

**SWFCAC Meeting**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**July 17, 2015 ~ 9 am – 3:00 pm**  
**Clarion Hotel, Joliet**

<b>SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	<b>SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT</b>	<b>DCFS STAFF PRESENT</b>
Barlow, Pauline	Boyd, Gladys	Annes, Lee
Burris, Charlene	Cugier, Allison	Arnold, Marilyn
Cruz, Edith	Dixon, Irma	Eyer, Gwenn
Gregory, Donna	Fargher, Kelly	Grove, Michelle
Hart, Laura	McDaniel, Mark	McGlothlin, Terry
Holt, Darrin	Olson, Sarah	
Jones, Stephanie		
Kalas, Kurt		<b>GUESTS PRESENT</b>
McCoy, Cathy		Barber, Angela
Norris, Kellye		Cebulski, Julie
Sheley, Carol		Harvey, Robyn
Simpson, Michael		Keefe, Ken
Webb, Pamela		Spires, Denise

**Welcome & Introductions** – Laura Hart, SWFCAC Vice-Chair

**Final SWFCAC Reports to Director** – Laura Hart for Sarah Olson

There were no final reports to the Director. The monthly report to the Director from the SWFCAC Chair was submitted and SWFCAC members received an email copy.

**Approval of Minutes from June 19, 2015 Meeting**

*Kellye made the motion to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2015 SWFCAC meeting. Mike Simpson seconded. The minutes were approved as written.*

**Permanency - Marilyn Arnold**

Illinois is part of a National Quality Improvement Center Support and Maintenance of Adoption and Guardianship Families grant. It's a five-year grant to provide support and maintenance for adoption and guardianship families in Illinois. This is an enhanced program to support families at risk of disruption. Rachel Kerrick is the project lead and Cynthia Tate and Mark Testa are involved. The House Bill that indicates that DCFS will no longer be involved in inter-country adoptions. If a family is involved in an international adoption DCFS no longer has to provide oversight. This will expedite the adoption process.

**Quality Parenting Initiative – Denise Spires, Laura Hart**

This program is something our Director was involved with while in Florida. This Youth Law Center program is a re-branding of the Department's view of foster parents and case management. The goal is to change the perception of foster parenting and encourage better teamwork with foster parents. Policies and procedures will still be followed, but we will look at ways to improve them. It will look at ways to encourage providers to be effectively involved. Carol Schafer from Florida presented the program. As a Department, DCFS may start to be more flexible with foster parents, i.e., interstate travel, figuring out ways to include foster children on family vacations. This management goes both directions – from top management down and front line up. This group approach allows all who do the work to have influence on policy and procedure. They're launching with CHASI now and will then move into Southern Region.

### **Update from CIPP – Lee Annes**

Lee recapped the development of the Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation program. There were Child and Youth Investment teams about 10 years ago and about 2-1/2 years ago we transitioned to CIPP. CIPP is a program designed to place a strong emphasis on earlier intervention to improve placement and relationship stabilization, by preserving youth and family social connections and relationships and minimizing changes in placement. The goal is to reduce the level of changes in living arrangements and to prevent entry into residential and group home settings. Caregivers, youth and caseworkers may all request a CIPP and facilitators are available to join in Child and Family Team meetings to provide support. Only about half of the meetings occur while the youth is still in a foster home. They are asking that when moving a youth laterally they have a CIPP facilitated Child & Family Team meeting. They're slowing getting more of these, along with the foster parent placements. Foster parents may call directly to ask to have it scheduled, but will be asked if they first tried to schedule it through their worker. The CIPP intake telephone number is 312/814-6800. Facilitators reach out to foster parents and to youth above age 12 in advance of the meeting to help prioritize concerns. They will ask for family members or other adult connections that are important to the youth. (Services are important, but really don't work without connections and relationships.) Guardians ad Litem probably attend 98% of the CIPPs in Cook County. Courts don't typically get involved unless it's to request a CIPP. Their goal is to get meetings scheduled within two weeks. They need to get the right people involved and prepare them for the meeting. Meetings should be scheduled in a location that is easily accessible to the youth, family members and foster parents. It was noted that it might be good to send this information to private agency management to encourage their participation. The CIPP process is all about developing a plan you can support.

Discharge CIPP's focus on Clinical Intervention and are a huge part of "Countdown to 21." This is designed to provide support for youth transitioning to adulthood. This program includes very youth-driven meetings to help them develop their transition plan. Two meetings are held – one at age 19 and the second 3 months prior to discharge, i.e., before the youth plans on leaving). Youth who are successful in meeting "countdown to 21" requirements as detailed in policy must demonstrate that they are likely to safely manage Emancipation Funds. Following the required financial training, the youth will receive \$1,200 to assist them in financing elements of their transition plan. They are linked to all of the older transition services. The Department is figuring out how to give kids over the age of 18 some rights and motivate them to participate in developing their own transition plan. Lee stated that we have difficult young people to work with and a difficult system to work in. We must think about relationship first. If a youth has strong connections and the foster parent really wants to keep the youth they should fight for it, working through the ups and downs.

### **Implementation Plan Tips and Tools Workshop - Gwenn Eyer**

"Tips and Tools" go out as Emails to agency liaisons. Examples include the following:

- Basics like specific information regarding submitting the plan, i.e. deadline, format, mailing and email addresses, and tracking.
- September is the official "public review and comment" period. We publish the announcement in the "official State newspaper." It says that anyone may ask for and receive a copy of your plan and may send their comments to your agency. You must make plans accessible and those comments should be considered as you make plan revisions.
- **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Review and Revise** - Please work with your foster parents and staff to be sure that your plan is a useful tool in daily service delivery. Use the Council's comments to help guide this work. While we won't tell you which specific items to revise for a full score, we try to

guide you to areas of general concern. If you have to read three pages to find out how foster parents contact staff when there's a problem, you should probably consider revising narratives for clarity. You may certainly reuse/recycle narratives that clearly describe current practice. BUT... your plan should be a living document, so please take the time to review and revise when needed. Always keep in mind that it must be user-friendly for foster parents and it should clearly impact service delivery.

- **Tracking Changes** - If not requesting that your plan be scored in its entirety, please track all changes. It's easiest to use Word to "Track changes." You may delete text, use bold, underlining, etc., but please do not use the function that reduces text size and displays deleted text in balloons on the side of the page. It's very confusing to score those plans, and I'm guessing it's confusing to work on them, too.
- **Don't Track Changes in your Annual Report** - Since this document should be written annually. Please send only a clean copy with no tracked revisions. (You can still track changes as you work, just approve and save all changes once you've made your revisions.)
- **2-Point Scoring Components** - Rule 340 includes a number of components that address your work on the plan. Please be sure to include both a list of foster parents who've worked on the plan as well as a signature sheet where foster parents sign off on a clear statement of approval/endorsement of your final plan. (This approval should not be combined with suggestions for improvement since there's no way for their input to be considered if they're endorsing the completed plan.)
- **Grievance Procedure** - Your foster parents should have influence on your grievance procedure. It needs to be user-friendly. Many procedures were developed years ago, but in order to address the 2-point scoring component should be reviewed with foster parents. Just tell us how your FP's helped develop the procedure, or have them review/ revise and approve it.
- **Score Your Plan** - Only the SWFCAC scores are secret! In the Council's effort to place more emphasis on practical service delivery and less emphasis on high scores, they've determined that only general ratings will be distributed. However, the scoring tools are readily available so that you all may score your own plans to better understand how they measure up. Rule 340 Appendix B is the foundation for our score sheet. I always recommend that you have staff and FP's score the plan to get an impression of points that may not be clear to SWFCAC scorers.
- **Ready, Set, GO!** Please submit your plan as soon as you're ready. It's easier on our office when they don't all arrive at once, and since our SWFCAC scorers are volunteering their time, it's helpful to be able to finish scoring before the holidays. The sooner I receive your plan the sooner I send it out to be scored.

## **DISCUSSION:**

- Agency Buy-in – Agencies need to recognize the value of the plan and make it impact service delivery.
- Some agencies are interviewing foster parents directly rather than during a large meeting.
- Choose people randomly to go through the foster parent law implementation plan, making it more personal and less large scale.
- Interview foster parents throughout the state using a survey interview, and going through every single right and responsibility, line by line, item by item with space to record comments.
- With staff ask them to submit feedback in person or discuss it at staff meeting. Forced feedback – distribute comment sheets for each narrative and require it being returned complete.
- Focus narrative review on applicable right/responsibility for the foster parent.
- Licensing workers – use a monthly handout to emphasize one right and one responsibility during semi-annual visits.

- Staff turn-over is high - train everyone, presenting the plan to everyone. Feature one right each month on the staff bulletin board.
- Tie foster parenting in with the need to avoid disruptions. We have foster parents getting fed up. We are not supporting problem situations in a timely manner. Be proactive, in general, with placements and the relationship between licensing workers and case managers. Provide a one-pager with the rights and responsibilities and ask foster parents, “How do you feel we’re doing?”, “What can we work on to improve?” Spend 10 minutes on one visit between now and October.
- Stress that the plan is a tool for foster parents – one thing that makes it hard for foster parents and staff is the bulkiness. Don’t bury information.
- Staff in Central Region use a quick-reference guide to introduce the plan.
- Make it a cooperative relationship between the SWFCAC and the agencies and regions. Let them know that SWFCAC members are willing to attend their meetings.

**How to make plans available to foster parents:**

- Mail hard copy to every foster parent.
- Post on web site.
- Child Welfare Specialists distribute for one month.
- Licensing worker distributes.
- Hand it out on board check pick up day.
- New foster parents get it in the welcome packet.

**Next Steps:**

- Create a Happy Anniversary letter from SWFCAC to foster parents to survey who would like to be involved. “We value your opinion.”
- Create newsletter blurbs.
- Include the Foster Parent Law in pre-service training and the teamwork in-service module.

**Tips and Tools for Liaisons from SWFCAC:**

- Offer alternate ways to collect foster parent approval of the final plan.
- Identify ways to help foster parents understand the value of involvement in the implementation plan process.
- Suggest ways to help foster parents use their influence as team members.
- Organization is critical. Use Rule 340 and the score sheet to see the way we’ll be looking at your plan. Follow the rule and score sheet to organize your plan.
- Remind them of special program changes like 18+.
- Remind them of language changes, etc.

**Suggestions for Setting Meeting Calendar/Deadlines:**

- Set dates for the following:
  - Meet with foster parents to review the plan and collect suggestions.
  - Make revisions.
  - Share revised plan with foster parents.
  - Secure foster parent approvals. Remind them that foster parents should approve/endorse the final version of the plan. If they use individual comment forms for revision, approval should be separate.

**Suggested ways to motivate participation:**

- Foster parents – provide options other than meetings, i.e., use our score sheet to score your agency/region’s plan
- Staff – Cover the plan in staff meetings and supervision
- Post the Foster Parent Law and all of the implementation plans on the DCFS web site. (peer pressure, best practice)

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Membership Update - Terry McGlothlin**

We currently have three openings for foster parents on the council from Northern, Cook Central and Central regions. We have three vacancies, but have candidates for two of them.

### **Committee Reports**

Adolescent Issues – Mike Simpson - No Report

Policy and Legislation– Darrin Holt/Cathy McCoy

Cathy reported that the Policy Committee held their regularly-scheduled monthly conference call, noting that the committee is currently working on updates and revising the implementation plan process. The final draft of the revised review questions were sent to the Council for review. The committee recommended that the council approve the questions and the council approved.

Since we’re taking a fresh look at the implementation plan process we are considering making this 20<sup>th</sup> year a score all year for all agency implementation plans. It doesn’t mean that agencies have to revise or rewrite their plans.

Darrin noted that there is still a budget stalemate. Fortunately, any services covered by the BH Consent Decree still have to be provided. Robyn stated that one agency is currently telling their foster parents that they cannot provide their board payment. He reported on a few pieces of pending child welfare legislation. These bills have passed both the Senate and the House and are awaiting the Governor’s signature.

- **HB3684** – Foster Children Bill of Rights - This Act provides that every child and adult in the care of DCFS who is placed in foster care has certain rights. This is still waiting for the Governor’s signature.

Terry distributed packets of information regarding DCFS programs, rule and procedure.

Foster Parent Support Specialists - Edith Cruz

We have five Lead Foster Parent Support Specialists in attendance today. There are not many major changes with the program. Robyn noted that there are certain pockets in the state that are underserved. Denise noted that where Southern Region has to travel great distance, the Cook region deals with a high volume of foster parents. She stated that she encourages networking between her foster parents.

Respite - Gladys Boyd – No report.

### **Reports from Other Councils/Committees/Workgroups:**

CWAC – Allison Cugier

No CWAC meeting since their last call.

IFAPA - Gladys Boyd - No report.

## **Regional Reports**

Northern Region – Donna Gregory – They haven't met during the summer but will meet in August and will elect officers.

Southern Region – Mark McDaniel, Michael Simpson- No meeting.

Central Region – Carol Sheley, Stephanie Jones

Stephanie reported that they formed a new support group with pretty good participation. Central Illinois Foster Adoptive Parent Support Group. Foster parents from all three agencies in the area participated. Carol stated that they've had a couple of support group meetings. Robyn will be with them in an upcoming meeting. They're now forming a support group within a new community for foster care and adoption. Carol asked about pending policy changes and requested that this council be included for input.

Cook North - Edith Cruz, Irma Dixon

Their recent Advisory Council meeting addressed emergency preparedness plans. They talked about what to keep available for food, shelter, protection, what to keep in their car, practicing fire drills, etc.

Cook South - Kellye Norris, Pamela Webb

Angela Barber said that Cook South will meet again in September.

Cook Central - Charlene Burris

Charlene attended the foster parent appreciation banquet in May but did not attend the last meeting. Denise Spires noted that they held a June meeting with about 18 foster parents. Pamela Paulson from Foster Parent Reimbursement was their speaker.

## **Discussion on New Award Categories for Implementation Plans:**

Innovative Practice

Innovative ways of involving foster parents in the development of your plan.

New innovations

Professional Teamwork

Sharing information

Time Management in sharing

Encouragement

## **Adjourn**

*Stephanie Jones made a motion to adjourn. Carol seconded.*

## **Policy Committee Issues to be Determined:**

Look at ways to use Agency Reviews or FP Surveys to assess foster parent involvement in ACR's, Child & Family Team meetings, etc.

## **Agenda Items:**

Obtain a copy of pending legislation that impacts foster care.

Ask someone from Policy to come to the next meeting to discuss pending legislation.

Denice Murray - timely review of day care applications for a foster child. (Flag applications for faster approval.)

**Next Meeting:** September 18, 2015 - Effingham