

MINUTES
Division of Family Services
Advisory & Advocacy Council Meeting
May 9, 2012

Attendees: Leslie Newman, Ellen Levin, Rosalie Morales, Karen DeRasmo, Suzanne Seubert, Julia Pearce, Tania Culley, Vicky Kelly, Rodney Brittingham, Joseph Smack.

Meeting called to order at 4:15pm.

Approval of prior meeting minutes - approved unanimously without change.

Opening Comments – Leslie noted that this was not our normal meeting date or time. The next regular meeting date is August 14th Leslie asked for feedback on what is the best time of day to meet. Julia suggested 4:00pm. It was decided that the meeting would be at 4:00 pm on August 14th. Note: meeting will be at the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families administration building, room 199.

Agency Updates – Rosalie said that Child First training was held in April for 33 participants. The majority passed the test and received their certificate. They are looking at modifying training to see what is the most appropriate for Delaware.

Ellen reported that CASA accomplished mandatory reporting training online.

Julia reported that the Child Placement Review Board was released from their sunset review and are working on coordinating with the Family Court on the remaining issues.

Tania reported that the Delaware Youth Opportunity Initiative is working with youth to teach them how to move their agenda legislatively and politically by using the YAC initiatives.

Karen provided an update of the Stewards of Children program. Over 3,000 citizens and 64 facilitators have been trained to date. The committee is moving ahead with its goals.

Suzanne will seek other attorneys to participate on the Advisory & Advocacy Council.

DFS Update – Vicky said that record report line numbers continue. There are upwards of 850 children in care. We are expected to exceed 17,000 reports by the end of June. Teens continue to be a challenge with 79% of teens coming into foster care for the first time as teens. DFS is still working with the Casey family programs; Casey Family, Jim Casey, and Annie E Casey. Annie E will lead engagement team issues. Ann Holton, former First Lady of Virginia and a Family Court judge, is consulting and will work with

Family Court judges. Discussion ensued about the number of kids coming in due to failure to appear by a parent or escalating custody issues.

Structured Decision Making® goes live on May 22nd at the hotline. There is a different set of questions with a decision tree driven process based on our statutes. The inter-rater reliability rate was high. Rosalie said that they cover some of the process of the hotline and the mandatory reporting training Vicky noted that different questions will be asked to determine if the report reaches levels of abuse or neglect. Leslie suggested a letter go out to key stakeholders to make them aware of the changes. Vicky agreed. There will be a learning curve. DFS was able to obtain two casual seasonal positions to assist during peak times when calls come in: 8 AM to 8:30 AM and 4 PM to 4:30 PM. The report line has also added music for people on hold.

The FACTS II contract has been signed. July through October will be a crunch time for the supervisors and line staff helping to design the new system.

Differential Response appears to be on track as a budget initiative and a work group has been convened. The Administration for Children and Families is excited that we are moving in this direction and have obtained consultants for us. Of jurisdictions that have Differential Response and SDM, new DR programs see diversions of 20% from entering child welfare services and mature DR programs see diversions of 70%. DFS will work to identify the priority group that will be the focus of the first round of DR services. Vicky stated that we are looking at creating different capacity partners like Help Me Grow to assume some of the supports to keep these families from entering care. This is a huge step for Delaware and is a move away from our traditional system. Leslie noted that some states are utilizing federal IV-E monies for flexible funding. Vicky noted that our penetration rate is 28% and that we had to pay back \$750k in penalties as a result of a recent audit. The risk is too large to apply the IV-E money in these areas. Annie E. Casey has brought in a Title IV-E consultant to work with the Department. It is a complex equation that takes into account many factors including language in court orders. The Department is looking into this.

YAC Presentation – Maegan Soll, president of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), gave a PowerPoint presentation to explain to the Council who YAC is and how they are designed to empower youth in foster care as well as those who have recently aged out of care to have a voice in the child welfare system. Maegan highlighted some of the recent presentations YAC has made and events they have participated in. Ms. Soll presented challenges to youth in care and possible legislative solutions that YAC had begun to lobby for in Dover and beyond. The three main legislative issues are: assistance with obtaining a driver's license and automobile insurance, additional assistance with transition planning, and extending foster care to age 21. Ms. Soll imparted her personal experience in the foster care system and gave examples of some of the challenges she faced in care and now as she prepares to go to college. Maegan reinforced the YAC motto, 'Nothing About Us, Without Us' to help the Council better understand how the actions of adults affect the lives of children. The council members asked questions and wished her well in her future endeavors.

Meeting adjourned at 6:03 pm.

Next Meeting – Tuesday, August 14, 2012, 4pm – 6pm. Room 199 of the DSCYF Administration Bldg. 1825 Faulkland Road, Wilmington DE 19805. A reminder and further information will follow prior to the meeting date.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph D. Smack
Division of Family Services