



## Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council

Approved Minutes  
 September 16, 2022  
 Illinois State Library,  
 300 South Second Street,  
 Springfield, Illinois  
 In Person  
 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

| SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT | SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT | GUESTS             | STAFF                     |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Gladys Boyd            | Kathryn Adrian        | Julie Celubuski    | Ximena Arroyo-Estrada     |
| Kelly Elleman          | Arrelida Hall         | Debbie Freke       | Gwenn Eyer                |
| Molly Hamilton         | Kate Monte            | Elizabeth Richmond | Jamie Blakeman            |
| Tiffany Johnson        | Audrey Reynolds       | Cassandra Williams | Charlotte Gallagher       |
| Harriet Kersh          | Phyllis Summers       | Arlene Wood        | Kara Hamilton             |
| Susan McConnell        |                       |                    | Jennifer Eblen<br>Manning |
| Mary Savage            |                       |                    | Kim Willis                |
| Samella Taylor Lewis   |                       |                    |                           |
| Rebecca Thomas         |                       |                    |                           |

### Welcome/Introduction

Rebecca Thomas

Rebecca welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9 am as co-chairperson. Charlotte Gallagher reported that the meeting was being recorded and completed roll call.

### Approval of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Meeting Minutes

*MOTION: Harriet Kersh made the motion to approve the June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, minutes. Dr. Tiffany Johnson seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously via voice vote.*

### Office of Caregiver and Parent Support Update

Kim Willis

The Emergency Foster Care (EFC) program is working on recruiting foster parents to be EFC homes and is currently working with the Core Teen training program to provide comprehensive training to these foster parents. The enrollment numbers for Core Teen are increasing. Core Teen has seven sessions and is a trauma-based training that focuses on how to understand

trauma and how trauma affects the body. It also focuses on how trauma can impact children which can be seen in some behavioral issues.

### **Implementation Plans**

**Gwenn Eyer**

Gwenn introduced a draft document that could be used to format and/or score plans. She noted that foster parents are saying that the agencies are not following the Foster Parent Law and their implementation plans. The new checklist could be used to rate the implementation plans. After discussion, the council decided that it was too late in the year to complete the checklist and they could implement new strategies next year.

Discussion:

- Foster parents are not always comfortable making grievances due to the fear of retribution from the agency.
- There needs a plan component/format that can be used for each agency and be more outward-facing.
- Many implementation plans are very long and extensive. It might be beneficial to have a summary of the main points of the implementation plans.
- There are concerns about the narrative format presenting actual implementation techniques rather than restating the Foster Parent Law.
- Implementation plans should be posted on the websites.
- It is important to work on focusing on strengths and areas of improvement. The council needs to have input on the different agencies' implementation plans.
- Twenty to twenty-five people are taking foster parent law training each month.
- There is a new development from the University of Chicago offering a rating system for agencies and workers. This is where both biological parents and foster parents could leave feedback.
- There are lots of complaints, but many do not rise to the level of grievance. Dignity and respect are huge issues, and it does not always rise to the level of a grievance.
- What is the best way to recognize agencies who are working on implementation plans or the best incentive for agencies to put a lot of effort into the plans? Do they get a grade and that is it?
- How do we as a council motivate the agencies to involve their foster parents in the meetings?
- The plans are supposed to be a collaboration between the foster parents and the agency.
- The Foster Parent Law could be part of a training requirement for licensure.
- The ongoing concern about there being no accountability to the agency that violates the Foster Parent Law.
- It was suggested that the licensing worker goes over the implementation plans as part of the licensing renewal process with the foster parent.

- The implementation plans need to simplify the steps taken to implement the Foster Parent Law, and the agencies need to be recognized for going above and beyond.
- A public rating system for foster care agencies would be very helpful in holding agencies accountable.

A workgroup was established to work on better managing the implementation plans. Molly Hamilton, Mary Savage, Johnnie Pentenburg, and Harriet Kersh volunteered to be a part of this workgroup.

### **Statewide Parent Advisory Council**

**Cassandra Williams**

Cassandra is a co-chair of the Statewide Parent Advisory Council. The Statewide Parent Advisory Council is working towards improving shared parenting between birth parents and foster parents. Cassandra shared her own experience that she was not able to do as much shared parenting and explained how it helps the children. There is a workgroup to collaborate with the Statewide Parents Advisory Council to improve shared parenting. Sometimes there is difficulty with shared parenting and can be discouraged by the caseworker. Many times, foster parents have their own biases about the birth parents which can be detrimental to the children. There is training from Be Strong Families about shared parenting.

### **FY23 Goals and Direction - Follow Up**

**Rebecca Thomas**

Previous Goals: therapeutic day care, respite, and better access to agency contact information.  
Discussion:

- Respite rate and the difference between respite and babysitting. Respite rates are extremely low and there are space limitations.
- The three-family (child?? Not sure what this is) rule can limit respite and placements.
- Respite and Daycare workgroups will continue to be separate even though their issues are similar regarding pay rates.
- Capacity waivers to increase capacity for siblings or long-term respite. Waivers take way extremely too long. The Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council wants to be a part of any meetings that DCFS is having around these issues.
- A goal for the following year is for the council to be involved in the meetings within the department.
- The council is adding the director's report to the agenda until further notice so that the council will have input in the directors' report.
- Contact information for agencies is to be available on their websites. The Agency Contact Information workgroup is being developed to address ongoing issues with poor communication due to different agencies' inaccurate contact information. Molly Hamilton agreed to be in this workgroup.

### **CFSR PIP Measurement Data**

**Jennifer Eblen Manning**

There is an overall five-year plan, the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), that is updated annually through the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). Jennifer said that every child

welfare agency in the nation must submit a five-year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Jurisdictions include all the state systems, tribe systems, and territory systems. Plans are updated annually, and are due on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Accountability to the plan comes through the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and flows through the CFST Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP is designed to address any areas in need of improvement that were identified in the CFSR.

Jennifer noted that no jurisdictions have passed all the outcomes, and DCFS only passed two. This plan has several parts that must be completed. One component is “Family and Community Partner Engagement.” This is a part the councils may specifically speak to. The Department has met two of the goals: #1 timely initiation of investigations and #14 caseworker contact with children. The Department has done a “baseline review” more representative of the whole state. If the Department gets to the end of the PIP measurement without meeting the goals, there will be financial penalties, limiting our federal claiming that offsets the cost of the services we provide. The Department wants to avoid sanctions from the Federal government, but we also want to provide quality services to children and families. During the pandemic, Illinois was one of the only jurisdictions that had a rise in the number of children coming into care.

The qualities the Department focuses on are safety, permanence, and well-being. Each division within the Department directly impacts these either directly or indirectly. Caseworkers are agents of change, building relationships with the child and family, providing behavior support and linkage to services and supports. This includes advocacy on the child’s behalf, trauma-focused education, quality assessments, teamwork, coordinated care, and cultural competence. Key practices which continue to impact performance. Assessment of needs and provision of adequate services to address identified needs for parents, and children in intact cases, paramours, and other caregivers which include foster/adoptive parents.

Children and parental involvement in case planning which includes diligent searches for missing parents, voice & choice, and Child and Team Family Meetings. There is a focus on the quality of visits to children and parents in their homes. Included in well-being is making sure that all children’s physical health, dental care, and mental health care. There are 65 cases used as the demographic which includes 40 foster care, 19 Intact, 5 investigations, and 1 EFSP. Not sure what this is? EFC? The overall themes were assessments, engagement of parents, the impact of COVID, and instability in the field.

#### **Council Reports:**

\*CWAC

Harriet Kersh/Mary Savage

CWAC last met on August 18, 2022, in Springfield and Chicago had a hybrid option. There is progress with background checks and fingerprints getting completed promptly. There are issues with the contracted companies who complete the fingerprinting. There is work being done to address child removal biases and different issues which are more likely to lead to the removal of children. There is a pilot program to address these biases. The new SACWIS/ CCWIS is going to make huge improvements but still won’t be out for a while. The new system will be making notes easier for caseworkers.

\*IFAPA

Gladys Boyd

Foster parents continue to complain about not being treated with respect and dignity. There is no accountability for private agencies for these actions. Foster parents are just closing their licenses and are no longer willing to take placements. There is a new IFAPA website <https://illfapa.org/>.

**Regional Reports:**

**\*Northern Region Report**

Rebecca Thomas

The support groups are going very well, and they are collaborating with the Central Region for a book club. The first book is "The Connected Child". There is a visitation house that is run by Kids in Need in McHenry County. The visitation house also is providing parent coaching and there has been very positive feedback. This model is going to be expanded to other areas. There is a continued lack of foster homes. There are issues with foster parents getting services and medical services for our youth.

**\*Central Region Report**

Kelly Elleman

Support groups are meeting in person, but attendance is very low. Many daycares do not want to accept DCFS payments. There are communications issues and delay in services. There is still a delay with clothing vouchers even with the new debit card program. There is a lack of support after hours when children are having severe behavioral issues. It is impossible to get ahold of the payment unit due to limited hours and no one answering the phone. There is an extensive delay in case workers are assigned.

**\*Cook Central**

Molly Hamilton

There is a shortage of foster parents and there is frustration with the courts which is causing foster parents to close their licenses.

**Workgroup Report**

**\*Day Care**

Rebecca Thomas

No update. They are waiting for information from the SPICE Committee.

**Committee Reports:**

**\*Training Committee**

Harriet Kersh

Home of Relative (HMR) training just finished phase one and they are moving forward to phase two. The Foster Parent Law is going to be a part of the training.

**\*Foster Parent Support Specialist**

Arrelda Hall

**\*Policy & Legislative**

Susan McConnell

**\*Membership**

Susan McConnell

There are no updates.

**\*Permanency**

Susan McConnell

SWFCAC and IAAC are working together in a workgroup.

Director's report:

There have been numerous letters sent to address the respite. Advisory council members want to be a part of DCFS meetings that directly impact foster parents.

Public Comment: none.

Stakeholder Comments: none.

Closing Council Discussion: none

*Adjourn: Gladys Boyd made the motion to adjourn., Dr. Tiffany Johnson seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously via voice vote. Meeting ended at 2:48 p.m.*

**Next Meeting:** October 21st, 2022, location to be determined