

African American Advisory Council Minutes

Tracy Marshall, Chairperson
Keith Smith, Vice-Chairperson
June 17, 2021

ATTENDEES:

Robin Albritton
Shirley Davis-Barsh
James Bracey
Fayette Coleman-Gill
Renee Heard
Jacqueline Johnson
Tracy Marshall
Veronica Mattison
Jere Murry
Christopher Towers
Lori Welcher-Evans

The meeting was officially called to order by Chairperson, Tracy Marshall at 10:05am. The meeting was held via WebEx.

ORDER OF MEETING:

REVIEW OF MINUTES:

This agenda item was tabled.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT:

Tracy Marshall stated the following:

- ❖ All summits have been completed and recommendations have been made-letter drafted which will be sent to the Director. Tracy shared the letter with council members.
- ❖ There were a decent number of attendees, however, there were less participants in Southern region. Workshop summaries were completed in detail in which included barriers to resources, and solutions were offered as well as recommendations. The document that was developed will be included in the minutes as an attachment.
- ❖ Recommendations were shared with council members. Tracy reported that council members need to highlight some things that are going on in the community for fathers; we need to shift and begin to address the deficiencies in the Department, as we need to look at being more mindful and more aware of engaging fathers.

Robin added that there has been a lot of discussion with the Children's Bureau around engaging fathers, as the Department begins to ensure that fathers are engaged in the ACR process. We need to keep in mind that the Department is being rated low across the board in all divisions.

- ❖ Tracy gave a special thanks to the collaboration with the Quality Enhancement Division and council members Fayette and Lori, and the TA Regional Administrator Thayer Johnson for assisting with Cook county being re-accredited by the Council on Accreditation.
- ❖ The Director acknowledged the accreditation process in an email.
- ❖ Kenneth Leggin is the new Regional Administrator of Child Protection for Cook North.
- ❖ The new Regional Administrator for Permanency begins 6/28.
- ❖ Tracy reported that the council can work on

NEWSLETTER:

This agenda item is tabled.

A.A. SERVICES:

Christopher Towers reported that the Men's Summit took place on the previous day in which Chris attended. Chris reported that there is a mandatory training, Implicit Bias training that everyone is expected to complete, as this is part of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Chris further reported that both DCFS and POS employees must take the training. Juneteenth passed in the House. Tracy suggested that the council post something on the Dnet regarding Juneteenth. Tracy reported that it is paramount to continue to highlight fathers.

TRAINING COMMITTEE:

James Bracey reported that he recently spoke at the Harvey office with a few individuals, as the class was not a full training class. Tracy read the names of the new employees that were part of the classes. James admitted he missed conducting a presentation in Cook South. In the future, James will forward information around presentations to Lori so it can be recorded and reported out on.

STATUS REPORT-HOST FAMILIES/CARE PACKAGES:

Shirley is currently awaiting names in order to consider the selection of a new student. Tracy reported that she will follow-up in requesting a new list. It should be noted that the council is looking for a freshman to financially support over the next 4 years. Shirley provided an update that our last student is doing good and recently graduated. Reportedly, the

student is in Tennessee working. The plan is to celebrate our graduating student. A date and time will be scheduled.

MEMBERSHIP:

Robin Albritton reported that no recent inquiries have been received, and that once there is an inquiry, and persons that show an interest in becoming a member, fail to follow-up. Robin further reported that she has a couple of people in mind regarding becoming a member of the council, and that she will discuss with Chairperson, Tracy Marshall. Julia Monzon inquired if her intern could participate with the council as part of her learning plan. Shirley inquired if the intern will work with all councils or just the African American Advisory Council. Carmen Walker has expressed an interest in becoming a member of the AAAC. Tracy is expected to reach out to her to invite her to a future meeting. Robin reported that the membership committee is expected to meet Monday, 6-21-21 at 1:00pm to finalize the by-laws and have a candid conversation about membership.

LEGISLATIVE:

Jere submitted the following report:

HB 2914 – DCFS-Racial Disparities Report

Amends the Children and Family Services Act. Provides that no later than December 31, 2022, and no later than December 31 of each year thereafter, [the Department of Children and Family Services shall prepare and submit an annual report, covering the previous fiscal year, to the General Assembly regarding racial disparities for children and families involved in the child welfare system. Provides that the report shall be conducted by a research institution at a public university and must include, at a minimum, the following de-aggregated data by race as compared](#), where appropriate, to population-level data: (1) education success, health and behavioral health, housing, jobs or economic justice, criminal justice, and other key metrics that serve as indicators of child and family well-being and can measure socioeconomic conditions in communities; and (2) children and families involved in a safety plan, the number of protective custodies, the number of investigations of each type of abuse and neglect allegation described in a specified provision of the Illinois Administrative Code and the findings of such investigations, the number of Department recommended court filings for each allegation type, the number of intakes into the foster care system, placement settings, lengths of stay, and permanency outcomes.

**** Passed in the House and Senate

HB 3100 – ANCRA Implicit Bias Training

Amends the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. Requires mandated reporters to complete an initial implicit bias training within 3 months of their date of engagement in a professional or official capacity as a mandated reporter, with certain exceptions, and at least every 3 years thereafter. Provides that the implicit bias trainings shall be in-person or web-based and shall include, at a minimum, information on implicit bias and racial and ethnic sensitivity. Requires the implicit bias trainings to provide tools to adjust automatic patterns of thinking and ultimately eliminate discriminatory behaviors. Provides that, during these trainings, mandated reporters shall complete a pretest to assess baseline implicit bias levels, an implicit bias training task, and a posttest to reevaluate bias levels after training. Provides that the implicit bias curriculum for mandated reporters shall be developed within one year after the effective date of the amendatory Act and shall be created in consultation with organizations demonstrating expertise and or experience in the areas of implicit bias, youth and adolescent developmental issues, prevention of child abuse, exploitation, and neglect, culturally diverse family systems, and the child welfare system. Provides that implicit bias training shall be provided through the Department of Children and Family Services, through authorized entities.

**** Passed in the House and Senate

HB 3821 – DCFS Racial Disproportionality

Creates the Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Act. Creates the Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force within the Department of Children and Family Services. Requires the Task Force to examine the historical and current role of mandatory reporting and its impact on the racial and gender disparities of families involved with the Department of Children and Family Services; examine the underlying factors that bring families into contact with the Department and the factors that lead to child removal; review the Department's progress on the planning and implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act; examine the current processes and policies, data, and data collection methods for families involved simultaneously in the child welfare, juvenile justice, or criminal justice systems; explore policies and protocols for race-blind child protection screenings and child removal reviews; and other duties. Contains provisions concerning the composition of the Task Force and Task Force meetings. Requires the Task Force to submit a report to the General Assembly and the Governor within one

year after the Task Force has its first meeting. Provides that the report shall contain policy recommendations that seek to prioritize preserving and reunifying families involved in the child welfare system, particularly Black families; reduce child welfare system involvement, particularly for Black families; and eliminate racial disproportionality in system involvement and the disproportionate impact of system involvement on families. Provides that the Task Force is dissolved, and the Act repealed, on January 1, 2024. Effective immediately.

**** Passed in the House and Senate

There are additional recommendations regarding the task force membership and also that reporting data has no identifying client information.

Search of: Illinois General Assembly – ilga.gov

Tracy reported that we as a council can work along with James and the Progressive Partners where they hosted a workshop on incarcerated black mothers/parents in general. The presentation was for incarcerated dads informing them of their rights as parents and how their services can count towards reunification with their children and at the very least establishing an attachment with birth parents and their children. James shared some of the information that was used in the presentation:

Background on Parental Rights and Responsibilities

Birth Parent Rights (*important to note these are not always put into practice*)

- You have a right to have a say in where your child is placed
- You have a right to visit with your child
- You have a right to be informed about your child's health, education, development, and where they are living
- You have a right to be involved in making a Family Service Plan for your child and receive best effort support from agencies in achieving your desired outcomes
- You have a right to have access to an attorney
- You have a right to participate by phone or in person at court hearings or to be represented by an attorney

Birth Parent Responsibilities:

- Regularly contact your children and their caseworkers and make your goals known

- Develop and work on your Family Service Plan and help with planning for your children
- Participate in court hearings, stay in touch with your attorney

Note: If a child has been in foster or kinship care for 15 or the past 22 months, the child welfare agency must file to terminate parental rights, though exceptions can be made. Your arrangement of your child with a responsible adult is not considered foster care, and therefore is not considerable justification for TPR.

Information Regarding Services in Illinois

While parents who are incarcerated have legal rights to presence and decision making in their child's life, there are often barriers that prevent this from materializing. Phone calls, letter writing, and visitations between a parent and a child under these circumstances can be limited by barriers of timing, cost, and strict regulations of the correctional facilities (Dworsky et al., 2020). The hours in which a parent can use a telephone to contact their children or case workers may not line up with when those on the other end are available, or the lines may be so long that there is no guarantee of reliable communication on a certain day to establish consistency for a child. Guardians of the children and/or the parents themselves may not be able to afford envelopes for mailing. Limited visitation hours for parents who are located in correctional facilities far away from their children pose additional challenges for those involved in arranging visits, a proven mediator of the trauma of having an incarcerated parent. Though opportunities are theoretically available, the reality is that not enough services exist to support the development and maintenance of parental relationships to their children. In 2019, the Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force was developed to investigate the challenges of parental incarceration faced by families. Their final report found that there is a lack of communication and a central group for which agencies serving children of incarcerated parents can work together, resulting in additional challenges for families (Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force, 2020). Another summary point is as follows:

Existing services are under-resourced or inadequate to successfully reunify families. Despite an array of services offered, some are operated by volunteers without stable funding sources, while others have very restrictive eligibility requirements. (pg 3)

JOINT COUNCIL MEETING:

This agenda item was tabled.

BUSINESS UPDATES:

NEW BUSINESS:

- ❖ A meeting with all co-chairs will be held in August or September to discuss the details of the next joint council meeting.
- ❖ Robin will be sending out information from a consultant on professional development. Feel free to share with all supervisors.
- ❖ Please email Tracy or Lori if you are unable to attend a meeting.
- ❖ The council is behind in submitting and posting minutes.
- ❖ The council acknowledged that Shirley and Fayette both have birthdays during the month of June.
- ❖ Please support the Asian American Advisory Council Virtual Institute Day 6/25.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place July 15, 2021 via WebEx.

The meeting adjourned at 11:49am.

Minutes submitted by:

Lori Welcher-Evans, Recording Secretary