was not being given information, but rather that there is a process for inviting him to council meetings. She stated that her understanding of the previous discussion was that SWFCAC needed a topic to draw in the Director. Gwenn Eyer reiterated that there is a statewide process to invite the Director to meetings that includes submitting an outline of items to be addressed.

Gladys Boyd read the council responsibilities including the council’s charge to advise the Director of the Department or his designees. She reiterated that we need to be complete in our minutes.

Rebecca Thomas asked if we know whether the minutes go to the Director. Gwenn Eyer will check with the person she sends approved minutes to.

Motion: Maya Maclin made the motion to accept the September 17, 2021 meeting minutes amended with the addition of the 9:00a.m. Next Meeting start time. Audrey Reynolds seconded and the motion carried unanimously via voice vote.

Office of Caregiver and Parent Support

Michelle Grove

Gwenn Eyer reported on Michelle’s behalf. She reminded council members that we sent out the Stakeholder Collaborative information for council review. The purpose of the Stakeholder Collaborative is to provide a structured process bringing together representatives from all advisory groups to discuss efforts and contributions of each group. The primary objectives of the meeting are: 1) Improve communication between advisory groups and DCFS administration; 2) Increase awareness about initiatives across DCFS divisions and advisory groups; 3) Achieve consistent messaging of efforts and initiatives; 4) Review recommendations for system or practice changes for potential unintended impacts from a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion; 5) Decrease duplication of efforts through strategic planning and communication; 6) Ensure stakeholders are engaged in collaboration on recommendations for system and/or practice changes; 7) Ensure stakeholders are informed of the dispositions in a timely manner; and 8) Track and archive responses to recommendations to keep a historical record to inform future CQI efforts based on lessons learned. Reports still go to the Director. This is an additional process that goes to the senior leaders from the advisory councils. This is

represented in the PIP and the Department has adopted this process. All issues can be completed on the change management form. The council has a current one with the daycare issue.

Gwenn said that Michelle asked if the council is ready to meet in person with social distancing. There was no consensus that the council is ready to go to in-person meetings.

Jason Cummins has left the unit. He will be replaced, and additional staff are in the process of being hired. The mailbox will continue to be monitored by The Office of Caregiver and Parent Support. Our office is down 7 staff, but the hope is by the end of the year we will be fully staffed.

The Adoption/Guardianship Parent Support program has begun. This will mimic the Foster Parent Support Specialist program. The pilot will start in Central and Cook to work out the details and then will expand statewide. Please, if you know anyone in Central or Cook interested in supporting Adoptive or Guardianship parents, this is a great opportunity to get involved in the front end of a great program.

Support Services for Youth with Asthma Margaret Scotellaro, MD, Clara Law, Ashley Nicole Murphy, Heather Risser

Dr. Scotellaro introduced herself and research partners on the call. Heather Risser is a senior researcher; Ashley Murphy, researcher; and Clara Law, researcher who oversees students. This program began as nurses in the home supporting children with asthma, preventing ER visits and hospitalizations. They are looking for ways to provide virtual home visits to provide education and support. They no longer have DCFS nurses to provide the support but they have student nurses who may provide the support. Heather reported that when children come into care their asthma treatment plans may change and this will help keep continuity. The overall program goals: improve asthma-related outcomes. This is an inexpensive intervention and the hope is to someday have Medicare cover the costs.



Asthma Intervention
Program - Overview.p

Feedback Discussion:

- Susan McConnell stated that her agency records training and posts it for foster parent access.
- Rebecca Thomas noted that she experienced a child coming into care for the first time and it was a week before she recognized the child had asthma, upon receipt of the nebulizer. There is a breakdown in the processes that exist.
- Focus on youth new to care within three months to see if a new diagnosis comes up to identify need.
- Council members were invited to recommend other experienced foster parents to provide input through a focus group.
- Susan indicated that her agency would send out an Email blast for them.
- They will come back to present findings from time to time, by request.

Regional Reports:

*Northern Region Report

Kimberly Coniglio/Rebecca Thomas

Rebecca reported that another support group has been added in McKendree County. They continue to address the same issues, i.e., lack of foster homes, difficulty finding foster homes, homes for teens, the lack of transportation contracts, etc. She stated that parents and workers are transporting, even in areas where there are contracts. Kimberly reported that issues around working parents, especially working mothers, have resulted in placement disruptions. She indicated that this has not historically been an issue. It has been reported that foster parents in one family are being criticized by caseworkers for working, etc., to the point of being harassed. Rebecca indicated that she had been notified of backlash against foster parents, as well, relating it to stress everyone has felt through the pandemic. Kimberly said this is related to the employment of the foster mom, at home and/or outside the home. She acknowledged the Foster Parent Law and the parents could file a grievance or contact the Advocacy Office; and noted that she had reported this during the last meeting and she would love to know what the council is doing to address the issue. Kimberly recommended the council take this on as an issue to be addressed. It was noted that the majority of foster parent females work. Rebecca noted an additional challenge in the lack of availability for after-hours contact. Renee Mays shared information and contact numbers for some DCFS resources in the chat. Tiffany Johnson noted that they have utilized the Child Intake and Recovery Unit to provide support.

*Central Region Report

Kelly Elleman/Kathryn Adrian

No report.

*Cook North

Kate Monte

No report.

*Southern Region

Audrey Reynolds

The following report was submitted in writing prior to the meeting.

The continued workforce crisis is causing serious issues across multiple agencies. Foster parents report a lack of support or even contact with their caseworker. This has far-reaching impacts for kids and parents, as forms are not getting filled out, etc. YouthCare has come up again as a pain point. Foster parents report not having providers in their area who take YouthCare, and having difficulty finding those who do. The transition to Addus for transport has not been going smoothly. There have been quite a few reports of issues with the Addus drivers. The FPSS in the region report having more difficulty than normal placing challenging kiddos. There are many children being held in hospitals much longer than medically necessary. Lastly, there has been a definite struggle finding therapeutic daycares in the Southern Region and Audrey is looking for resources.

*Cook South

Maya Maclin/Kellye Norris

No report.

*Cook Central

Arrelda Hall

Arrelda submitted a written report prior to leaving the call.

Cook Central, along with the other Cook sub-regions, has started back having combined monthly foster parent support group meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. The September meeting was held on 9/21/21 and Donnis Briscoe was the presenter. She gave very valuable information on educational advocacy. The foster parents appreciated her so much that she is coming back for a second time on 10/19/21 for part two.

Reports from Other Councils/Committees/Workgroups:

Council Reports:

*CWAC Harriet Kersh/Mary Savage, Phyllis Summers
No meeting has been held since the last council meeting.

*IFAPA Gladys Boyd/Arrelda Hall
Gladys reported that foster parents are still having problems with accepting new children into their home. Some parents are complaining about birth parents who file income tax for their children currently placed in foster homes. She noted that foster parents do not have a good understanding of the Foster Parent Law and the work of the Advocacy Office. She said that some foster parents are being asked not to work and, based on information received at the last SWFCAC, she tells them that 402 indicates that foster parents should have income to meet their needs. She reported that IFAPA has scheduled a Zoom meeting with the Director on November 1 at 2:30 p.m. Subjects to be addressed include day care and respite. Gladys reported that as a member of SWFCAC, Rebecca Thomas has been invited to join the meeting, along with several IFAPA members.

Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond asked Gladys if she was referring to homes being asked to serve as Emergency Foster Homes. He stated that they reimburse at a much higher rate, but you have to be ready, willing and able to take a child any time, 24 hours a day, so you could not work if you were going to do that. Gladys did not know if the ones she referred to were Emergency Foster Homes.

Workgroup Report

*Day Care Arrelda Hall, Mary Savage, Rebecca Thomas,
Jesse Rodrigues-Hammond, Audrey Reynolds
Rebecca reported that the workgroup met and they are still waiting for one critical piece of information from DHS, following multiple scheduled meetings they have cancelled. She said that once they have that piece they will be able to take a proposal to the council.

Council Committees

Council

Leadership, Meetings and Reporting

Gwenn Eyer read the committee lists and council updates were made. Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond accepted the chair position on the Policy Legislation Committee. The council discussed how to conduct committee meetings, including the option of meeting during the council meetings. Gladys reported that in the past, committees met the night before the meetings, reporting at the meeting the next day. Gwenn Eyer reported that the Office of Caregiver & Parent Support is willing to set up virtual meetings, by request.

Committee Reports:

*Health Care No chairperson assigned

*Training Harriet Kersh

*Foster Parent Support Specialists Arrelda Hall

The committee has not met, but Arrelda reported that Foster Parent Support Specialists statewide have been working to support the Permanency Division by identifying foster parents that are willing to accept youth in care 24 hours a day for up to 45 days. The Office of Caregiver & Parent Support has been working to fill all positions statewide based on the needs of foster parents.

*Policy & Legislative Susan McConnell
No report.

*Hospitality and Public Relations Arrelda Hall
No report.

*Respite Gladys Boyd
No report.

*Membership Susan McConnell
No report.

*Adolescent Issues
No report. Need a chairperson.

*Permanency Susan McConnell
This committee will meet to address transportation issues.

*Nomination
Tabled until spring. The nominations committee will be appointed at the April meeting.

Public Comment

Crystal Rekart gave a Youth Advisory Board update. Senate bill 755 was signed by the Governor on 7-31-22 to connect youth to their Guardians Ad Litem. DCFS has until 12-31-21 to develop a plan to disseminate the information to youth and their caregivers. The SYAB meets with the Director quarterly. They are meeting with Loyola with their new list of initiatives, including permanency of any type – adoption, guardianship, and return home. Another top initiative is finding more and higher quality foster homes. They are sharing their concerns around their integration into the foster family, their meals, etc. They are officially voting on a new DEI committee which currently includes LGBTQI+, African American and Latino Affinity Groups.

Stakeholder Comment

Kimberly Coniglio asked how presenters were added to the agenda and how they are chosen. She stated that she had never once been given the option to accept or decline a proposed council presenter/ presentation as part of the council as a whole. She stated that the council should be consulted prior to adding presentations to the agenda. She said that the council should have some say in it because sometimes they are so inundated with guests they are detailed from the true mission of the council. Gwenn noted that the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Law and the council bylaws indicate that the chairperson works with the Office of Caregiver & Parent Support to draft the agenda.

Rebecca Thomas said that we do need to hear from someone that will address the transportation issue, to actually hear what the council is saying and do something.

Susan McConnell said that she has heard that starting next year every case will be assigned a CASA.

No report.

Committee Meetings

Breakout rooms were opened for four committees: Training, Policy and Legislation, Respite and Permanency. Gladys Boyd announced that the Respite Committee would join the Policy Committee meeting.

Closing Council Discussion

The council will work with Arrelida Hall to develop the next meeting agenda at the end of each meeting and ask council members to approve outside speakers at the council meeting.

Susan McConnell asked committees to meet at least once between now and the next meeting. Gwenn Eyer will send out the committee list and membership lists. The group that remained came back together, but there were no committee reports.

Potential Agenda Items:

- Approve a process for including outside presenters.
- Permanency Presentation from joint council workgroup
- Transportation

MOTION: Dr. Tiffany Johnson made motion to adjourn the meeting. Gladys Boyd seconded and the motion carried by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned 12:00p.m.

Next Meeting: Joint meeting with the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council November 5, 2021, 9:00-noon, via WebEx for the health and safety of our members.