

DCFS Statewide Parent Advisory Council Minutes

6-27-23

Approved 7-25-23

Parents Present - Cassandra Williams, Terry LeNoir, Johnny Williams, Shawnise Newton, Shawna Peterman, Prema Chamness, Melissa Reed, Leolani Posten, and Theresa Leggins

Staff Present - Michelle Grove, Janelle Pulcher, Norma Machay, Amy Chase, Javonna Smith, Kara Hamilton, and Tahney Fletcher.

Roll Call - Cassandra welcomed everyone; she then did the roll call.

Approval of Minutes - Terry asked if everyone received the minutes from the last two meetings and if they had a chance to go over them. Cassandra pointed out that Kim has not had a chance to finalize the minutes and send them out. Terry stated that we will table the minutes until next month's meeting.

Norma Machay then introduced herself and explained her role with DCFS, stating she has been with the Department for 24.5 years. Norma explained that she has been working with Cook County working to implement Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) as one way to enhance permanency. She was unable to share her screen, so she emailed members her power point and then she went over it.

Norma explained the recommendations and how she has had the chance to work in other surrounding areas, including Southern Region, Lake County, Central Region, Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Sterling Counties, to share this project. The practice of quality CFTMs using the IL Care Practice Model (CPM) supports the youth and family voices in the care that they receive and invites supportive family and friends and community partners to participate in their teams. By the end of the project, it will: 1.) increase the number of CFTM prep meetings; 2.) increase the number of CFTMs that occur within 45 days; 3.) improve the quality of CFTM documentation; and 4.) improve the quality of engagement. There are two types of cases, Intact and In Care. An investigation starts when DCFS gets the call, and a formal report is taken. All evidence then goes in front of a judge, who decides whether the case will be intact or in care. There must be credible evidence for a child to be removed from his or her home.

If intact, an intake will take place, and the worker will create a child and family team meeting. If a case is brought in due to medical neglect, a CFTM will need to be set in 10 days. Otherwise, the CFTM must be held within 40 days. Parents may have a CFTM before 40 days, but they have 40 days to set the first CFTM, and that is when the parties come up with the service plan.

Shawnise Newton asked Norma where the report comes from when the investigator goes to the home, and how do they prove a child is being harmed? Norma replied that as part of the investigation, the Child Protection Investigator must interview the child's doctor, family friends, other family and others to come up with enough evidence such that the judge can uphold the child's removal.

Theresa then asked how it is right for DCFS to remove children without proof of the abuse. She asked how can they lie?

Leolani asked who holds these people accountable for abusing authority? Norma explained the appeal process and apologized for parents going through what they went through and encouraged everyone to always reach out to their local Family Advocacy Center.

Janelle said it may be beneficial to have someone present when dealing with Child Protection Investigators.

Javonna said always ask for the charges and request them in writing so that parents can appeal it within the time frame. Always appeal. Mellissa wanted to address the issue of having allegations placed on parents without interviewing the parent or without informing the parent of any possible allegations against the parent when the original allegation was against the child.

Norma said she recommends calling the DCFS Advocacy Office when a worker is falsifying information, adding that she encourages parents to complete service appeals. Each worker and investigator are required to give parents a service appeal brochure.

Javonna called it preponderance of evidence. Norma said preponderance of evidence is what is needed for the judge to rule on removal of the children when workers do falsify. She said she gets the opportunity to retrain these workers with what words to use, and how to be sympathetic and respectful.

The new Safe Model will replace CERAP protocol, and all workers will be retrained. These models structure and specify steps workers must take to ascertain risks to children.

Terry mentioned the members having great questions but reminding them of our limited time and to let Norma finish her presentation. Norma said if she does not have time to answer questions, feel free to email her personally. She explained more about the Safe Model and that it's what is best for the children. She said there are 29 teams that meet once a month for coaching. Parents are allowed to ask for a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) whenever, but they are supposed to be set up with the first 45 day and then every 90 days, which is quarterly. Norma thanked everyone for having her speak.

Mandatory Training for Members

Cassandra reminded members that trainings are due by the end of next month and suggested we leave next month's meeting to finalize all trainings. That way all members can get help and we can ask and address any questions regarding the trainings and make sure everyone has them turned in. Terry agreed.

PWP Chapter Reports

Cook Chapter- Javonna said they met but there was no presenter. There are concerns about how parents are being treated and that they are still working on the back-to-school event and book bag give-away.

Springfield Chapter – Cassandra said they met last Tuesday in a virtual format and that her parents requested hearing more on service planning. Cince Bowns presented, and next month we will be having an in-person event with Cince, during which she will explain reunification and what that looks like. Cassandra asked Norma if she could join us and do a quick presentation about CFTM pilots. Norma agreed to be there.

Shawna asked what the difference is between SPAC and the local PWP, because it feel like SPAC is doing the same as the local PWP. Cassandra explained the change management proposal and the process of change one step at a time and how the local PWP supports parents locally with educational topics that will help guide parents and gives them an opportunity to vent about their cases personally, where SPAC is a team built to decide what changes need to be made and issues that local PWPs are having. SPAC brings in presenters for stats and what trainings and projects are being made to improve services to parents, looking at matters from a statewide, administrative view.

Adjournment - Cassandra called for the motion to adjourn the meeting. Theresa seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:11pm.



Illinois
presentation - revise