

Illinois Adoption Advisory Council Meeting
APPROVED MINUTES
April 10, 2015 ~ 10am – 10:50am
Conference Call

IAAC MEMBERS PRESENT	IAAC MEMBERS ABSENT	DCFS STAFF
Clemmie Banks	Karla Blake	
Kathleen Bush	Brice Bloom-Ellis	Gwenn Eyer
Nancy Golden	Laura Dillard	Brian Goodwin
Ruth Jajko	Rosa Dust	Michelle Grove
James Jones	Karen Faber	Vanessa James
Jeanette Kurth	Heather Feltman	Cheryl McIntyre
Ashley Lepse	Kelly Green	Terry McGlothlin
Holly Loy	Sandra McGee	Veronica Resa
Michelle Price	Maripat Oliver	Sharva Hampton-Campbell
Elizabeth Richmond	Sarah Phillips	
Dawn Saphir		Guests
Karen Taylor		Debbie Saucedo
Mark Werner		
Julie Yelverton		

Welcome & Introductions – Elizabeth Richmond, IAAC Co-Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes from February 6th Meeting

Clemmie Banks made the motion to approve the minutes of the joint SWFCAC/IAAC meeting held February 15th. Jeanette Kurth seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

NEW BUSINESS

Acting Director Sheldon

The Director is new to Illinois, coming in from Florida. He stated that we have some great challenges. He has served as Secretary of the Dept. of Children and Families in Florida. While there, they made a commitment to adoption, partnering with judges and other stakeholders, and were able to build a remarkable team in four years, reducing children in out of home care by 37%. He is committed to dealing with the problem in the home and reunify the family whenever possible. In Florida they were seeing reunification within about 7 months, which was very good. They would proceed aggressively if parents were not moving forward with their case plan. He stressed that children operate on a different time frame than adults. The Supreme Court of Florida ordered all dependency courts to operate in “Kid time.” Moving toward a permanency goal is important. He believes that we have failed any child who ages out without a permanent setting, unless the youth comes in at 16 or 17 years of age. He also served as the Assistant Secretary of Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and really focused on permanency and child well-being. Council support is very important – identifying what’s working and what’s not working.

There are some very good things happening here in Illinois, but, regrettably, the public reputation of the Department is not so good. We have to restore confidence in the Department. We're one of the best in the country re: health screenings within 24 hours and in oversight of psychotropic drugs. With regard to the budget, Illinois is in a remarkably poor fiscal position. Historically, we have dealt with cuts in Florida, but now they're in a surplus. The Illinois Governor is focused on the budget, and the impact will be reducing services for kids ages 18-21. The Director has concerns, but realizes that the Governor had no good options. The Director is looking at maximizing federal dollars, scrubbing numbers to see if we can fill in with Chaffee funds, etc. Proposed reductions are minimal re: post adoption services, etc. and should not impact services moving forward. We will take some hits re: personnel, but he's going to try to meet the goals through attrition rather than layoffs, if at all possible. We will be able to maintain the caseworker ratio at 15:1. Investigations are currently 10:1 and will move to 12:1 and that number is still in line with CWLA recommendations. We're also trying to even out the numbers around the state, since the ratios currently vary by geographic region.

As we look at the goals – identifying what we do right and what we do wrong – our absolute top goal is to reduce the length of time a child is in care. The state is not a good parent. That issue has a dual response – we must deal with issues that brought the child in and reunify the family, or move to permanency otherwise. We were able to achieve permanency for 500 youths by the end of last year. Director Sheldon's goal is to have 1200 youth in permanency by June 30th. (We're at 287 today.) The Director stated that he looks forward to meeting with the council in person. He plans to spend half his time in the field.

Update from Statewide Adoption Administrator - Cheryl McIntyre

We've had 287 adoptions so far. We are really focusing on the teamwork aspect. What we've done in the adoption unit in the last 2-1/2 years is have APT come in, sitting with and behind us, really motivating private agencies to get their cases finalized. Previously, DCFS staff and IV-E/FFP Unit would get something ready to go, but permanency was not being finalized. When DCFS staff read the subsidy and identifies the need for correction they're staying in close contact to ensure that corrections are made in a timely manner. Permanency Achievement staff offer support as well. It's awesome to see that team approach with three different units working together for permanency.

Personnel – Eileen Runte is now in place as Adoption Supervisor in Northern Region. She's learning her role and is very responsive. Pam Mills is temporarily taking over statewide contract responsibilities. Otherwise, things are business as usual. They're really working on getting subsidies done in a timely manner and are also focusing on being responsive to our post-adopt families. We are there to help them, and she wants to make sure that's happening. She does not want to practice by "lock-out." No one on staff is to tell parents to lock a child out. Elizabeth requested a conference call with the Transitions Subcommittee after the budget becomes clearer. It was noted that Maria Nanos would like to talk about the Peoria Pilot program too.

Questions & Answers

Q: How is the work going to get more kids listed on the web site?

A: They are moving forward to do quality listings for children that need our attention. AICI sends a Friday report showing statuses of each child listed. They're just finishing the current round of permanency reviews. Their goals are 24 and 25. AICI participates to ensure that children are being included. They want to start working quickly with caseworkers to identify families for waiting children with goal 24 so the child does not wait for a permanent home. We are finding that in permanency reviews the majority of kids are conversion from foster care to adoption. Residential

placement does not automatically eliminate the need for adoptive families. We are using Adoption Preservation from day one with the Embrace Adoption concept. Cheryl will let Terry know about Embrace Adoption parties and possibly council members can attend to provide support, mentor, etc.

Q: Because residential kids are so high risk, is there any potential to get post-adoption engaged before adoption is finalized, i.e. transitioning to a new therapist, etc.? Post adopt staff are highly trained and really know how to work in the home setting and residential staff are not the same as families with working in the home.

A: The whole transitioning situation – making the transition as smooth as possible – is crucial. If we’re recommending that a child get into therapy, Cheryl asks them to consult with her staff to be sure that the therapist has a foster care contract as well as a post-adoption piece. We want our staff to be involved as quickly as possible when a youth is coming home from residential.

Medical Issues Update - Brian Goodwin

His staff has been working closely with Cheryl and her post-adoption staff on a new issue. Basically they have around 89 kids in subsidized guardianship or adoption assistance who receive in-home nursing care. Medicaid is reviewing their system of providing hourly allocation in the home. HFS/Key Pro will contact the families saying that they’re re-evaluating the allocations, based on the child’s medical needs. There are not a lot of updated letters of medical necessity out there. We’re trying to send out notifications to let families know that Brian’s staff is there to assist. They’re recommending that parents provided a letter of medical necessity provided in the last 3-6 months. We realize that they’re using a new tool and our children won’t qualify for as many hours. Adoptive parents must keep the appointment with Key Pro to ensure that they are still considered for services. Once the evaluations are completed, we will look at adoption subsidies to assist foster parents in appeals or, if necessary, figure out a way to pay for it. Parents should contact the adoption assistance worker and Karen Moredock if struggling with this process. They’ve gotten a lot of information regarding adult SSI and will need to go through the information then disburse it to our parents. Elizabeth asked if anyone knows a family that has made the transition, please join the committee. Jeanette and Joyce both suggested that their mothers might offer support.

SSI Committee: Jeanette Kurth

Transitions Committee: Mark Werner, Karen Taylor

Adoption Celebration - Jeanette Kurth

In the next couple weeks we’ll have a committee call to see what our options are. Anyone on the council please look at local agencies and events planned for November. We’re really looking to partner with something that’s already being done. Karen Taylor wondered if we could peg into some of the Embrace Adoption parties. Vanessa and Veronica reported on a previous conversation they’d had re: making plans for National Adoption Month. They discussed using DCFS Communications to try to plan the event in advance, in cooperation with the Cook County Court System, similar to what’s been done in Rockford. Others discussed the early days of the IAAC when the Chicago Bar was involved. The upcoming event should also be a press event. Jennifer Zaluckyj is the person that has worked to establish the program in Rockford. It was suggested that we find the attorneys from the Cook County Attorney Panel, using Christina Schneider as a resource. Michelle Price, Ashley Lepse, Dawn will serve on the Adoption Celebration Committee.

Update on PRIDE Training - Sharva Hampton-Campbell

We were scheduled to roll-out PRIDE Illinois pre-service, piloting this month, but GSU is still finishing up session 9 and the trainer/participant manual. We hope to start training it in July using Master trainers, but that’s a “soft date.” September is anticipated to be the full roll-out. We have not

yet finished the Adoption curriculum since PRIDE is not complete. Karen noted that they have a concept/rough outline so as soon as staff is available they're ready to move forward. Elizabeth asked that adoption training be shared with council for input.

Lifebook Procedures - Karen Taylor

2014.012 Policy Guide requires that all workers make life book materials accessible for all children in care. It states that all children need life books and it's up to the worker to ensure that children have materials available to construct them. The challenge is that workers do not have easy access to all of the materials needed. Deanna Large is now involved in drafting policies to make this work out. There will also be a life books training component and it will likely be a very fast roll-out. We want to be able to offer something consistent throughout the state. They're hopeful that funding might be available this year. The Permanency Achievement Specialists are out working on this, too, using Icebreaker meetings with birth parents. Ruth referenced the Lifebook work that LSSI with emphasis on training and the development of the life book and Karen noted that they're trying to replicate that. A council member mentioned that a copy of the life book needs to stay with the child's file that could provide a backup if the original is lost or damaged. There are going to be some things in the life book that are irreplaceable, so those items will need to be copied to stay in the child's file. It was noted that in Adoption Preservation it is a pretty regular practice to keep copies of pages made for the child's life book.

Revisions to Subsidy Forms - Karen Taylor

Karen is on an overall Adoption Reform committee. They're reviewing and revising adoption subsidy forms. If the council has recommendations re: the forms, please send them to Karen.G.Taylor@illinois.gov. Terry will send out the forms, requesting that council members track changes or otherwise give input.

Agenda Items

Director Sheldon – status update on programs and staff
Budget information
Post Adoption
Medical/Medicaid
Adoption Celebration
DCFS International Adoption Coordinator, Susan Nelson

Adjourn

Veronica made the motion to adjourn. Elizabeth seconded and the motion carried.

Next Meeting – June 5, 2015 – Joliet