

STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL

September 16, 2008

MINUTES

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Dr. Irv Jennings, Co-Chair; Ginny DelMonaco, Co-Chair; Molly Cole; Maureen Price-Boreland; Laurie Landry; Lorna Grivois; Dr. Michael Lustick; Pamela Ferguson; Commissioner Susan Hamilton

MEMBERS

ABSENT: Barbara Ellison; Catherine Holahan; Patricia Lorenson; Joseph Marino; Barbara Sheldon; Genevieve Stuart; Pamela Trotman

INVITED

QUESTS: Karl Kemper, DCF; Fernando Muniz, DCF; Josh Howroyd, DCF

Strategic Plan Update

Commissioner Hamilton gave an overview of the proposed integrated agency-wide strategic plan. The Commissioner is in the process of meeting with stakeholders to gain feedback from them prior to producing a final document.

The commissioner discussed what is driving the changes and the work we are doing and the need to do better integration across the bureaus. The work of each bureau was reviewed: data driven outcomes and measures in child welfare more than in other bureaus; technical assistance was provided by the National Resource Center to assist in developing our strategic plan; performance measures -- core areas that require integration. We have to have child specific measures and child specific indicators that are good for the child. Thus, the following indicators were developed:

- Prevention -- How do we define and effect prevention? By increasing the number of families whose needs can be met in the community without opening a CPS case, we can:
 - reduce investigations -- reducing the number of families that rise to the level of needing to actually open a case
 - reduce the number of open cases by providing in-home services
 - reduce the number delinquency petitions
 - reduce FWSN cases
- Children to Remain Safely at Home -- by providing services in home, we are able to
 - reduce the number of removals
 - reduce the number of repeat substantiations
 - reduce the number of re-entries into foster care
 - reduce the number of delinquency commitments
 - reduce recidivism
- Permanency
 - reduce the number of kids who have APPLA (Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement)
 - no youth under age 14 will have an APPLA goal
- Improved Child Well-Being
 - reduce the number of kids on discharge delay by ensuring the right kids are in the right placements
 - The "needs met" outcome measure is very broad and we need to improve performance.

- Transitioning Youth - for those aging out, how do we effectively service them?
 - youth who leave our care need a permanent connection to an adult

In order to reduce the number of cases, a case must rise to a certain statutory criteria. People are fearful to ask for help. We need to get community agencies to count how many problems come to them for help before they need DCF resources. We will only become involved in those cases where needed services are not available in the community or there is information to require a CPS investigation.

The commissioner also discussed the core measures that were identified that cross the bureaus as far as initiatives. Current initiatives include: improving continuum of care; internal practice improvement; external relations; administrative practice. The commissioner was looking for input from SAC on these core indicators -- anything missing; too much to embark on, comments.

Dr. Jennings stated that treatment is the best prevention. If we can get families services in the community, we might be able to prevent unnecessary removals and need for continued out of home care. He suggested that the definition of prevention be more specific. We should consider a secondary prevention. What families in the state are most vulnerable to having a referral to DCF, and work with that community to develop a strategy to prevent a referral and have services in communities to deal with domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues. We need to divert those families to services when the initial call comes in to the Hotline. The Differential Response System will target those low risk cases and divert to community services and provide the level of support families need.

It was suggested to change the language used in the "Indicators" from "fewer" to "reduce the number". Another suggestion was to have a distinction between outcome measures and indicators. We should **bold** outcomes with indicators below. Another suggestion was to have indicators that show access to community programs that also shows improvements.

As explained by Mr. Kemper, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (LPRIC) report identified areas of concern. Specifically, they raised the question that while the Bureau of Child Welfare has outcomes as a consolidated agency, what are the measures for this agency as a whole - thus the beginning of the strategic planning.

The Commissioner reviewed the proposed Table of Organization and the rationale behind the changes. When the Department changed from the five regional offices to the 14 area offices concept, the well intended goals never came to fruition. The intention was to have local responsibility to effectuate the outcomes that were needed. Unfortunately, we did not have the capacity to provide area office budgets and the area offices did not have the capacity to make placement decisions.

Key changes made to the Table of Organization include the following:

- The proposed structure provides specialized caseloads at the local level. Currently, we have generalized rather than specialized caseloads.
- The Bureau of Child Welfare has too many direct reports and would now have 3 regional directors rather than 14 area directors reporting directly. In addition to the 3 regional directors, there would be a Division of Centralized Intake & Investigations, Division of Practice Standards; and Division of Placement Services.
- Each region would be broken down to five divisions.

