

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

Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2022

Meeting called to order by Chair at 1:02PM: Tim Snowden, Statewide Chief Deputy Director
Permanency and Intact Services, DCFS

Members in attendance: Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS
Latonia Byrd-Williamson, Dept of Juvenile Justice
Heidi Clark, Dept of Public Health
Abby Dompke, IL Capital Development Board
State Representative Mary Flowers
Tanya Ford, Department of Healthcare and Family Services
Tiana McCall, Dept of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Erica Weatherspoon proxy for Margarita Mendoza, Dept of Corrections
Dr. Charles Montorio-Archer, One Hope United
Denice Murray, Adjunct Instructor University of Chicago, Crown Family School of Social Work
Dana O'Leary, Dept of Labor
LaTasha Roberson-Guifarro, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois
Michelle Shaver, IL Board of Higher Education
Janelle Washington, IL College Board
Chrystal Wofford, Dept of Aging

Members not in attendance: State Senator Napoleon Harris
Pam Hudson, IL Dept of Human Rights
LaTanya Law
State Representative Tony McCombie
Rachel Turner

Public: Sara Block, Ascend Justice
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth

DCFS: Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups
Lucretia Newman, Legislative Liaison, Office of Legislative Affairs
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Roll Call and Approval of Minutes:

- Darnita Jackson took the roll call. It was determined that a quorum was present.
- Minutes were reviewed, Tiana McCall entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on September 29, 2022. Tasha Roberson-Guifarro seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Topics of Discussion:

- Commission Framework Going Forward by Chair Tim Snowden.
 - Restatement of the Commission's duties, expectations and charge of tasks per bill HB3267/Public Act 102-0470 – work directly with all State agencies to identify causes and factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of African American Children in Foster Care and to develop effective policies, programs, services and strategies to include prevention resources that will prevent African American children from coming into the child welfare system.
 - Consideration of socioeconomic statuses, family support networks, contact with community-based systems with varying levels of support, i.e., medical, educational, housing, employment, mental health and other State systems of all which many African American families start out on the lower end of most of these support systems.
 - Structure and Plan of Action for Subcommittees based on previous meetings, each to include; a racial lens from an African American perspective, recommendations for prevention services as a whole State system, consideration and examination of external supports that may hinder a seamless supportive system overall, reduction measures in the length of stay for when African American children do come into the system, cultural competencies and data-informed decisions as well as the identification of policies and procedures that support African American children disproportionately coming into the child welfare system.
 - **Legal System and Its Impact to Youth-in-Care** – includes prevention and other subcategories of focus based upon the data including data from Cook County.
 - **External Resources and Services that can Address Disproportionality** – to be considered broadly in terms of access.
 - **Legislative Impact to African American Families** – existing and future legislation and/or proposals and recommendations or amendments to existing legislation to be made by Commission.
 - **DCFS Services to Impact Prevention & Efforts to Reduce Length of Stay in Care** – includes review of current policies, procedures, practices for purposes of identifying decision points at entry or exit of care that led to disparities.
- Update on Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force by Dagené Brown.
 - Implemented per HB3821, the Task Force is charged with developing and submitting policy recommendations, both administrative and legislative, to the General Assembly and the Governor within one year after the first meeting which took place August 25, 2022.
 - The recommendations shall seek to:
 - Prioritize preserving and reunifying families involved in the child welfare system particularly African American families.
 - Reduce Child Welfare System involvement for African American families; and
 - Eliminate racial disproportionality in system involvement and the disproportionate impact of system involvement on African American families.
 - The Task Force meets monthly on Wednesdays with the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 9, 2022. The Task Force will be dissolved on January 1, 2024.

Comments/Areas of Focus and Elements of Proposed Action Items for Subcommittee Discussions:

- African American families are disproportionately affected and treated differently in all aspects as it relates to health care, education, employment and advancement in the workplace.
- Research shows that children who are raised in the child welfare system do not fair well as they would if they were left home and provided the necessary resources within the family unit.
- Legal System and Its Impact to Youth-in-Care
 - Analysis of court decisions involving new cases and surrounding children of color and reunification with families.
 - Data on number of African American children that come into care, percentage of African American Children on track to be reunified with parents or kinship homes for purposes of making recommendation.
 - Invite Foster Care Attorney(s) and Retired Judges with practical experience to provide input.
 - Impact on youth-in-care that are also involved with Juvenile Justice.
 - Impact on youth-in-care who experience parental incarceration and what services are provided for those incarcerated parents to reunify families.

- Enhance DOC/DCFS collaboration to reunify incarcerated parents with children in care; allowed communications/visitations.
- External Resources/Services
 - Identify all the programs Statewide and data surrounding how families do or do not access and whether procedures are done properly. Reference made to template that provided information on how many State agencies were involved with the same family. Concept surrounding universal IDs issued to families to better identify all state agencies they have been involved with.
 - Determine what services are offered and where within the State including non-governmental agencies and community-based programs and services.
 - Resource mapping to determine gaps and conflicts in child welfare and external services for low-income families. Reference made to HB3129 TANF Increases requiring 75% of cash assistance go to any children in the family receiving TANF assistance; Public Act 101-0103.
 - Examine existing services and efficiency of those services. Determine whether funding for these services is adequate and identify where more funding is needed.
 - Consideration of other agencies and services as resources outside of the child welfare system; childcare services and lack of pay to providers (reference federal funding to increase early childhood educator credentials specifically for underserved areas to bring in more childcare providers of color via IBHE), grandparents raising grandchildren or relative/fictive kin via the Dept of Aging, and employment and job training resources via the Dept of Labor.
- Legislative Impact to African American Families – consideration of the systemic nature of racism and how policies and procedures basically drive the system.
 - Bill/legislation passed that affect DCFS should be held to a certain time frame and committees established as a checks and balance system to review and prevent further harm and impediment to African American families.
 - Policies, procedures and administrative rules as it relates to the workforce (DCFS and other State agencies); how they are directed to do the work mandated by State statute and how it impacts supports for African American families.
 - Amendments that can be made to existing legislation; reference HB3129, Public Act 101 -0103 as a starting point and recommendations for newly proposed legislation.
- Comparative Analysis on programs other States have successfully implemented to address issues with the same population for the purpose of identifying programs that may be effective.
 - References to work in Connecticut via chat: Amorebieta, Maite and McFadden, Cynthia. “How Connecticut’s foster care system is setting a new standard.” Today, October 13, 2022, <https://www.today.com/video/why-connecticut-s-foster-care-system-is-a-model-for-the-nation-150548037709>. Accessed October 27, 2022.
 - Invite person(s) with expertise to provide overview of research conducted on programs/services offered in other states to include data and statistics – Research conducted by Chapin Hall and Dr. Dana Weiner were identified as potential starting points to explore best practices and observations of effectiveness in other states.
- DCFS Services and Supports
 - Examine the processes and practices of children coming into care. Consider what policies and procedures are causing the disproportionality; data on the number of children coming into care is needed.
 - DCFS to provide information on Norman funds, how much is given to African American families; flexible funding supports, workforce needs, services that are projected to increase, child welfare referrals, data around reducing the length of stay, data from Cook County that refers to extended length of stay.
 - Analysis and review of historical data from Differential Response Pilot program i.e., the goal and intent of the program for preventive measures to include the number of families worked with, the number of families deflected and the number of families that came back into the system within a specific

timeframe. Conduct a comparative analysis with existing Child Welfare Referrals and Differential Response program .

- Review and assess programs implemented by DCFS in the past to address disproportionality issues for purposes of extracting effective practices to formulate recommendations.
- Modify the requirements for becoming a foster parent to include reunification terms with visitation.
- Conduct a needs assessment among youth and parents connected to DCFS for purposes of determining other agency services and supports needed, i.e, Dept of Labor, Dept of Aging; priority of services outside of the Child Welfare System given to children and families connected to DCFS.

Public Comment:

There were no comments from the public.

Next Steps:

- Initial Subcommittee meetings to be conducted outside and between meetings of the Commission.
- Review instructions for attending and facilitating subcommittee meetings.
- Dedicated time to be given during Commission meeting for subcommittee breakouts.
- Subcommittees to provide updates regarding drill-down information examined, proposed data action items and areas of focus to Commission for purposes of feedback, determining next steps and areas of recommendation and action by large group.
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Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55PM.