

**Joint Meeting of the
Illinois Adoption Advisory Council and
Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
WebEx
November 6, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
DRAFT MINUTES**

IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT	IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Amy Trotter	Maripat Oliver	Gladys Boyd	Kathryn Adrian	Julie Cebulski	Gwenn Eyer
Elizabeth Richmond	Crystal Rekart	Jessica Bullard	Ken Keefe	Lisa Bramlett	Michelle Grove
Cara Siebert	Danny Tolliver	Kimberly Coniglio	Maya Maclin	Peggie Terry	Jennifer Florent
Laurel Meade	Linda White	Kelly Elleman	Kellye Norris	Kathleen Bush	Sylvia Fonseca
Elizabeth Hunter		Jimmie Golden		Lori Benner	Kelly King
Julie Yelverton		Arrelida Hall		Rachel Hoyt	Barb Crandall
Brittney Sprouse		Tiffany Jones		Delores Wilks	Geneva Byrd
Katie Friend		Harriet Kersh		Rosanna Perrino	Susan Wilkins
Karen Wardlaw		Susan McConnell		Liz Teague	Marc Smith
Angela Walters		Kate Monte		Christine Feldman	Hope Bartz
Karen Taylor		Audrey Reynolds		Koryell Tate	Kara Hamilton
Alex Montgomery		Jessie Rodriguez-Hammond		Nicela Guy	Melissa Kasel
Keely Giles		Mary Savage		Pleshette Hamb	
Mary Kay Collins		Carol Sheley		Tina Haynes	
Danielle Sanders		Phyllis Summers		D. Kotowski	
Mark Werner		Stephanie Tesreau		Jamie Dornfeld	
Shirley Padera		Rebecca Thomas		Jessica Bullard	
Jeremy Wheeler		Samella Taylor-Lewis		Carlene VanDyke	
				Viviane Ngwa	

Welcome and Introductions – Elizabeth Richmond

Elizabeth Richmond welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all present to introduce themselves.

DCFS Office of Caregiver & Parent Support

Michelle Grove

Michelle opened by noting that the Office of Caregiver & Parent Support is responsible for both the Illinois Adoption Advisory Council and the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. She went on to read an update on the National Training and Development Curriculum.

NTDC Training Updates:

- This training has been developed to provide “content layered learning” which includes self-assessment before and after the training, classroom-based and now virtual training which has podcasts, video clips, articles, discussion, and tools on 19 foundational themes, and right time training where parents can avail themselves of information on 15 different themes at a time when they need the information. In addition, Illinois specific topics are included so that the training meets Illinois licensing requirements.
- NTDC has posted refresher trainings on the NTDC portal for every theme to ensure that facilitators who have experienced a significant hiatus from the TTT to training will have an opportunity to “brush up” on the theme specific content in advance of training.
- The theme related to Trauma Related Behavior was revamped and redistributed to facilitators based on initial feedback from stakeholders.
- NTDC will provide each site with the following reports on a regular basis:
 - Weekly Participant Tracker: includes data on the number of site-specific participants who have registered for the training and rates of completion for consents, pre-test, outcome survey, and other evaluation and training components. The data is provided at the individual and aggregate level.
 - Quarterly Fidelity Reports- these reports will provide a summary of the fidelity feedback received from the facilitators. The first report will be produced in January.
 - Post-Test/Skills Check Reports. Beginning in April, NTDC will share the aggregate data for the tests and checks completed by the participants. The report will be shared 2x a year.
 - Consent Management Report- the lead facilitator receives a report three days before and again 1 day prior to the start of the training that provides them with the consent and survey completion status of the participants.

Progress in Illinois:

- The NTDC Workgroup Team which has been directing the implementation of this grant is comprised of DCFS Caregiver Support leadership (Michelle Grove), DCFS Training leadership (Victor Lazko and Veronica Sanchez) along with DCFS regional training managers (Megan Royce, Lori Horgan, Ginny Hayes-Manske, and Karla Blake), DCFS curriculum staff, including Karen Taylor, and DCFS Post Adoption leadership (Sylvia Fonseca) as well as the liaisons from Spaulding. Other DCFS representatives are involved as needed. The group continues to meet every other week.
- This collaborative effort has been successful in preparing 13 facilitators to deliver this training and evaluation in the two pilot areas: Cook Central and Northern Region. The comparison site is the Central Region.
- Illinois has begun NTDC training for 7 cohorts (69 participants) as of October 28, 2020. Of those that have started NTDC training 36% have agreed to participate in the NTDC evaluation. During this past month NTDC and the site have been working to address gaps in the consent process. The rates of consent have improved in Illinois over time as Illinois has implemented new strategies and NTDC has addressed technical issues.
- During the same time period, Illinois has registered 3 cohorts in the comparison group for a total of 26 participants. 57% of the participants have signed consents agreeing to participate in the evaluation.

- The supervisory training staff has done a wonderful job supporting the facilitators as well as elevating the NTDC process. The team has developed many management tools to facilitate administration of the training. The facilitators have been willing to provide honest feedback to NTDC which will help enhance the final version of the training.
- Facilitators report that the participants have been enthusiastic about the content.

Next Steps:

1. Over the next month, the group will focus on the development of the NTDC budget for Illinois.
2. The site will focus on increasing the number of participants who sign the consent and complete the pre-test and outcome-based survey.

Michelle noted that they are also working on the Core Teen curriculum, trained by Spalding. Foster Parent Support Specialists are being trained to support families with teens who have behavioral or mental health issues. Julie noted that trainer's manuals are user friendly and the materials strikes a positive chord with foster parents. She has been practicing Core Teen skills with her own daughter. Michelle stated that components of the Core Teen curriculum will be utilized by Foster Parent Support Specialists, and will also be used individually. Sylvia Fonseca and Kelly King also utilize this program. SWFCAC member Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond, noted that he and his husband are Spanish-speaking and take only teens. He volunteered to assist with the Teen Core program, as needed. Illinois has permission to use the curriculum as a parent resource and they've ordered books to help support foster and adoptive parents.

Adoption Month Celebration

Karen Wardlaw and Jen Florent

Karen experienced connectivity issues, so Jen reported that they are expanding on the "What's Your Connection" campaign from last year. Communications distributed a statewide press release and obtained a Governor's proclamation. The IAAC will receive a packet with Adoption Month logos, coloring sheets for children and a copy of the proclamation for use on social media to spread the message. The idea is to have children color the pages, then post them in windows, taking pictures to spread the word through the window graphics. Communications sent the information to all state legislators encouraging them to share with their constituents. Mark Werner encouraged council members to be sure to share the information.

State of Child Welfare in Illinois

Director Marc Smith

Director Marc Smith thanked the councils for welcoming him to the joint council meeting, stating that he is happy to present the Foster Parent Law awards honoring agencies who provide care for our kids. He noted how proud he is for DCFS staff and their partners, commending them for their work during the pandemic. He said that each passing day it becomes more and more important each day to thank those putting themselves out in the community providing care for our children and families. He has shared that appreciation with the governor, noting that the pandemic has been hard on all of us, but we still all work together to protect children and keep them safe. He commended foster and adoptive parents for their commitment to children during these challenging times. He noted that one thing has not changed, and that is the caregiver's commitment to caring for children. He said that when the Department issued guidelines, foster parents downloaded Zoom so their foster children could stay in touch with their families. They turned their kitchen tables into classrooms. They provide continuous

support to children, assuring them that things will be OK. Director Smith remains committed that the Department will continue to provide services and supports to families throughout the state.

Foster Parent Law Awards

Director Marc Smith

Director Smith stated that November is National Adoption Month, a month dedicated to raising awareness about the urgent need to provide permanency through adoption for children and youth unable to return home from foster care. He noted that the DCFS Illinois Adoption Advisory Council was established for the purpose of advising and consulting with the Director of DCFS or his/her designee(s) on all matters involving or affecting the provision of adoption & guardianship services.

Director Smith reported that the Illinois General Assembly enacted the Foster Parent Law June 3, 1995, to establish a statement of Illinois foster parents' rights and responsibilities to help them successfully fulfill their role on the professional child welfare team. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Law, also enacted June 3, 1995, established a council to advise the Department with respect to all matters involving or affecting the provision of foster care to abused, neglected or dependent children and their families. One of the key responsibilities of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council is to review, approve and monitor plans to provide foster care as required by the Foster Parent Law. Each year council members recognize the top plans in three areas: Dignity and Respect, Innovative Approaches to Service Delivery and Foster Parent Involvement in Plan Development.

2020 Foster Parent Law Awards Presentation

Director Marc Smith

Director Smith recognized Unity Parenting and Counseling staff on the call. Nicela Guy started as a caseworker at Unity and worked her way up to serve as Director of Child Welfare Services. Sheila Paxton is the Supervisor of Special Projects at Unity, which includes licensing. Sheila has been with Unity for 19 years. Marilyn Woods has been a foster parent for more than 10 years and has established permanency for several children during her years at Unity. The award for Dignity and Respect was presented to Unity Parenting and Counseling. Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council members recognized Unity for using the title "Professional Foster Parent" to acknowledge and honor foster parents' membership on the professional child welfare team, noting that all materials use that title and professionals outside the agency recognize this significance. Staff make monthly quality assurance calls to foster parents. They document deficiencies and any lack of compliance with agency's protocol and the implementation plan, with reports going directly to the administrator. Supervisors conduct home visits at least once a year. Staff are trained on communication and teamwork and rights narratives stress caseworker accountability. This year's award for Dignity and Respect goes to Unity Parenting and Counseling. Flora Koppel, Executive Director, accepted the award and shared her thanks with foster parents and staff.

Director Smith then recognized Delores Wilks, Licensing Manager for National Youth Advocate Program. Delores has been employed with NYAP for 5 years, leading the recruitment and licensing process of foster parents. As a dedicated leader, Delores has more than 25 years' experience in child welfare in Illinois. She has always enjoyed working with and supporting with foster parents because she views them as "the key to our youths' success in foster care." Mr. Lee Otis Mack has been a foster parent with National Youth Advocate Program for over 12 years. Mr. Mack is specialized in fostering older youth who require specialized care. He is currently fostering three youth in care. Mr. Mack is also a leader within the foster parent community where he functions as their Advisory Board President. He is a trained Foster Parent Support Specialist and a mentor to other foster parents who are caring for

youth in specialized foster care. He has fostered many youth in care and has adopted five. As in previous years, Mr. Mack and the NYAP Foster Parent Advisory Board members were very involved in the development, review and endorsement of the agency's Foster Parent implementation plan. The National Youth Advocate Program was recognized for Innovative Approaches to Service Delivery. The agency fully supports foster parents and advocates on their behalf. They understand the direct connection between placement stabilization and training and they recognize that foster parents are an integral part of the treatment team. Staff provide court support and coaching for foster parents. The implementation plan states, "Foster parents are advocates for the clients and are encouraged to identify services and activities that can benefit the needs of the child in their care." The agency is committed to ensuring that foster parents have a support group available to share experiences and identify solution-focused outcomes. They have a foster parent on their Human Rights Committee who advocates for all their youth, addressing foster parent concerns and providing feedback and suggestions regarding what the agency can do differently to improve service delivery to our youth. This year's award for Innovative Approaches to Service Delivery goes to the National Youth Advocate Program. Executive Director Viviane Ngwa expressed her appreciation for the award, and thanked her agency's foster parents and staff for their work.

The Director next recognized Pleshette Hamb-Murphy, the Director of Foster Care and Specialized Services at Kids Above All. Motivated by her belief that every child deserves the opportunity to live their best possible life, she has served several communities in Illinois, particularly in the neighborhoods on Chicago's south and west sides. Pleshette oversees programs aimed at finding safe, supportive foster homes for youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system so they can heal from trauma, become empowered adults, and reach their full potential. Nelson Willis, a long-time foster parent, provides a home for children who have been specialized. Mr. Willis is a retired educator, a minister, and does foster care "for the love of the children." Kids Above All appeared to make diligent efforts to build training on the Foster Parent Law and the implementation plan into their program, not just once, but throughout the year. They held meetings in conjunction with trainings to review and revise their plan. Meetings were held in various locations and times to accommodate a wider range of foster parents. Certain meetings specifically explored successes and improvements needed. At the end, foster parents were asked to review the entire plan and endorse it prior to submission. This year's award for Foster Parent Involvement in Plan Development goes to Kids Above All. Dan Kotowski, President and CEO of Kids Above All, accepted the award and handed off the Pleshette Hamb-Murphy who accepted the award on behalf of their foster parents who "continuously work to keep us on task." She noted that foster parents are the real champions in the implementation plan process as they hold the agency accountable and collaborate to improve service delivery.

Director Smith reminded those on the WebEx how much the Department values their work. He believes it is important that people understand how important the work is and how important it is to encourage others to join us in this work. The Department has been talking about a lot of things, including the new managed care program, encouraging new providers to enhance their programs. He noted that he has received feedback that YouthCare is going in the right direction. He said that the Department has really stepped up during the pandemic, commending the nurturing and love provided by the foster parents. He said that we are in a positive place and he is honored to be in his role as DCFS Director.

Adoption Month Award

Mark Werner

Mark recognized that Kathleen Bush, the Adoption Award winner, is now "Dr." Bush. He reported that she is the Associate Director of Clinical Services at the Baby Fold, but will soon be moving up to the

position of Director. Mark reported that Kathleen has done very much in the adoption field and congratulated her on this award.

Transition

SWFCAC Breakout

Approval of the September 11, 2020 Minutes

Stephanie Tesreau made the motion to approve the September 11, 2020 minutes. Mary Savage seconded, and the motion carried.

Final Report to the Director

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

Foster Parent Implementation Plan Scoring Training **Gwenn Eyer**

Gwenn presented an overview of plan scoring. She described the tools needed, and walked through the overall process, the timeline and the awards packet. She noted that this year all new members should expect to do on-the-job training for at least their first plan. Implementation plans are due November 13 and will be pre-scored prior to distribution for scoring by council members.

Council Updates

Arrelda updated the council on forms included in council member binders.

- Report our forms should be submitted a week in advance of each meeting
- Issue forms should be submitted for consideration by the council

Permanency Committee

Susan McConnell

Susan reported that this committee will do research, set goals and propose solutions and recommendations. Email SusanMcConnell@LetItBeUs.org to join the committee.

Reports from Outside Councils and Workgroups

Child Welfare Advisory Council

**Jessica Bullard, Phyliss Summers,
Mary Savage, Harriet Kersh**

Harriet Kersh reported that no meeting has been held recently. They have been working via Email to make CWAC more diverse, balanced to the youth in care. For example, if 40% of youth in care are African-American, they want CWAC representation to match that number. Michelle Grove asked council representatives to give their opinion re: attending CWAC general meetings, or attending CWAC committee meetings. Mary Savage offered to stay with the foster care subcommittee. Michelle is happy to support council members by debriefing after each meeting. Arrelda said that council representatives will meet with the chair and co-chair to establish an overall approach. Jason will update the CWAC distribution lists to reflect council member participation.

IFAPA

Gladys Boyd

Gladys said that they talk to the foster parents on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Some of their foster parents are frustrated due to limited resources, especially re: kids that are too old for daycare and too young to stay home independently. Foster parents have indicated concern about locations for visits when they do not have assurance about the child's health and safety, COVID testing, etc. Jesse concurred, noting that his support group has expressed the same concerns. There is no control over the

risk of dangerous activity going on outside the foster home. Kimberly Coniglio noted that this issue was also the basis of the Northern Region report today. Stephanie Tesreau suggested tailoring visitation and other requirements to correspond with the local mitigation levels throughout the state. Arrelda asked council members to share their recommendations to resolve this concern with her at Arrelda.Hall@illinois.gov.

Regional Reports

Northern Region Report

Kimberly Coniglio, Rebecca Thomas

Kimberly reported that foster parents in her region have expressed the same concerns that IFAPA shared. Rebecca stated that Northern Region foster parents are reluctant to take in foster children and it is becoming more challenging to recruit new foster homes. She reflected on the recommendations the Council pushed forward a few months ago, and their hope that they will see results. The problems still exist and they are getting worse. Arrelda noted that this is a statewide issue and noted that additional steps need to be taken.

Central

Ken Keefe, Kelly Elleman, Kathryn Adrian

No Report

Southern Region

Stephanie Tesreau, Audrey Reynolds

Audrey reported that a foster parent brought up a question about the grievance process, noting that they did not have ease of access and resolution. Gwenn noted that there is a 30-day resolution timeline in Rule 340.

Cook North

Kate Monte

Kate reported that she has been participating in/monitoring several foster parents support groups and, as noted in prior reports, COVID-related issues loom in Cook North, as well. Former daycare options are currently unavailable, and some that are do not know how to or do not work with the Department to accept the lower rate. Kate reported that regional councils posed the following questions and concerns:

- 1) How is DCFS handling new placements re: COVID. Do they have to have COVID tests? Are they quarantining? What about infants?
- 2) What precautions are taken regarding visits?
- 3) What safety protocols are in place?
- 4) Foster parents want to be open to new placements, but foster parents need concrete supports to accept new placements.

Cook South

Maya Maclin, Kellye Norris

Tim Snowden, Regional Administrator for Cook County, held a virtual 360 Community Partnership meeting on 10/23/20. The meeting connected varying resources such as mental health providers, counseling, religious leaders and law enforcement agencies. The goal was to let each entity share their agency's missions and services that they provide, along with providing networking opportunities.

Cook Central

Arrelda Hall, Jimmie Golden

Cook Region continuing to work on Christmas parties to be held regionally instead of one large party. The donations will start being delivered on 12/5/2020. Regional drive thru parties (cookies and

punch and picking up gifts) will be held 12/7-12/20. Cook is working on a plan to bring the Teen Core Training starting in January 2021.

Stakeholder Comments

- Some new council members reported a need to receive binders, but others received theirs.
- Arrelda Hall reported that Rule 406, 407 and 408 should be sent out to council members for comment. She will follow up with Jason and will collect and submit comments on behalf of the council.
- Michelle Grove reported that the office will follow up with council members who have not yet taken required council training. She noted that this is online training and support is available to help council members access this training. Council members should Email the SWFCAC mailbox to request support, as needed.
- Arrelda noted that the council has work to do and all members should sign up and participate on at least one committee.
- Arrelda noted that special meetings may be convened, as needed, to address issues and concerns.
- Kimberly Coniglio suggested that the Department could look at community resources to be used as visitation locations.
- Jimmie Golden noted that he addressed his child's special needs with the doctor since visits are moving from outdoors to indoors. He suggested bringing in the DCFS Medical Director to address issues around visitation.
- Harriett Kersh noted that taking concerns to the child's medical doctor is a solid approach.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

MOTION: *Gladys Boyd made the motion to adjourn. Jesse Rodriguez-Hammond seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 12:04 pm.*

Next Meeting: SWFCAC 01/15/2021 WebEx

Day care, Grievance Procedure Southern Region, identify resources including outside entities to provide relief for caregivers