



DCFS Statewide Parent Advisory Council (SPAC)

January 24, 2023

Approved 2-28-23

Present- Parents – Cassandra Williams, Theresa Leggins, Gregory Cox,
Johnny Williams, Terry Lenoir

Guest Parent – Shawnise Newton, from the PWP Springfield Chapter

Non-Parent Members – Jeff Haley, Javonna Smith, Amy Chase, Norma
Machay, Cynthia Richter-Jackson, Kara Hamilton, Linda Jones, Tahney
Fletcher, Michelle Grove

Support Staff – Kim Willis, Ray Gates

Roll Call – Instead of calling the roll, Greg asked all present to introduce
themselves in turn.

Guest Speaker Cynthia Richter-Jackson – Cynthia introduced herself and
briefly shared her experience with DCFS. Then, she noted that this council's
Change Management Proposal was well written and detailed, containing
helpful examples of changes the SPAC is recommending with regard to staff
treating parents with dignity and respect and enhancing parent/child
visitation.

Cynthia showed a diagram that outlines the seven work plans that have been developed to address changes that need to be made in order to enhance the work of the Illinois Child Welfare System. This council's Change Management Proposal is primarily addressed in Work Plan Two, Family Engagement, and Work Plan Seven, Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM). Cynthia briefly explained each of the seven work plans. She then described a survey that had been sent to parents in order to establish a baseline against which progress from the current work can be measured via future surveys of parents.

Cynthia invited SPAC to join the work team that is implementing the CFMT work plan. That work plan will address respect and visitation. Cynthia emphasized that the Department wants parents to be involved in discussions about how we can do this better, and parents from SPAC are invited to be involved in helping do the work. She invited SPAC to let her know which parents from SPAC will join this workgroup, which meets the second Monday of each month via Webex.

Ethics and Harassment Training – Ray thanked all who completed their 2022 trainings with such short notice. Ray emphasized that these two trainings must be completed again for 2023, and that they are due no later than June 15, 2023. Ray said that he has sent the information and link for members to set up their OneNet training accounts, adding that members are required to complete their 2023 training through their OneNet accounts.

Minutes – Greg asked if all had received the November minutes. All replied in the affirmative. Greg moved to approve the minutes and Terry gave the second.

Chapter Reports

Cook – Javonna reported that the chapter met December 8 for a brief, organizational and planning meeting, then they had a brief business meeting followed by a Christmas for Parents event on December 17.

They also met on January 12 and debriefed the two December meetings, plus, they began planning for 2023, including a discussion about engaging the community and helping the community understand a bit about child welfare and ways to keep their children safe. The chapter is hoping to present a back-to-school event which brings the community together, something more than just a school supplies giveaway. Members also discussed having a juvenile court judge come educate parents about the juvenile court process for child welfare cases. Kara Hamilton offered to help with getting a judge to come speak.

East St. Louis – Ray explained that this chapter is a hybrid type in conjunction with the parent education group at the local Family Advocacy Center. He stated that Kim had attended their November and December meetings and made great progress recruiting two parents for possible membership on SPAC.

Kim explained how the FAC is serving parents through their parent education group. Kim talked a bit about Parents Sophia and Ashley and their interest in joining SPAC. Ray said that the process to make sure that parents know what they are about to agree to re SPAC is that Kim recruits them, then Cassandra calls them and if Cassandra believes they are right for SPAC and SPAC is right for them, Ray calls them. This is to ensure that parents understand their SPAC member obligations and to give parents an opportunity to decline if they do not feel ready or willing to commit.

Lake County – Norma said she has been unable to convene meetings in November, December and January due to increased workloads and expanded areas of responsibility. Norma said parents still call her, and she refers them to Cassandra. Norma noted the need for a chapter in Lake County, and she said there needs to be paid staff whose only job is working with parents, so these chapters can be rebuilt and built. Greg said he had met with Northern Regional Administrator Pedro Mendoza about this, and Greg will meet with Angela Harris and some executive directors in Rockford about re-starting

the Rockford Chapter. Ray noted that Rockford drug treatment facility Rosecrance used to help support the Rockford PWP chapter.

Springfield – Cassandra said they have been meeting monthly and have had educational presentations on service plans, and CFTMs and have one scheduled about ACRs. She plans to invite Judge Tharp to speak at their in-person meeting in March, to describe the juvenile court process.

PWP Contract – Ray noted that this is the contract that employs two full time staff to work with parent chapters across the state. He reminded all that Michelle Grove’s office was successful in pushing for a contract to be awarded to the winning bidder organization last June, but in August that organization withdrew, citing inability to provide statewide coverage.

Ray emphasized that Michelle’s office has quickly done what they are required to do to re-start the bidding process, and now that process moves forward in other parts of the Department.

Posting SPAC Membership List to Dnet – Greg noted that all members have agreed to have their full names posted.

Adjournment – Ray explained that a co-chair must ask for a motion to adjourn. Greg did, with motion made by Cassandra, and second given by Terry. The meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.



JB Pritzker
Governor



Marc D. Smith
Director

Office of Caregiver & Parent Support
406 E. Monroe Street • Station 225 Springfield, Illinois 62701
217-524-2422
www2.illinois.gov/DCFS