

Illinois Children and Family Services Advisory Council

March 11, 2021 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM

Via WebEx / Conference line only

APPROVED MINUTES

Attendance

Members: Anita Weinberg, Brittani Kindle, Jennifer Hansen, Lenetta Haynes Turner, Marge Berglind, Bob Bloom, Sherrie Crabb

DCFS: Bettie Alvin, Fayette Coleman-Gill, Kara Hamilton, Michelle Jackson, Yesenia Perez

Youth Advisory Board (YAB) Members: Audriana Aranda, Crystal Rekart, Gabriel Foley

Public: Crystal Rekart, Uli Senz

Agenda

I. Welcome and Introductions

Marge called the meeting to order at 3:03 pm.

Some staff joined to clarify and/or answer questions on assigned projects and discussion topics.

- Bettie – re: HMR licensing
- Crystal – YAB coordinator with Be Strong Families

II. Approval of Minutes from January 14, 2021

On a motion by Sherrie and seconded by Bob, the minutes from the January 14th council meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

III. Discussion Item: Identification of New Council Members

a. DCFS staff report of DCFS/Governor's Office member requirements

Some clarification was received from the Department and the YAB, but guidance is still needed from the GO. Will fully discuss as Nominating Committee in a separate meeting.

b. Two potential applicants

Four applications have been received. Marge will also be reaching out to Crystal re: permanent members from the YAB.

c. Next steps

A doodle poll will go out to inquire members' availability on the Nominating Committee to meet separately and discuss membership.

The council is still seeking new members. Send recommendations to Marge for review.

IV. Discussion Item: DCFS FY22 Budget Proposal (see attached proposal)

See related attachment re: proposed budget from the Department.

The proposal is up for approval soon after the next council meeting in May. There was some discussion and indecision about the efficiency of identifying questions and inviting DCFS Budget and Finance to the next meeting to address. However, it was decided that members should send any questions and concerns to Marge, which will be forwarded to the Director's Office. See questions voiced during the meeting below.

Questions/comments/concerns from the council:

- Q. Do we know what the Department's ask is from the GO? How does the budget match up with the areas that Director Smith wants to address? The request is for \$1.55B. However, no one from B&F is on the call to properly address specific questions about line items. The council would like someone from B&F to present at the next meeting.
- Q. When is the hearing date for the proposal? Kara noted this question and will reply to Marge by the end of today.

V. Discussion Item: DCFS COVID-19 Response (see attached letters and flyer)

See related attachments re: letters from Marge. Dated January and February on behalf of the council, they express formal recommendations on 1) assistance extensions for YIC aged/aging out, and 2) vaccinations. No response has been received and the council stressed the importance of providing prompt and formal responses.

a. DCFS response to ICFSAC recommendations letter of January

See related attachments re: Department's decision to extend assistance. The decision letter, dated March 2021, was delayed due to the allocation of funding only coming two weeks ago. YIC numbers in relation to this extension will be tracked.

Re: delays/no responses to recommendations, a Stakeholder Steering Committee has been created with representatives from the different boards and councils to streamline communication. One of the committee's tasks will be to track recommendations and responses. It will be a document to be available to all boards and councils. The Department acknowledges there's an issue with timely responses and hopes this steering committee will improve the process.

Questions/comments/concerns from the council

- Q. What is the status of staff being vaccinated? Per Kara, as of 3/3 for DCFS staff: Received 1st dose: 819; scheduled appointment for 2nd dose: 583; scheduled appointment for 1st dose: 64. An additional 5,000+ POS and general public were vaccinated. However, no separate data is available since Aunt Martha's doesn't track that way. The council would like to see separate numbers to know that POS staff are receiving the same opportunities as public staff, as well as the total number of people that qualify and were notified. Kara will follow-up on the request for additional data/numbers.
- The reported rates of vaccinations are low, but feedback from residential directors is that most or all their staff is vaccinated. However, field staff, foster homes and POS should be given the same opportunity and vaccination rates tracked.
- Q. Are parent/child visits back to normal? Is there data available re: in-person visits? Per Fayette, visits have resumed through CFTMs and are on a case-by-case basis. It's up to the team to decide. Fayette and team will follow-up on the request for data.
- Q. Has there been an impact on permanency decision-making? Per Fayette, there is an uptick in return-home and finalizing adoptions and sub-guar. There's also more participation from parents in ACR via Zoom.
- Glad to see that parent/child visits are becoming more frequent. Current feedback from youth is that family visits are very important. Returning to in-person visits should be prioritized as things go back to normal.
- Q. Who makes the decision between remote vs classroom learning for youth in foster care? And who do schools require that decision come from? Per Fayette, the DCFS Guardian submits the decision but the Department tries to mediate between the biological and foster parents to decide.
- Q. There's feedback that a large percentage of CFTMs don't convene. Is there data to share on this? Fayette and team will follow-up on request for data. However, she noted that these meetings need to be taking place for planning and assessments. They will also be paramount in the Family First initiative.

VI. Discussion Item: Previous Council Recommendations on Juvenile Sex Offender Registry (see attached ICFSAC 2019 Report)

Thanked Anita for finding the report. There is a national effort to reform and/or eliminate the registry. The Juvenile Justice Commission put out a report a few years ago to eliminate it.

a. DCFS response to recommendations

The report and original recommendations were submitted to staff for review. Awaiting responses on recommendations #1 and #2, but there is no legislation pending for changes and will be complying with current state law. There was some discussion but no clear answer on whether the Department would support these changes, even if there was a sponsor.

Questions/comments/concerns from the council

- Q. Has there been success in removing youth from the registry? Per Jennifer, it's an easy endeavor if the process is followed. However, Anita noted that there are nuances to consider, such as area of the state, whether the risk assessment can be afforded, status of legal representation.
- Q. Has the Department pursued getting youth off the registry? Kara will follow-up on this request. The council voiced it's important to know how many youth they have tried to remove and success rate.
- The council would like to know where the Department stands on supporting this, especially on the recommendations re: data collection. Perhaps a different venue is needed for further discussion.

b. Next Steps

Kara will follow-up on questions/concerns as noted above.

Marge and Anita will extend an invitation to someone at the Juvenile Justice Commission to join a future meeting and discuss current efforts. If no one can attend, will schedule a separate meeting to focus on this item.

VII. Discussion Item: Further Information/Data Regarding Three Areas for Possible Council Focus as Requested by Director Smith (see attached DCFS legislative proposals)

See related attachments re: HB3970 and SB201 legislation. HB3970 addresses the use of sub-guar as a permanency goal. SB201 addresses HMR licensure. Noted that the council is also still awaiting responses to previously voiced questions and concerns.

a. DCFS response to recommendations

Re: HMR licensing and sub-guar – Bettie was onboarded on 8/31/20 to help increase HMR licensure. There is a mandate to implement a planning strategy by 5/1. There's a lot of work being done in partnership with POS and several CWAC subcommittees. Part of the strategy is to change from "asking" to "encouraging" relatives to become licensed. Also developing an HMR orientation that introduces them to the licensing process. The orientation is split into three parts, to complete in 30 days from starting. Part one needs to be completed before placement can occur. This strategy will be implemented concurrently with permanency efforts in sub-guar and adoption. The Department would also like the council to review and evaluate issues like diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Re: psych hospitalization refusals – There are many more parties involved in trying to analyze and resolve this issue. The Department asks that the council table this for now.

Questions/comments/concerns from the council

- Q. Can the Department speak more to putting sub-guar on the same level as adoption? Meaghan, as the legislative liaison, would be the best person to address this but she was unable to attend.
- There is some confusion about how sub-guar addresses the permanency problem since the language still alludes to having to rule out adoption. There are also concerns that sub-guar and adoption will be on the

same level. Previously moved away from guardianship as an option since it was predicted this would be everyone's first choice and put in place the "rule out" requirement. They each have different implications for children in the long-term.

- Concerns that cutting the time to decide from six months to 30 days will have a negative effect re: relatives becoming licensed. The council agrees that six months is a long time to decide and understands there's funding at stake, but this doesn't seem to address the core of the licensing problem.
- The Department should ensure they work on efforts that make sense for the system, as well as utilize their private partners as much as possible.
- The council needs more data on unlicensed vs licensed HMR homes to analyze re: maltreatment rates.
- Re: ask from the Department to table the psych hospital refusals, council members support tabling this for now. However, the council is still concerned about why psych hospitals are refusing admissions, as well as what's being done to address the issue/challenge of youth languishing in hospitals past their discharge date.
- SASS providers should be included in discussions re: psych hospital refusals.
- The council would like to know what plan the Department has/is developing to allocate sufficient resources in the continuity of care, to address mental health episodes without going to the ER, psych lock-outs, etc.
- There was legislation passed, public acts 101-78 and 100-978, that the council could possibly review.
- Q. What data will the Department provide to evaluate DEI issues in HMR licensing? Kara will follow-up.
- Q. What is this council's role in addressing sub-guar? Per Michelle, the Department asks this council to review policy and procedures and recommend changes that benefit the system. Specific to sub-guar, there is no plan yet to get around barriers other than increasing HMR licensure.
- Several discussions re: ICG changes, including concerns from both the council and Department that families are disqualified for any and all type of involvement with DCFS.

b. Next Steps

Kara will relay all legislation questions to Meaghan so she can address, as well as follow-up on additional questions/concerns as noted above.

Marge and Michelle will meet 1:1 to discuss these areas and finetune things before the next meeting.

VIII. Discussion Item: Identify Areas of Focus for Next Meeting

No additional comments, see notes above.

Miscellaneous Items:

- None

Meeting Adjourned: No formal motion to adjourn. Call ended at 4:58 pm.

Next Meeting: May 13, 2021 at 3pm.