

Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC)
May 18, 2023, 1:00 PM
MINUTES

Members Present

Glenda Lashley – DCFS Staff Liaison	Audrey Pennington
Beverly Jones – Co-Chair	LaTasha Roberson-Guifarro
Christopher Cox – Co-Chair	Deb Roberts
Malia Arnett	Jackie Sharp
Monica Badiano	Evelyn Smith
Rich Bobby	Kara Teeple
Kim Cobb	Prestina Singleton
Nancy Dorfman-Schwartz	Elena Thompson
Jason Keeler	Harriet Kersh
Charles Montorio-Archer	Mary Savage
Jere Murry	Phyllis Summers
Lisa Nicklas	

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Christopher Cox at 1:06 p.m. Glenda Lashley, DCFS Liaison took roll call, and it was determined a quorum was present.

II Review and Approval of Minutes

Approval of December Minutes – Co-chair Chris motioned for approval of the minutes as submitted. Christina Singleton motioned to approve the minutes; seconded by Latasha Robinson-Guifarro; unanimously approved, no opposed and the motion to approve the minutes carried.

III. Co-chair Report

Informed the purpose of CWAC FY23 Priorities (8 topics). Confirmed IllinoisConnect is noted as a standing agenda item. Looking for lessons learn and how the private sector can complement as rolling out to the next phase. Also, are aware the legislators are still working on the budget. In addition, need to review the CWAC structure and the committee’s work. It does not meet their current or future needs. Will have a larger conversation on this topic.



IV. Director's Report

The director confirmed are on track with the budget. However, still in negotiations with the union and the state around the COLA and level setting. Is looking forward for multi-year contracts to keep business moving and being supportive. Is committed to progress with IllinoisConnect and expect the hotline to make its roll out this calendar year. It has given the agency an opportunity to develop Gantt charts about current process and how it will be revamp. Last month had an opportunity to speak to legislators during the budget hearing. Noticed that is important to be able to think different than what people are used to hearing. They hear the update but want to know what is next. Would like to challenge everyone to think about "what is next?". In the next 6 to 8 months will focus on developing services in two categories. First, on home based Therapeutic and Clinical Support, Individual Counseling, and Support Groups. Think about those services and programs that can be expanded. Second, to continue enhancing and building residential Group Homes, TLP, ICC, and critical residential style support for the children. DCFS was able to work with ACLU and BH resulting in a thoughtful plan which the Federal judge was supportive due to everyone's collaboration. The director is still with DCFS because there is work that needs to be done. There is a list of providers that are stepping up and using the Capital Grant money to build their business. By using the increased funding to bring more staff to the workspace. Have additional agencies that have stepped into the space of Therapeutic Foster Care. Recently one provider open in southern Illinois. Thankful for the people's commitment to this space along with the Governor's support.

Update on Employee Background Check Process – Shontee Blankenship, Deputy Director of Licensing

We all know the Family First Prevention Service Act requires that as a condition of the Title IV-E, claim eligibility all new potential hires shall not start with a child welfare agency, group home or childcare institution until the employer receives the full background check clearance. DCFS has had ongoing conversations with the private sector surrounding the background check requirements. The allowance of the conditional employee hiring process would only be temporary. Due to the federal mandate, the office of administration for children and families informed DCFS that the conditional employment language did not meet the Title IV-E Federal Funding requirements. Effective May 1,2023 the conditional employee hiring process was no longer permitted. On April 20,2023 an informational transmittal was released informing licensing staff, all license child welfare agencies and congregate care staff on this change and the release of the revised background check authorization form.

A background check portal was created in November 2022 for the purpose of allowing license providers to see the background check status results on potential hires. Once eligible they can begin anytime thereafter while waiting for document via USPS mail. It's continuously enhanced to upload the authorization forms if fingerprinting is not required. Also, the acceptance of E-signatures to the new background check authorization form. Currently, DCFS Licensing process is within 3 to 5 business days. If there are problems encounter on the portal, the agency needs to notify their licensing representative. Then the representative can follow up at DCFS.DG.BCU-chicago@illinois.gov unit email. The Workforce Committee confirmed been able to have background clearances and BCU's finding through Illinois.gov email versus USPS mail. Will follow up with DOIT for a more streamline process for those that already have the Illinois.gov email address.

Q: Is there an opportunity for expansion of other vendors or available in the nearest future? Under current State Procurement rules all the state agencies must use Biometrics.

Q: Can Biometrics be at onsite for hiring events? Yes, Biometrics is currently collaborating with DCFS' events.

Q: Does the amendments to the background check policy pertains to child daycare centers/facility as well? They are under the Child Care and Development Block Grant with a different federal mandate as it relates to background checks. All license settings are mandated such as; child welfare agency/and or congregate care, childcare institution, group home, and TLP, need full clearance prior to start date.

Update on IllinoisConnect (Standing Agenda Item) – James Daugherty, Chief Financial Officer/Dolt

Continue rolling out the Augintel tool with DCFS and community-based partners' staff. This tool allows case workers to navigate the case files in an innovative way. The Virtual Training Center will roll out live by July 10th to the new Learning Development Center (LCD). Immersive Learning which is very close to in-person simulation centers is rolling out as well. The Intake System is in the process of testing that will be placed in CCWIS. Lessons learned; worked hard to integrate the SAFE Model and CCWIS. Therefore, need to balance training with SAFE in order to test it with the CCWIS system. Intake 1.0, Investigation Case Management, when it launches, SACWIS and CYSIS will be turned off. Are already working on the conversions to the new system. Would like some volunteers to engage in the process to design the new solution and test the system before going live. Another ask is a role called the Change Champion to serve as an intermediate between the IT department and staff by providing back and forth feedback. The Ally-IL app maps the case data; will compare the cases with and without the Ally-IL App to track results. The Mobile app is getting an update, looking to implement workflow management automation. The Provider Taxonomy form has been automated for caseworkers to refer services from cases. There will be new service codes to identify the service and training around that as well. CWAC Co-chair encouraged the private sector to view the attached Illinois CCWIS Data Quality Plan power-point presentation. The CCWIS project is a single interface that all agencies can leverage. It's an API and near real time data. The agency bought this package as a joint purchase agreement with rate card and technical resources. Therefore, agencies can integrate at state rate with Deloitte's contract. Community-based partners can contact James Daugherty and/or Glenda Lashley for further discussion.

Employee Safety Initiatives – Jason Strokosch, Chief of Staff

The agency is launching a way to provide some additional funding to the private sector so they can get financial support for placing safety initiatives in place. The finance team met with the subcommittee on April 20th for preliminary discussions on funding for provider worker safety. For foster care, a model was shown that would provide a pool of funds for worker safety initiative that are equivalent to state cost. For the office, security safety devices and personal protection a per case amount would be added to foster care rate to give providers a pool of funds. On the residential side, a discussion was held and ICOY, subsequently provided a survey that was taken to discuss needs, plan to schedule an additional meeting to discuss the residential component since it's not uniform like the foster care side. A meeting is scheduled on June 14th with the Illinois State Police, Department of Homeland Security, and State's Security Information for executive level across the child welfare private sector.

Update on FY24 Program Plans – Timothy Snowden, Chief Deputy Director of Intact/Permanency

There are not many changes under the Program Plan FY24. There is a change in the way DCFS is going to operationalize the existing program plan. On FY23 foster care added a Permanency Chief Specialist and Recruit Specialist. However, there are tweaks to the program plans; like clarifying language in the new plan. Also, the quality assurance of the program. Will need the agencies existing quality insurance plan of how the quality will be delivered to children and families. The other change is how to enact existing Intact providers to work in the child welfare referral lane. To create a seamless way for an agency who decides to be part of the child welfare referral group of programming.

Q: Where is the connection between DCFS and home base services? The department is part of that roll out. Pathways is going to be a test for all to really figure out how do they connect among multiple services and agencies.

Update on FY24 Contracts and Rates – Kiersten A. Neswick, Chief Financial Officer/DCFS Office of Budget and Finance

The department recognized the agencies are currently planning their own budgets and having unknowns relative to the state's budget can make this process difficult. DCFS assured that will share information as soon as it becomes available. What is not included yet is the final rate setting most notably finalizing the COLA and accounting for union salaries (still being negotiated). Given the current timing, DCFS has determined the best way to ensure timely payment in July is to issue the payments using the FY23 rates. As soon as the final state rate setting is completed, budget amendments will be issued to incorporate the final FY24 rate.

Q: What is the 3-year contract that is coming out? The department's overall goal is to convert their contracts to a multi-year schedule. There are more benefits; more quickly obligated and made payable at the start of a fiscal year. It provides consistency for agencies while reducing that administrative burden and assist DCFS in meeting auditing best practice standards. There is not a downside, they can still be amended both financially and problematically as needed. Currently, most of the budget-based grants and non-board fixed straight grants are on a multi-year schedule. DCFS would like to convert as many as they can except for those with specific service goods or commodity.

Updates on HB4304 – Tracey King, Deputy Chief of Staff/DCFS Office of the Director

Tracey King is the project leader for implementing HB4304 which was renamed during phase II of the project as Foster-care Assessment & Rating at Exit (F.A.R.E.) The House Bill 4304 became effective January 1, 2023. It ensures that youth voices regarding their experiences in their foster homes are heard, documented, and considered before another placement is considered. Unless clinically contraindicated, the Department shall ensure an exit interview is conducted with every child aged five and over who leaves a foster home placement within five business days of leaving. Consideration of any foster parent who has requested a youth's removal from their home on more than five occasions as "quality of care concerns" applicant. It requires DCFS to review exit interviews as part of the review of "quality of care concerns" applicant's application for licensure and renewal. The Interview is to be completed and documented by the caseworker, mental health provider (if applicable), or clinician. If the information that requires a hotline call or a potential licensing violation is presented, the interviewer will follow up with a call to the State Central Register, who will, in turn complete an investigation or send to the Licensing Supervisor and worker. Documentation of the interview will be maintained in the file of the; foster parent's licensing, youth, and provided to the youth's guardian ad litem and an attorney appointed under sections 2-17 of the Juvenile Court Act of 1987. Also, publishing the data in the external website. Currently SMEs work group is composed of DCFS office divisions and working with Northwestern University Partners to coordinate the implementation of HB4304. The following forms will be updated: Procedure 315, Clinical Form 399, Licensing Forms (CFS 542, 591-1 and 592-2), Rule 383, Policy Guide 2017.09. Will share the rated questions with the Statewide Youth Advisory Board and CWAC Permanency Subcommittee, the week of May 22, 2023, for input. Go live anticipated start date is August 1, 2023.

Q: Does this process applies to the private sector and purpose of bill? Yes, about 75% of the cases are handle by the private sector and completed by the caseworkers. The Legislature wants to look at the quality of care that youth is receiving and the match between caregiver and youth.

V. Public Comments

None at the moment.

Adjournment

Co-chair moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:19 p.m. on behalf of their collective process and structure. Thank everyone for their commitment and time to children and families in Illinois.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 17, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.