

## MINUTES

### **Division of Family Services Advisory & Advocacy Council Meeting January 24, 2007**

**Attendees:** Julia Pearce, Mike Kersteter, Del Failing, Karen DeRasmo, Sue Dougherty, Leslie Newman, Ellen Levine, Suzanne Seubert, Carol Post, Mary Lou Edgar, Janice Mink, Laura Miles, Joseph Smack, Carlyse Giddins.

Chairperson Julia Pearce called the meeting to order at 10:10 am. Due to the visit of President Bush to Delaware, many of the area roads were closed or congested. Several members arrived with the meeting in progress. New Council members Del Failing (People's Place II) and Sue Dougherty (North East Treatment Center) were welcomed by Julia and they provided an overview of their organizations work.

**Approval of Minutes from prior meeting** – Council unanimously approved the minutes from the October 18, 2006 meeting.

Extended Jurisdiction Legislation – Julia handed out a draft of legislation that had emanated from the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC) and explained the intent. In the January meeting, CPAC voted to support the bill for introduction in the General Assembly. Leslie asked what current services are available for the youth in the Independent Living program and what would be available for the youth under the extended jurisdiction legislation. Carlyse stated that the services would be the same as the current independent living services but would include a case manager from DFS to help secure housing, education opportunities, transition services, etc. Essentially things that NET and People's Place II currently provide. The suggested budget for the extended jurisdiction program would include money for five staff and ancillary costs. Medical coverage would be linked through Medicaid eligibility. Carlyse made it clear that there was strong language in the bill to make criminal activity ineligible for EJ services and that they would be separate from child protection. The funds would all be in the General Fund and DFS will only be able to spend the amount on extended jurisdiction that is budgeted. If EJ is passed, it will not be retroactively applied and there would be a six-month lag to get up to speed for implementation. Carlyse would like to seek greater support for independent living services. DFS has requested a budget increase of almost \$56,000. Carlyse noted that the budget has not increased in the ten years since the program's inception. The IL program receives \$500,000 in federal funds with a state match of \$125,000, some of which pays staff salary. Carol inquired what some of the ancillary funds would be able to purchase – Laura said it could be proper attire for job interviews, time limited transportation, or critical life hurdles. Carlyse noted that EJ participants requiring education funds would be able to tap into Ivy Davis Educational and Training Voucher money that already exists. There was some discussion about the differences between children in the Independent Living program and 'emancipated assisted' persons in the EJ program. Carlyse said that the only real difference is that the child decides at 18 or after graduation that they wish to continue with Family Court

oversight. Susan Seubert, who serves as a CASA for children, shared her view that most of the children she represents would not avail themselves of the EJ services. She sees great benefit to Family Court oversight, especially in dealing with school district bureaucracy. Carlyse noted also that if DFS was not involved in the new EJ plan, independent living providers would have to be in court. She also brought up the importance of legal counsel; DFS is represented by the Dept. of Justice, IL providers would be on their own. The issue of housing is statewide and this legislation does not create more opportunities for housing.

The discussion turned to drivers licensing for youth in care. Carlyse said that Senator Sorenson is planning to work with Insurance Commissioner Matt Denn and Child Advocate Tania Culley to examine how this could be implemented. Laura explained the liability issue for auto insurance and the Children's Department. It is our policy to recommend also that foster parents not sign to allow children in foster care to obtain licenses. Leslie inquired if the EJ legislation could be amended to meet the need for staffing or other flexibility issues that may arise.

Motion (Leslie Newman, second Mary Lou Edgar) to recommend to CPAC that the Extended Jurisdiction legislation be amended to allow funds to be utilized for children in the Independent Living program for ancillary costs (up to a certain percentage). Motion passed unanimously.

Julia went over some of the advocacy issues we had discussed and asked for any other ideas. Mary Lou would like to do a presentation on post legal adoptive services and to discuss issues in recruiting foster and adoptive homes for teens, and asked the Council to consider looking at what is being done for adoptive families. Carlyse said that the Department has included post-adoptive service enhancements in the Four Year Plan.

Carlyse asked the Council to support our Department's budget initiatives. Our specific requests are for two additional treatment staff and two treatment supervisors to meet our staffing ratios. The Independent Living expansion of \$55,800 and \$150,000 to allow for a database that would meet federal reporting requirements. As part of the Department requests, there are two additional positions to assist with home studies required by new federal mandates. Mike inquired if any inflationary increases for providers had been requested. Carlyse noted that some were given last year and an overall view from the budget office that would look across the entire system for increases is being considered. Motion by Mike (2<sup>nd</sup> Leslie) that if the Governor's Recommended Budget did not contain inflationary increases, that the Council support efforts seeking the increases. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Mary Lou (2<sup>nd</sup> Janice) to support the Department's recommended budget.

**DFS Update** – Carlyse gave a synopsis of fiscal year 2006 accomplishments. Foster care reform is continuing. Screening for behavioral and mental health issues for children entering care ages 4-17 has begun. The independent living program has conducted surveys to better assess the services available and what may be needed. New child care center regulations have been adopted and OCCL had a 99% compliance rate for home

visits. Seventy-four children were adopted from foster care. One child was accepted to the Milton Hershey School and is doing extremely well. We produced a new brochure for public dissemination and our caseworker turnover rate was a remarkable 7.4%. Our priorities for the next two fiscal years will be expanding foster care placement capacity; announcing new foster care providers in New Castle County; revising Delacare regulations for home daycare; caseload/workload legislation through CPAC; expanding independent living services and assisting youth aging out of care.

The site visit for the Children and Family Services Review is scheduled for the week of March 5 with training for reviewers on February 22-23. The statewide assessment is on the internet and can be found at [www.state.de.us/dfs\\_child\\_andfamilyservices.shtml](http://www.state.de.us/dfs_child_andfamilyservices.shtml)

Ellen inquired about the group home proposal in New Castle County. Carlyse stated that proposals have been received and we have been working on announcing something in the very near future. There were 14 proposals received – four for group care, ten for treatment and specialized care. The RFP panel has recommended a combination of both group home and other specialized placements.

New Business – Carol said that domestic violence 1:1 training is scheduled for March 13-14 in Georgetown. Please call Carol at 658-2958 for further details or visit their website at [www.dcavd.org](http://www.dcavd.org)

Mike said that People's Place II has opened a branch counseling center in Smyrna, and are accepting referrals.

Karen said that Child Abuse 101 training takes place February 13-14 in New Castle County. Register on-line at [www.pcadelaware.org](http://www.pcadelaware.org)

Julia asked what other topics the council would like to see covered in upcoming meetings. Topics mentioned included independent living services, education and training vouchers, and Ivy Davis Scholarship Funds. Laura will share the independent living benchmarks at the next meeting. Carlyse will be at a national conference in Portland, OR, presenting a workshop on our Child Protection Registry. Laura will lead our meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:57 am.

**Next Meeting – April 18, 2007, 10am-Noon, in Room 199 of the DSCYF Administration Building. 1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph D. Smack  
Executive Assistant  
Division of Family Services