

# Advisory Commission on Reducing the Disproportionate Representation of African American Children in Foster Care

Minutes of Meeting  
September 29, 2022

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**Meeting called to order by Chair at 2PM:** Tim Snowden, Statewide Chief Deputy Director  
Permanency and Intact Services, DCFS

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**Members in attendance:** Dagene Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS  
Latonia Byrd-Williamson, Dept of Juvenile Justice  
Heidi Clark, Dept of Public Health  
Deputy Majority Leader Mary Flowers  
Tanya Ford, Department of Healthcare and Family Services  
State Senator Napoleon Harris  
Tiana McCall, Dept of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
Denice Murray, Adjunct Instructor University of Chicago, Crown Family School of Social Work  
Dana O'Leary, Dept of Labor  
Michelle Shaver, IL Board of Higher Education  
Rachel Turner, Public Member  
Latasha Roberson, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois  
Dr. Leslie Ward, IL State Board of Education  
Chrystal Wofford, Dept of Aging

**DCFS in attendance:** Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communications and Advisory Groups  
Kari Rogers, Statewide Administrator of Intact Family Services  
Tierney Stutz, Chief Deputy Director, Child Protection & State Central Register  
Lori Welcher-Miles, Deputy Director, Intact Family Services  
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

**Public:** Thomas Grippando, Attorney formerly of Cook Co Public Guardian's Office  
Sarah Daniels, Illinois Collaboration on Youth  
Tamara Fuller, Director of Child and Family Research at University of Il in Champaign

## Roll Call and Approval of Minutes:

- Darnita Jackson took the roll call. It was determined that a quorum was present.
- Minutes were reviewed, Latasha Roberson entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on August 25, 2022. Michelle Shaver seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

## Topics of Discussion:

- Baseline information about the structure of DCFS, services and operations that connect to children and families was presented to Commission as per request from meeting in August.
  - Tierney Stutz presented information on State Central Register (SCR), Child Protection, Investigations, Mandated Reporting System, and the Allegation Based System.
  - Lori Welcher-Miles presented information on Preventative Services, i.e., Extended Family Support Program, Child Welfare Service Referrals and Intact Family Services.
  - Tim Snowden presented information on Permanency Hearings and Permanency Planning, Substitute Care and Fictive Kin placements, critical decisions involved in permanency cases, reunification, adoption and guardianships and children in care currently.

- Questions and comments that are to be addressed via written responses and/or additional information to be provided at future meetings.
  - Information on the services/programs that have proven to be most effective in stabilization/reunification.
  - Additional information on Norman funding, its usage, allocation and increases over the last few years.
  - How data is collected during investigations.
  - Engagement with community-based resources.
  - The types of programs that should be expanded to address.
- Creation of subcommittees within Commission to review data sets.

**Public Comment:**

- Tom Grippando, formerly of the Cook County Public Guardian's office and the Public Defender's office regarding Child Welfare provided input that DCFS does not solely determine whether a child goes home or is adopted. The court system is a key decision maker. Judges GAL's and States Attorneys complete their own risk assessment from their professional vantage point as well.
- Mr. Grippando cited statistics such as: 71% of the children that are in Foster Care in Cook County are black, 27% are white. Additionally, that statistics are exactly the opposite if you go for the rest of the State, almost exactly and yet children go into foster care in Cook County are likely to stay at least a year or longer then if they go into foster care outside of Cook County. They are far less likely to be adopted within 3 years if they go into Cook County Foster Care system as opposed as to going into foster care in other parts of the State.
- Mr. Grippando suggested consideration be given calling upon a higher court or maybe DCFS can conduct a study to determine why is that children whose cases are adjudicated in Cook County remain in foster care significantly longer than other states. Are there things that could have done differently? And you do that by examining closed cases, in other words if a case was closed after 4 years and a kid went home was there something that could have been done? Was it a necessary delay? And the same thing is true of adoption. They could look at closed cases then they might be able to apply those lessons to current cases.

**Next Steps:**

- Structure going forward, areas of interest for subcommittees.
- Items suggested for consideration and further discussion in future meetings:
  - Prevention – Keeping children out of care.
  - Decision points that impact African American children coming into care as an example.
  - View this issue through racial lens.
  - For children that do come into care – processes by which to ensure they received the services they need and leave the system in an efficient time, enhanced interventions.
  - Impact of legal system.
  - Cultural Competency to occur on all levels.
  - Ideas on innovated technology with regards to program development.
  - Thinking about issues in a holistic way, what other supports, resources, systems, and/or agencies can be brought together to address disproportionality.
  - Improving collaboration with other existing systems to provide wrap-around services.
  - Other data or information needed to begin.

**Meeting Adjournment at 4PM**