

Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2008

Vice Chair Jim McKenna called the meeting to order at 10AM.

Introductions were made. In attendance were:

Cindy Crowell, Franklin County
Eric Pilson, Stone County
Lori Ross, Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association
Janet Richardson, Jackson County & (Barron Richardson, guest)
Katherine Byington, St. Francis County
Denise Kelley, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition of St. Louis
Ron Byington, St. Francis County/St. Louis
Pat Rodgers, LaClede County
Jim McKenna, Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association
Cheryl Williams, St. Louis City

Regional Reports were given.

Region 4: Pat Rodgers reported about the “Walk Me Home” fundraiser that Missouri FCAA is looking into. Missouri Options program for teens at risk of not graduating high school was discussed and recommended as a good alternative for older high school foster children who have lost credits due to instability in care. Pat discussed the Foster Parent Opinion Poll which is being conducted in two counties in this region. Trends indicated that Respite Care is a big issue. Jim McKenna added that the group hopes that the survey will be passed out at licensure every other year, with results going to the CD. This is an activity designed to improve the provision of foster care and to increase foster parent retention. There was group discussion of the many potential uses of such an opinion poll.

Region 3: Kay Byington had no official report but had some questions from her area related to foster care licensing and the provision of unrelated child care, she also had questions related to respite care.

Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition of St. Louis: Denise Kelley reported that interest in growing in the St. Louis area for the services provided through the Adoption Resource Centers via training extravaganzas. Additionally, this venue is developing foster care community interest in the functioning of the State Board. FACC is primarily working on Respite Care and Educational Advocacy and has hired an Educational Advocate who is helping foster/adoptive parents on the Eastern side of the state with school related issues.

St. Louis City: Cheryl had no official report. She is new to this position. Lori Ross agreed to promptly mail her a copy of the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board Member’s Handbook.

Region 5: Janet Richardson reported that the local board has been working on several issues. Foster Parent ID cards are currently being made for Jackson County families. The goal of the local board is to entice local businesses to offer discounts to foster parents who present their ID cards at checkout. Additionally, the local board has

been working with the CD on placement papers for use at medical visits and school enrollment, which do not have confidential information listed. Janet discussed the active e-mail loop in the Jackson County area with more than 150 participating families, on which helpful information is regularly and instantly shared. Board members who would like to participate in the e-mail loop may contact Janet at ijnrichardson@sbcglobal.net to be added to the group. STARS train the trainer will be coming to Jackson County after some local board effort as well. Jackson County has been very focused on CPR and Educational Advocacy trainings. Janet reported about a unique review that has been conducted at the request of a foster parent, to look at a case which has been mishandled and has resulted in extremely poor outcomes for two local siblings. Ultimately the goal of the review is to identify policy or practice issues which can be addressed to ensure that this type of case is better handled in the future. Janet also reported that the local CD is interested in the local board's respite proposal. An update will be provided at the next state meeting.

Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association: Lori Ross reported on several seasonal activities that the group has just concluded. She added some information to the earlier discussion by Denise Kelley about the Adoption Resource Centers, and stated that crisis intervention is a part of the Western Missouri Adoption Resource Center's activities. She also reported on Midwest's legislative and policy advocacy.

Region 2: Cindy Crowell had no official report. She stated that Diane Bueneman had attended the local advisory board meeting.

Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association: Jim McKenna reported that there is a meeting in Warrenton scheduled for the second weekend in January in which the Missouri FCAA will be discussing the National Foster Parent Association's Walkathon schedule in May. Jim would like to get the Walkathon going in several areas throughout Missouri. He reported that the Walkathon will take 3-5 thousand dollars in upfront expenses to start. However, it could make lots of money. Jim invited FACC and Midwest FCAA to participate with him in this effort, however reported that FACC had declined the invitation.

End of Reports.

Jim stated that Denise Kelley had resigned her position as secretary of the Board and indicated that the group would need to nominate and elect a replacement secretary. Other options include asking the CD to supply an employee to serve as secretary, however that would be contrary to the position taken by the board that the group should be led by foster and adoptive parents.

A discussion was held about the new Foster Parent's Bill of Rights which empowered the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board to approve pre-service and in-service training for foster parents. There was discussion about the need to create an internal CD policy which defines how that process can happen, and a need on the part of the Board to commit to fulfilling that responsibility. There was additional discussion about what additional roles/responsibilities we'd like to see the Board take, and whether or not it would be necessary to get those responsibilities codified in statute. Board members agreed that participation in the Board is driven by their desire to be effective

advocates for the children in the foster care system. A preference was expressed that we work in partnership with the CD on these efforts. Denise suggested that in terms of the new legal responsibility we should create a sub committee to work to identify real concrete steps which would allow this responsibility to be shifted to the Board. She suggested that steps needed to include: (1) Talking with Bonnie Washeck and Jim Harrison about policy and partnership, (2) Requesting a meeting with the CD training unit to establish roles and responsibilities in this partnership, (3) Discuss and draft CD policy to create the process for this new responsibility.

Denise made a motion to form a subcommittee. Kay Byington seconded the motion. Unanimous approval was given. Denise, Lori and Cheryl agreed to work on the subcommittee, and Diane was appointed in absentia.

Denise suggested that she'd like to see the group build momentum in terms of the understanding that local foster parents have about what the State Board is and does. She'd like to see some progress on the letter that has been discussed. Again, she'd like to see action steps or a subcommittee in place to resolve issues surrounding the Board's communication with foster parents and local workers.

Jim suggested that he'd like to see a page on the CD website devoted to the Missouri State Foster Care and Adoption Advisory Board. Jim tabled the discussion of the possible communication motion until the Strategic Plan agenda item later in the meeting.

Jim began the Strategic Plan discussion with a reading of the overarching goals and objectives established in that plan. There was a discussion about the need to review those goals and create short term goals for each objective.

The meeting was adjourned temporarily for lunch. 12-1PM.

The meeting was called back to order at 1PM. Eric Pilson suggested that it would be important to have subcommittees meeting between larger Board meetings in order to accomplish more goals. Pat Rodgers questioned the possibility of getting local advisory boards to address and work on issues identified at the State Board meetings. Jim felt that there might be problems in using the local boards because of the timing of their scheduled meetings.

1:05 PM CD staff Venus Wood and Belinda Luke joined the meeting. Belinda brought summaries of policy memos from November of 2007 to share with the group. She discussed the process of creating new policies and pointed out the need for policy to accurately reflect the Code of State Regulations and Missouri Statute. She mentioned the work group currently looking at a big picture view of how Missouri provides foster care and said that Respite is a part of that discussion.

Janet asked for an update on the discussion at a previous board meeting regarding using debit type cards for clothing vouchers for foster children. Venus reported that no further action had occurred on that issue.

Belinda mentioned an administrative hold memo that she worked on. Janet asked for some clarification on that process. Belinda provided that clarification and said that this category was to allow foster parents to opt to place their license on hold, and did not have the stigma or additional consequences of the previous suspend category.

Janet asked whether the memo on Mo Health Net White Cards indicated that every child currently holding a red Medicaid card would receive a new card. Belinda indicated that only new cases or those in which the card is lost would result in the issuance of the new white card.

Ron Byington asked whether or not the Career foster care program was being phased out. Both Venus and Belinda indicated that while the overall system was being discussed, it was not likely that phasing out the career program would come to fruition at this time.

Janet asked about the new respite forms. Pat asked whether the CD would cover the costs of the fingerprint checks for potential respite providers. Venus indicated that there was no money in the budget for that expense.

Lori asked whether there were representatives from the State Board who serve on the working groups looking at the big picture of the foster care system. Venus indicated that the State Board was not inclusive of all foster parents and that there were foster parents nominated by regions who participated on some working groups. No, there is not a member of the State Board on that particular committee. Lori requested a written list of the members of that work group. Venus replied that she'd ask her supervisor if that could be provided.

Ron Byington asked about issues surrounding respite in his region. There was a suggestion that he submit a Policy Interpretation Question to the CD to have career respite policy clarified.

Cindy Crowell discussed the new physical form which allows the CD to access foster parent's medical records with no expiration date (a part of the new licensing paperwork). There was a discussion about foster parent dissatisfaction with the lack of a time limit on that form. Cheryl discussed the extra cost associated with additional forms for doctors to sign and asked whether or not the CD was picking up the cost of that. They are not.

Jim McKenna revived the discussion about the Board's interest in participating in the development of policy and procedures related to foster and adoptive care. Belinda and Venus indicated that they'd both consulted with their respective bosses after the last State Board meeting and that they'd been told that the assistance of the Board would not be possible in much of the policy development. Again they reiterated the need for policy and procedure to comply with Code and Statute. They also indicated that on policy development that wasn't related to Code or Statute, the Division often involves people from the field, but that the Division chooses who to involve based on the issue being addressed. This State Board will not be invited to participate in policy development on any regular basis.

Janet asked how long it takes to develop or alter policy. Belinda indicated that there was no time frame she was comfortable in giving as priorities, determined by her boss, change.

Jim asked Belinda about the new responsibility of the Board in terms of the approval of pre and in-service training, and whether a policy was being developed to address that new role. Belinda indicated that the CD interpreted the new law to say that "If the Board sees that there is a need to cover something new in training then the Board can submit that suggestion to the Division training unit." She felt the law stated that the board could 'recommend' training. Lori pointed out that she felt the law stated clearly that the training was to be determined by the State Board, and that she felt that it might make sense to develop policy that defines how that statutory requirement will be fulfilled. Belinda indicated that she'd take that information back to her boss to discuss and get back with the Board. Jim reiterated that as foster parents it is our role to be advocates for other foster parents and for the children in our care.

Melody Yancey and Lisa Clements (Missouri Health Net Division) joined the meeting at 2PM and Venus and Belinda departed.

Lisa Clements introduced herself and said that she works on the psychology program at Missouri Health Net. Lisa presented a discussion on the shift to prior authorization for mental health services for foster children. She indicated that this shift was in response to a lack of provider accountability for the quality of services provided to children. She indicated that in 2006 a multidisciplinary group of people reviewed the information on the shift to prior authorization for mental health services and recommended that this same process be put into place for foster children. At the present time providers seeing foster children must obtain prior authorization for their services.

Jim indicated that his children's best counselor had resigned from his case and indicated that she'd no longer see foster children due to the new PA process. He suggested a grandfather clause for current providers. Lisa indicated that this would not happen.

Lisa indicated that she wants to hear about any problems foster parents experience as a result of this program. She indicated that there are providers they hope to eliminate due to provider fraud. Additionally, providers can elect not to participate. Lisa denied that the paperwork necessary is extensive and said that providers have been required to have this documentation in their files all along. Lisa covered the PA process and indicated that services must be 'medically necessary'. She also indicated that the number of hours authorized would be based on the age of the child and the diagnosis.

Cheryl asked if the child's caregiver would receive a copy of the prior authorization approval for their children. Lisa indicated that they would not. Lisa indicated that if providers bill foster parents for services that Mo Health Net denies, they are committing fraud. She indicated that her experience at the Dept. of Mental Health taught her that providers tell families things that aren't true in order to cover themselves.

Denise indicated that it might be helpful for families to know what their child is authorized for so that they can work with the provider to prevent lapses in services.

Additional discussion covered online provider lists, the process to switch providers, clinical exceptions and the fact that the treatment plan should be part of the FST meeting discussion. There was a discussion about multiple providers for one child. Only one authorization for a specific service can exist for each child. Lisa passed out a brief written summary to the group. She indicated that questions about this transition should be submitted to Melody Yancey at the CD, who will find out the answers. Lisa and Melody left the meeting at 3PM.

Lori initiated a brief discussion of the previous CD comments on the participation of the Board in policy development and asked the permission of the Board to draft potential legislation expanding the ability of this Board to participate in CD policy development. There was a discussion about whether or not electronic voting would be acceptable between meetings. Bylaws were consulted. Seeing no prohibition against electronic voting, Eric made a motion that electronic voting between meetings be approved. The motion was seconded by Janet. The Board voted unanimously to accept the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15PM.

Submitted by Lori Ross, fill-in.