

**Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
 Joint Meeting with Illinois Adoption Advisory Council
 MINUTES
 November 5, 2021 9:00 a.m. – 11:16 a.m.
 WebEx videoconference**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT	IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT
Gladys Boyd	Kathryn Adrian	Mary Kay Collins	Keely Giles
Kimberly Coniglio	Kate Monte	Katie Friend	Maripat Oliver
Kelly Elleman	Kellye Norris	Alex Montgomery	Cara Siebert
Arrelda Hall	Maya Maclin	Shirly Padera	Danny Tolliver
Tiffany Johnson	Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond	Crystal Rekart	Karen Wardlaw
Harriet Kersh	Samella Taylor-Lewis	Elizabeth Richmond	Jeremy Wheeler
Susan McConnell		Danielle Sanders	
Audrey Reynolds		Brittany Sprouse	
Mary Savage	STAFF	Karen Taylor	GUESTS
Phyllis Summers	Ray Gates	Amy Trotter	Debbie Freke
Rebecca Thomas	Michelle Grove	Mark Werner	Tina Haynes
	Terry McGlothlin		Maria Levengood
	Joseph Smith		Crystal Rekart
	Gayla Webster		Carol Sheley
			Arlene Woods
			Julie Yelverton

Welcome/Introduction

Katie Friend, IAAC chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and conducted an IAAC voice roll call. Susan McConnell, SWFCAC, vice chairperson, conducted the SWFCAC voice roll call.

Adoption Month Celebration

Mary Kay Collins

Mary Kay reported on National Adoption Month celebration activities in Illinois. Due to COVID restrictions no in-person activities are being scheduled again this year. Children’s coloring sheets will be posted on the DCFS websites and Facebook site as well as with resource agencies for children to color and submit back to the Council. These can then be posted on those sites (without identifying information) and used to promote adoption/guardianships, the Council and other informational resources and support services available to children and families. A donation is being given to the IAAC for National Adoption Month activities by the Elks lodge #2497. The local press will be encouraged to highlight this event to promote the importance of adoption and

guardianship as a way to build families and to acknowledge the Elks valued sponsorship with the Council. These monies will be used to purchase family picture frame magnets that will be given to all adoptive and guardianship families as they complete their permanencies beginning in 2022. In addition, the Council would like to develop a “swag bag” to also be given to families that would contain pertinent resource and contact information along with useful tip and/or fact sheets. Plans for next year will begin early in hopes that a bigger in-person event will be possible for November of 2022.

Permanency Workgroup Report

Alex Montgomery, IAAC

Alex reported that this workgroup is a collaboration between SWFCAC and the IAAC and interested parties are encouraged to contact Alex to join. Stakeholders are encouraged to give recommendations to the workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to highlight the children in need of permanent families and to reduce the barriers and delays in completing adoptions and guardianships. The workgroup has been successful in having the guides for creating and reviewing subsidies reposted for workers who do this work, as a means for streamlining the process by reducing errors and providing greater consistency in the process.

Update from Office of Caregiver and Parent Support

**Michelle Grove,
Associate Deputy Director**

Michelle reviewed where the division falls within the Department and the programs included under her supervision. The Office of Caregiver Support falls under Permanency within the division of Operations and includes the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Birth Parent Council (which is still evolving). In addition, Michelle oversees the Partnering with Parents program, the Foster Parent Support Specialist program, the newly created Adoption/Guardianship Support Specialist program, Incarcerated Parents and Interstate Compact, each of which has an important working relationship with the Councils and the children and families we represent. She is seeking to fill the Incarcerated Parent Program Administrator position which has been vacant for the last year. Once in place, she will have that person present to the Councils as their work is very important in supporting youth and maintaining family connections when a youth’s birth parent is incarcerated. Research clearly shows the benefits of maintaining those connections. Parents are also very helpful in identifying kinship members as potential caregiver resources. Interstate Compact becomes involved when our youth are placed in out of state foster care or residential care and includes those adopted or in guardianship placements with subsidies when they do not reside in Illinois.

National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) update:

Michelle reported that we are in the 5th year of the grant which piloted the newly developed curriculum in Cook and Northern Regions and used Central Region as the control group. At this point the grant is focusing on building on sustainability. Michelle encouraged any council members who were interested in being developed into NTDC trainers to contact her office. Two NTDC facilitators provided feedback regarding their experience with the curriculum. They both thought the training was very good with emphasis on being trauma-informed, encouraging caregiver self-care and helping them identify expectations and areas of growth. They recommend amending the training to

have more Illinois-specific and caregiver-focused content. One of the strengths identified was the availability of the “Portal” which allows access to the materials and training resources after the training is completed so that participants can review content whenever it is most useful to them.

Foster Parent Law:

The OCPS is working with the training division to develop a self-directed training on the law that would be available to all caregivers and agency staff. One of the issues has been the fact that the current platform for the training is not 508 compliant and switching to another platform is difficult and complicated to achieve. Currently approximately 50% of our staff have less than 2 years child welfare experience and have little to no knowledge regarding this law so the need is great. Ideas to get the workforce trained are being considered.

OCPS Staffing:

The OCPS is currently down 7 positions and Michelle is working diligently to interview and fill them as quickly as possible. Jason Cummins has taken a new position and will no longer work with the Councils. In the interim, she is excited to announce that she has been approved for two 75-day contracts to get some temporary relief until after the new calendar year. She introduced Terry McGlothlin who has over 20 years of experience in working with the Councils, and Ray Gates, former administrator over the Councils.

BREAKOUTS to Individual Councils

Approval of 10-15-21 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Rebecca Thomas made the motion to accept the October 15, 2021 meeting minutes. Susan McConnell seconded and the motion carried via voice vote with one “no” from Gladys Boyd. Gladys stated that she would like to discuss calling a special SWFCAC meeting with only council members invited.

Meeting Schedule/ Meeting in Person

Council

It was noted that due to COVID, the dynamics of the meetings have changed. Several new members have been appointed and it has been challenging to get everyone involved. One council member suggested a hybrid meeting format. A survey will go out to council members to secure their input.

Required Council Member Training

Arrelda Hall

Ethics and other trainings need to be completed in a timely manner. Arrelda noted that council members need to submit their Conflict of Interest forms right away because the implementation plans will soon be distributed for scoring.

Regional Reports:

*Northern Region Report

Kimberly Coniglio/Rebecca Thomas

Rebecca reported that support groups are actively meeting online, with two meeting in-person. They are fully staffed with Foster Parent Support Specialists in the Northern Region. They are currently working on holiday plans. Transportation contracts are challenging, as is the lack of available foster homes. Homes are being placed on hold for

prolonged periods of time due to investigations. There has been an uptick in lack of response to foster parents. Rebecca noted that she feels like they are reporting on the same challenges each month. She would like the council to take on a few of the challenges and work on making changes.

***Central Region Report**

Kelly Elleman/Kathryn Adrian

Kelly reported that respite has been a huge issue recently because Licensing is taking some of the beds. Investigations are taking an extended length of time to complete. Childcare while working from home is another issue.

***Cook North**

Kate Monte

No report.

***Southern Region**

Audrey Reynolds

Audrey reported that the workforce crisis continues to cause serious issues across multiple agencies. She noted that it seems to flip-flop between counties. YouthCare continues to present challenges as 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 continues to be problematic in the Southern Region. FPSS in the region report having more difficulty than normal placing challenging children and youth. There are many children being held in hospitals much longer than medically necessary. It continues to be a struggle to find therapeutic daycare in the Southern Region and Audrey is looking for suggestions as to how to locate needed resources. She referred to SPIDER, noting that it has not been updated recently.

***Cook South**

Maya Maclin

No report.

***Cook Central**

Arrelda Hall

Arrelda reported that in Cook they provide combined monthly foster parent support group meetings. Dana Drummer will provide adoption updates at their 11/16/21 meeting. She noted that Cook is fully staffed with Foster Parent Support Specialists and they are looking for Adoption/Guardianship Support Specialists. They are working on holiday plans.

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. The next meeting is scheduled for November 18.

***IFAPA**

Gladys Boyd/Arrelda Hall

Gladys Boyd reported that she and IFAPA representatives Arrelda Hall, Rebecca Thomas, Susan McConnell and Phyllis Summers met with Director Smith, Jassen Strockosch, Timothy Snowden, George Vennikandam, Michelle Grove and Michelle

Jackson. Director Smith stated that he would like to know what supports foster parents have and that needs are not being met. During the meeting Rebecca Thomas specifically discussed the day care issue and Phyllis Summers addressed respite. IFAPA will hold quarterly meetings with the Director via Zoom to talk about foster parents. Ms. King from the Director's office will set up the meetings. She emailed Gladys the form to complete to request the Director's participation at each meeting. This form must be submitted at least 15 days prior to the meeting date. Susan McConnell thanked Gladys for opening the door for that opportunity. Rebecca Thomas thanked Gladys and Susan for the professional presentation. IFAPA will be looking for foster parents throughout the state to be represented during the February meeting.

Workgroup Report

*Day Care

Rebecca Thomas

Rebecca reported that the workgroup has been meeting consistently for 6 months. They received the last piece of information they were seeking from DHS. They recently met with a representative from the DCFS Legislative Affairs office and they are now ready for Michelle to take the Change Management form to the SPICE group. This form includes all the concerns the group has been addressing and the SPICE administrative team is charged with identifying where the needs are and ways to address them. One critical identified need is the \$19.56 daily rate that the foster parent can offer for a youth that cannot go to day care. COVID is still causing problems with day care. If a child has the sniffles he/she cannot attend. Youth age out at 12 years and some of the youth cannot be left alone. It was noted that there are many reasons a child might not have the ability to attend a daycare facility. It costs the state thousands of dollars a day for a youth in the Welcome Center. A council member professional described a situation where three children will be split up due to a lack of day care support for their current foster home. This move will cause the children to be traumatized again. Michelle noted that we know that day care will be paid if there is a court order in place.

Motion: Audrey Reynolds made the motion for Michelle to that the change for to the executive staff and on up to the SPICE group. Rebecca Thomas seconded the motion and the motion carried via voice vote.

Committee Reports:

*Health Care

No chairperson assigned

*Training

Harriet Kersh

Harriet reported that Training is working on HMR Orientation. It was released, but has now been placed on hold. Harriet will work with Michelle to find out whom to contact to provide feedback.

*Foster Parent Support Specialists

Arrelda Hall

Arrelda reported that Foster Parent Support Specialists program statewide has a few new hires. We currently have 43 FPSS with three vacancies. Onboarding will be conducted 11/15-11/17. Tina Franklin will be there from Policy. She has been working to reduce the length of time invested in recruiting and training. Arrelda reported that CORE Teen training is also being presented.

***Policy & Legislative**

Susan McConnell

No report. Susan reported that she is in the process of transitioning this committee to Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond.

***Hospitality and Public Relations**

Arrelda Hall

No report.

***Respite**

Gladys Boyd

Gladys reported that respite needs to go like daycare. If they cannot use daycare then they can use respite.

***Membership**

Susan McConnell

Susan noted that this committee is being taken over by Kimberly Coniglio. She sent out surveys and had a great response. Arrelda stated that she and Susan will be reaching out regarding vacancies on the council. Susan asked what the process is to fill council seats. Arrelda noted that we do not have a certain timeline, but there is a process to fill council vacancies.

***Adolescent Issues**

No report. Need a chairperson.

***Permanency**

Susan McConnell

Susan noted that this is now a workgroup with the IAAC and they will continue to focus on adoption and what slows the process down. They have been reviewing the subsidy piece and noted that the Subsidy Cheat Sheet fell off the DNet. It has now been added back.

***Nomination**

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

Public Comment

None

Stakeholder Comment

- Kelly Elleman knows someone who would be a good candidate for a Central Region membership position.
- Audrey Reynolds asked if she needs to keep notes regarding the most important issues brought forward during the meetings. She was to send it to the mailbox to be sent to the director.
- Arrelda Hall said she was asked if someone holding membership on the council as a professional could transfer that membership to another profession in his/her agency.
- Arrelda will be going to Springfield to consider some of the previous topics that have been brought up.
- She reminded council members to complete absentee forms. The council will be making decisions re: absenteeism in the future.

Potential Agenda Items:

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

MOTION: Gladys Boyd made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Audrey Reynolds seconded and the motion carried by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 11: 16 a.m.

Next Meeting: December 10, 2021, 9:00-noon, via WebEx for the health and safety of our members.