

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Statewide Citizens' Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect Committee Meeting Minutes October 20, 2021,
9:30 AM to 12:00

Via WebEx

Meeting number (access code): 177 949 9907 Meeting password: QJxcfvah382

Call to Order – Vea Crawford, Chair conducted the introductions and roll/roll call and turned the meeting over to Diane Scruggs, Vice Chair.

Introductions/Roll Call- The following members were attending via Web-ex: **Present (12)** Veatrice Crawford (Chair), Diane Scruggs (Vice Chair), Elaine Bailey-Johnson, Nancie Brown, Mary Bennett, Mary Jane Forney, Mary Hardy Hall, Joe Hemphill, Jackie Sharp, Judy Bradley, Delilah Nelson, Lisa Vinson

Absent (9): Cynthia Savage Brown, Dr. Alicen McGowan, Jaclin Davis, Commander James Davis, Alice Staley, Denise McCaffrey, Shauna McGuire, Judge Ericka Sanders, Ann G. Deuel

DCFS Staff: Marc Smith (Director), Jassen Strokosch (Chief of Staff), Kara Hamilton (Associate Deputy Director, External Communications and Advisory Groups), Kenneth Leggings (Regional Admin in Cook Co) Tierney Stutz (Chief Deputy Director, Child Protection & State Central Register), Jassen Strokosch (Chief of Staff), Shirley Davis-Barsh, Dustin Frevert

A quorum was present. 12 out of 21, were in attendance. This meeting was held virtually through WebEx in compliance with changes to the Open Meetings Act in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Meeting Called to Order 9:33 AM- Elaine motioned to approve the October meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Mary Jane Forney. Motion carries to accept the minutes.

Meeting with Director Smith: Diane welcomed Director Marc Smith to the group. Director Smith began by thanking committee members for their hard work during the pandemic. The Director announced the approval to start the Family First Project. The Department will be using Family First and prevention services to prevent children from coming into care. Director stated there would be racial equity and racial inclusion focus. The Department will be working with providers to help identify and provide services for children with mental health and behavioral disorders. The Department is also working with DHS and HFS to assist before a child comes to DCFS.

Effective July 14, 2020, an update to the Open Meetings Act requires the following:

- Councils meeting via videoconference must keep a verbatim recording of their meetings (record their meetings) to remain compliant with the Open Meetings Act.
- All votes must now be recorded via roll call

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Diane informed the Director of the group's desire to be involved with the implementation of the Family First Initiative. Director Smith stated that there is no specific committee for this initiative but did commit to sending someone from DCFS to update the group at upcoming meetings.

Diane also mentioned that the Department has struggled with racial equity for quite some time and asked what is happening differently. Director responded that there is increased training capacity, an increased effort for diversity in memberships on the advisory council and looking at cases with a lens of "color blindness." The Director will have Dagens Brown update the group on racial equity.

Diane asked the Director to expand on resource development. Director Smith noted that things have changed; most kids are doing well, and the system is working as intended. He pointed out that a smaller number of children, roughly 500 of 20,000, have more complex needs. The Department has been giving rate increases to providers over the last three years for this population. The Director has challenged providers to develop new strategies for complex needs children and families and is committed to working to support and fund these efforts. He expressed interest in hearing recommendations and concerns from SCAN.

When asked about conducting virtual case reviews, Jassen provided examples of what other groups have done for file reviews and offered to provide guidance and support to SCAN to complete their annual file review. Elaine asked what the Department is doing about the human trafficking of youth in care. Director Smith stated that he is working with providers to ensure that these kids are stable and that the providers have new run-away guidelines and programs.

Family First: Mary Jane Forney asked the Director how the Department planned to engage families with children 0–3-year-old children. The Director responded that the Department had engaged approximately 1500 families with children ages 0-3, and he committed to having a Family First staff person present and hear concerns of the committee. He answered five years upon being asked how long the Family First Initiative would be in effect. The committee was told that a copy of the report was posted and available online.

Lisa asked if there would be job openings for racial equity and if DCFS received input from community leaders. Jassen replied that two committees had been formed for this purpose and asked that Kara send this information to the group.

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Diane asked if the Department could make records available for review online. Jassen noted that they could make committee members available to share files via WebEx.

Legislative Updates: Diane stated that she had received approximately 20 pages of legislative updates and has not yet had time to review them; she asked that this be moved to the next meeting. Kara mentioned that the Governor had signed all. Diane asked if the group could be notified of legislation as soon as introduced. Jassen explained that a small number of bills referencing DCFS are Department initiatives, and Jassen committed DCFS to share these

Prevent Child Abuse Conference: Denise McCaffrey was not in attendance to update the Prevent Child Abuse Conference; the update was moved to the next meeting.

File Review: The group discussed topics for the upcoming file review. Shirley noted that the file reviews are due by March 31, 2022, and input for the annual report needs to be completed by March 30th. The committee selected January 19, 2022, to conduct the virtual file review from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Meeting Adjourned 11:12 AM.

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