

**Child Welfare Advisory Committee
May 19, 2022, 1:00 PM
MINUTES**

Attendees

Members: Glenda Lashley (DCFS Staff Liaison), Beverly Jones, Christopher Cox, Malia Arnett, Monica Badiano, Rich Bobby, Kim Cobb, Ashley Deckert, Nancy Dorfman-Schwartz, Patricia Ege, Toleda Hart, Jason Keeler, Harriet Kersh, Charles Montorio-Archer, Jere Murry, Viviane Ngwa, Lisa Nicklas, Audrey Pennington, Emily Rawsy, Anthony Riordan, LaTasha Roberson, Deb Roberts, Mary Savage, Prestina Singleton, Phyllis Summers, and Rick Velasquez.

Co-Chairs Welcome and Report (Beverly Jones and Christopher Cox)

- Member Roll Call
- Approval of February Minutes and FY23 CWAC Meeting Schedule (VOTE) – Beverly motioned for approval of the items as submitted, Sara seconded, no objections. Motion passed.
- Co-Chair Report – Beverly reminded everyone that we are about serving the business of Children and Families, it needs all of us as much as possible to come and work together. We need to find a way in which we speak as “We” not “Them” or “Us”. We need to talk about it, embrace it, and do it. Ask ourselves what is my contribution to becoming a “We” and less “Me”?

Director’s Report

“We” are the Child Welfare System for the State of Illinois. The better we are supporting each other as a system, the better we serve the children and family under our care. Thank everyone for their hard work for improving and moving the system forward. Currently have increased our presence in media to make it clear; DCFS and Illinois Child Welfare System is strong and progressing in a positive way based on data. Have worked hard as a system in the last 3 years, to really be thoughtful about how we right size things, and opportunities that have gone through the drift over the last years. Based on facts, we went through a pandemic and manage that process at its highest level. The people on this call: DCFS, Residential Providers, Foster Care Agencies and Foster Parents have worked as a team. DCFS is receiving pressure from the court systems to make sure we are in top of placing kids who are beyond medical necessities placed them appropriately in residential beds, community-based agencies and even with birth parents. They are being placed at a higher and quicker rate than the past. We have several partners who have committed over the next six to twelve months to add over 100 beds to our system. Also, the Governor understand that it’s deeper than just finding an appropriate bed for a child. It’s about what is the mental health capacity for the State of Illinois children and adolescents. Thrilled that Dana Weiner, PhD with Chapin Hall of University of Chicago has stepped into this role to help us think how we serve children and adolescents with their mental health issues. It is broader than using DCFS as a stop for children that can’t be handle elsewhere. What is the solution to support the ever-growing population of children and youth in this state that are suffering from mental health issues? DCFS is working hard with partners like HFS and DHS to engage them in this conversation. We can’t accept a conversation that starts and ends saying “DCFS what is your responsibility for dealing with the mental health issue with children and adolescents in Illinois?” The responsibility is to be a good partner. DCFS is in a critical moment to make a determination to change by using best practices and full embrace of services. The children under DCFS custody are already taken care of. We

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will not come to the table with a panic voice, but thoughtful ways to address this issue. It is my professional honor and commitment to this role to continue taking big swings at problems. Walked into this administration and saw there was an opportunity for Family First to really analyze preventions in the state of Illinois. DCFS is aligned to use evidence base practices to impact prevention in many ways. From home visiting, parenting, reintroducing representative services to statewide contracts for our prevention services (child intake referrals) before they meet the criteria for abuse and neglect. Director Smith has been on the system for a long time, one thing known is the challenges of SACWIS. Service Plans used to be written, then SACWIS was implemented but did not serve as expected. There is a new system coming named CCWIS which providers developing this system will be held accountable. This week started signing contracts for the actual development and roll out of CCWIS. It has been approved by Federal and State Partners follow by contracts with providers. Over the next 3 years, the program will be in place but in a few months will see the first implementation. Chapin Hall audit our Intact Family Services and noticed CERAP protocol was not effective. DCFS started to look at a mechanism that can increase safety protocols for children and family services. After negotiations are completed DCFS will transition from CERAP Model to Safe Practice Model. This is a big step regarding safe planning, how to engage families from the minute they call the hotline through the minute no longer with DCFS. We are in partnership with Action 4 Child Protection to make sure it meets the needs of IDCFS. The model will provide structure guidelines in short and/or long-term child safety decision making as it relates protective capacity. It fits with our motivational interview training. Please participate in the CCWIS Work Group Safe Model Project.

Chris appreciated DCFS sharing its' vision. Safety Tools help understand the beginning of the case to access risk properly. Sent email to different committees and/or subcommittees within our structure to lift the most important issues that need to be discuss to engage the time in the most helpful way. Reiterate partnership between private and public; this is the moment to serve even better.

DCFS Response to CWAC Recommendations/Shontee Blankenship

Increase the Qualified Candidate Pool for Serving children and families (4,6,7). CWAC Recommendation: Exeditiously implement of the recommendations drafted for credential waivers/extensions. DCFS Response: The emergency amendments to Rules, 401, 403, and 404 became effective 12/27/21. The emergency rules must be approved by JCAR. There have been 21 requests received: of those 13 waivers granted, 5 waivers deny, 1 withdrawal, 2 pending for review on May 20th.

Chris – Can the department share if the intent is to extend the emergency rule? Katarzyna Kowalska (Katie)/Policy Group stated by law an emergency rule cannot be extended, it expires. JCAR postpone action on 401, 403 and 404 until June 14th. Has scheduled a zoom meeting with ICOY to determine priority of remaining issues, subsequently scheduling a meeting with DCFS staff to discuss any issues.

LaTasha – What happens to those 13 people who were granted a waiver during that time? Shontee confirmed will remain qualified, will continue to operate with the intent of the rule until it becomes finalized.

Jason – Sounds like there is cause for optimism. Is it a fair expectation the emergency rule will be in fact approved by JCAR around mid-June? Jassen responded it would be incorrect for DCFS to make assumptions on what JCAR can and can't do until the process. Jason added there will be a gap time, the emergency rule expires on Saturday, will continue to perceive in practicality under the intention of waiver, but really do not have any assurance of final approval. JCAR may give feedback that will require additional revisions. Not fluent in the legality of working this way. Shontee reiterated would continue to operate with the intent until a final decision.

Ashley – Do waivers provide rational around the denial and is there is an appeal option? Shontee comment according to the amendment rules there is no appeal option. Final decision comes from Associate Deputy of Agency and Institution in written a form. The letter gives the degree if accepted or not accepted, and if the person qualifies for the position. The mailbox is checked daily, the rule does mention that upon receipt of waiver it will be review, then assign to a meeting which meets on the 1st and 3rd Friday of the month. Based on receipt date the Chair of the committee has 5 days to write up what the committee came together before its presented as a recommendation. The Associate Deputy has 5 days as well to review and send out the response.

Title IV-E Claiming Background Check Requirements/Jassen Strokosch

The committee understands there is a new process under the new Federal Law. What could be potential or realistic impact on the ability to meet the needs of our children, particularly bringing in qualified staff in a timely manner? Jassen explained last year Fed's clarify that any employee hire, the background must be clear before the start date of employment. There were numerous meetings with subcommittees on the topic. Had a town hall meeting that provided good suggestions in ways to streamline the process. The department agreed to put in place some of those suggestions to continue conditional employment for an extended period while the department works through some of those recommendations. The department's intention is to send out a letter clarifying the continued use of conditional employment to every single provider that DCFS has a license regardless of having a contract or not.

Reduction of Prevalence & Impact of DCFS Hiring Community Provider Staff/Jassen Strokosch

Committee requesting a 30-day notice given by DCFS when transitioning to the department. DCFS is allowing all flexibility on hiring dates for anyone hired from the outside. However, DCFS cannot inform current employer that person has accepted a position with DCFS. It is a violation of privacy unless person gives consent. The department will collaborate with no less than a 30-day start date.

FY23 Budget Briefing/Jason House

The budget had a total increase of \$254M versus current year. Joint Rate Workgroup with Community Based Providers \$87.1M, Level of Care Support Service \$25.0M, Workforce Crisis Response March 1, 2022, \$13.2M

Rates – All July 1st, 2022 rate changes are based on the following salary increases for positions including associated fringe and administrative increase and a 3% increase on all other items and cost of living (COLA).

CWS Referral – Reviewed Salary Increase per position and added funding for lab tops.

Intact Family Services – Added Family Enhancement Para-Professional.

Performance Foster Care – In addition of new investments, took the opportunity to rebuild the Cost Assumptions from the beginning.

Caregiver Room and Board – Under Director Smith's leadership the Rate of Reimbursement for non-license relative care givers steadily increase, will start implementing the same across the state for every child.

Specialized Foster Care and Independent Living – Pointed out added Permanency Achievement Specialist and Family Finding Recruitment Workers positions.

Institution Group Homes & TLP – Reviewed positions with percentage to new salary amounts.

Minimum Salary Requirements – DCFS is investing in minimum salary for the positions to be accountable and transparent.

Chris agreed the budget presentation was very user friendly. The department has advocated for agencies and feel the change in their life's, appreciate the Director. Kim inquired about the 100 beds coming within the next 6-12 months, is that within the \$25M of increasing capacity? No, it goes to the line item funding the core services for expansion. The other is a brand-new item called Level of Care Investment. In the next few weeks will send out letters for Notice of Funding Opportunities to agencies to submit their proposals.

Program Plan Revisions – Douglas Washington/Timothy Snowden

Douglas – In the program plans for non-substitute care there are revisions in the billing language keeping in alignment with State of Illinois Code Agencies. There are three financial indicators DCFS works with: Fix Rate Agreement, Grants, and Budget-based Grant Agreements. For the most part, budgeted programs will move from quarterly to monthly billing cycle beginning July 2022 for Fiscal Year 2023. Contracts will be sent out after July 31 2022, expected to be returned via electronic email to contract Administration as soon as possible. Please review your contracts and the embedded program plans thoroughly for further detail.

Timothy – There has been some narrative development around the HMR Incentive that will be in the program plan as well. Flex funds are to be used and target for step down into foster care scenario and placement stabilization efforts.

This is an additional resource and even underutilize the department has. The Emergency Foster Care Program Plan has roughly six to seven providers, the service has undergone the most significant revision. Want to be proactive in planning and providing the resources up front for the children in those contracts. Also, trying to create a pay structure that supports foster parents and agencies.

Rate Methodology Legislation/Jassen Strokosch

The department needs to pull together a rate study to look at new rates using a third outside party. The first step will be the procurement process; a RFP will be out by Nov 1, 2022, per legislation.

Strategic Plan Vision & Priorities/Tracey King

The team has completed, created content, shared the priorities and the vision of Director with CWAC. The plan is currently at the Governor's Office.

Public Comments

- Andrea Durbin with ICO YOUTH echoed the investment in the community-based part of the child welfare system. Appreciated the partnership with DCFS and Governor's Office to support and advocate for this investment.
- Beverly Jones confirmed a productive meeting and appreciated all that attended. Thanked the department and staff who reviewed very important processes and information for all. "It is about Us not Them".
- Chris Cox thanked all for the commitment to the children we serve. Everyone needs to continue moving forward. Appreciated Director's comment regarding "our moment in time".

Adjourned at 3:00 PM

Next meeting: Thursday, August 18, 2022 at 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM