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Marla McDade
Williams, MPA
Administrator

Nevada Children's Commission Child Welfare Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE: Friday, December 8, 2023

TIME: 3:00 P.M.- Adjournment

VIDEO CONFERENCE:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ODE0MWI5ZDItMDQ0NS00NGI5LTlmODYtNzFhMDUxMWIwZGU2%40thread.y2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e4a340e6-b89e-4e68-8eaa-1544d2703980%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22be58909a-421c-4f56-857e-c5f7d4ef6f7f%22%7d

TELECONFERENCE LINE: 1-775-321-6111

CONFERENCE ID: 436 326 718#

1. **Call to Order** – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Megan Miller.

2. **Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff
Members Present by Video: Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Shelia Parks (joined after roll call)

Members Not Present: Judge Stephanie Charter

DCFS Staff: Elvira Saldana

Public: Sabrina Schnur, Jonathan Norman, Elyse Monroy-Marsala, Kim Abbott, Belz & Case Government Affairs

3. **Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

4. **For Information:** Welcome and Introduce Community Stakeholders- Megan Miller

5. **For Possible Action:** Meeting Minutes September 15, 2023 – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks
Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any changes or corrections.

No recommendations were made.

Action: A motion was made by Judge Paige Dollinger to approve the minutes, seconded by Ryan Gustafson, and carried to approve the minutes of September 15, 2023.

6. For Information: Discuss and Develop Priorities Regarding Independent Living / Extended Foster Care— Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

- Discuss and identify steps to ensure deadlines regarding extended foster care in Nevada Revised Statutes 432B.5919 are met and achieved.

Megan Miller stated it sounded like from the last Commission meeting, this is something the Court Improvement Program (CIP) is on top of and working on. Megan Miller asked Judge Paige Dollinger and Ryan Gustafson if they have any thoughts, knowledge of where they are, or next steps the committee should be taking.

Ryan Gustafson stated it is more aware than on top of it. They are in the planning phase. At the summit a couple of months ago, the child welfare team had a mini session and talked about some of the concerns. Some of the primary discussions they had were the form and function of the person legally responsible (PLR). There may be some education that may need to be done on the psychiatric side. Other issues they talked about were population mix between very young children and older (adult) and what the capacity will be.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated it is being talked about and worked on via the CIP setting. They recently met and they are identifying some things the members are concerned about. Judge Paige Dollinger asked Megan Miller if they use committees for review hearings for child welfare.

Megan Miller stated they do not.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated they do not either. It is in the law; however, they have not utilized it. It probably is something useful if they could get something going in that regard. Judge Paige Dollinger is open to talking about how they might do that.

Megan Miller noted for the record, Shelia Parks joined the meeting.

Kim Abbott, from the Children's Attorneys Project at Legal Aid Center, stated Judge Charter does her review panels. For aging out kids and kids who are 16 and over she has specialized panels. She brings in folks to talk about education related topics, a therapist, and someone with lived experience to go over things they may need.

Shelia Parks stated Judge Charter modeled the panel from what they used to do many years ago. It was called the foster care review board panel. It was a team of people who would hear the cases. None of the other judges are doing it.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated she likes the idea and would like to get more information from Judge Charter.

Kim Abbott stated Judge Charter had a steering committee. Dewey Fowler, their attorney who leads their aging out youth effort within their office was on the committee and worked closely with Judge Charter. He would be happy to talk about it.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked Kim Abbott for confirmation of their attorney's name.

Shelia Parks commented she provided a copy of the original manual to Judge Charter and she modified it with the steering committee.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked if in the Eighth Judicial District if any of the other judges that hear dependency cases would be interested in doing it.

Shelia Parks stated Judge Charter has presented it to the other dependency judges, however no one has jumped on board that she knows of.

Megan Miller asked how it works logistically in the court room, if they are going through each child's situation individually and then having a group talk.

Kim Abbott stated each case gets called individually. The kids come in one at a time.

- Discuss and identify any concerns regarding placement resources for young adults entering independent living and/or extended foster care.
Megan Miller asked committee members if they have any thoughts or updates about placement resources for this demographic.

There were no thoughts or updates by committee members.

- Discuss and identify concerns surrounding young adults entering independent living and/or extended foster care who are also involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice Services.
Megan Miller stated this is an area where there is a lot of room for collaboration. Megan Miller would love to have Dewey at the next meeting. Megan Miller asked committee members for thoughts about individuals from the Department of Juvenile Justice who may have valuable information for future meetings.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated juvenile delinquency folks in Washoe County who may be interested in talking about the topic are Joseph Saiz and Liz Florez. Judge Paige Dollinger can connect with them to invite them. In Washoe County they have the project one docket which Judge Robb presides over for kids who have both a dependency case and an open juvenile delinquency case.

Kim Abbott stated the supervisor for Clark County Juvenile Justice is Jody Lupo-Masden. She is the point person for the cross over calendars. She may be one to reach out to.

Megan Miller stated she would reach out.

- Discuss and identify research regarding the efficacy of independent living programs. Megan Miller stated this was one of Judge Charter’s suggestions about making sure the programs offered to children are doing well. Megan Miller asked Judge Paige Dollinger and Ryan Gustafson if it is something discussed in CIP.

Ryan Gustafson stated he does not think they have talked much about the efficacy. They have looked at the efficacy and lack of dropping out of the court jurisdiction program. They have not talked about how it will specifically look when it comes to the extended foster program. Ideally, they would have some providers they could partner with.

Megan Miller asked committee members if there was any other discussion on the topic of independent living or extended foster care.

There were no additional comments from committee members.

7. For Information: Discuss and Identify Placements for Children Involved in the Child Welfare System – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

- Discuss and identify concerns surrounding children with mental health or behavioral needs. Megan Miller asked committee members if they had any thoughts or updates.

Shelia Parks stated there is a need for placements. It is a huge issue.

Kim Abbott stated it is a huge issue. The real complexities they have found is they have pigeonholes of placements they are trying to put kids into, as opposed to developing placements that treat the whole child. Until a continuum of care is developed for kids with significant mental health and intellectual or developmental disabilities, they will continue to fail on both sides. They are currently seeing a similar trend with kids with significant conduct issues, juvenile justice kids. They have several very high needs kids who have behaviors which land them into the delinquency system, however sending them to correctional care does not work due to their mental health being unstable. It is going to be an issue until placements are developed which are designed to address the whole child.

Ryan Gustafson stated he completely agrees. There are a lot of service gaps. It has gotten worse since COVID in the North. Their continuum of care has faltered between losing hospitals and other programs. It has left them in a bad situation where kids are being placed inappropriately.

Megan Miller stated it ties in with the subtopic of discussing and identifying concerns surrounding placement for children who are also involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice Services. What Kim Abbott said is spot on, these children are being treated through correctional options, however they are also not thriving in the behavioral health settings.

- Discuss and identify issues surrounding placements for sibling groups. Megan Miller stated this topic goes along with issues surrounding congregate care. Megan Miller asked committee members if they had any thoughts, ideas, or updates on either of the subtopics.

Ryan Gustafson stated pre COVID, in Washoe County, they averaged about 15% capacity. Once COVID hit, they ran into an issue of losing 50% of their foster providers. They are now back up to operating somewhere between 90 and 95% capacity and they are trying to figure how they will find money to expand the congregate shelter come July 1st. There are gaps in the continuum of care which need to be addressed.

Megan Miller asked Ryan Gustafson what has caused the drop in foster homes.

Ryan Gustafson stated they have done a lot of polls and meetings with the foster community as an agency. They have gotten a variety of answers. The biggest thing is not enough resources. They currently have 60 homes on hold and have been on hold since COVID. Money was a lesser issue, however still an issue. It has been addressed with the rate increase. They also received feedback from foster families about feeling insecure about the supports, where if a child were to destabilize or go into crisis what they would do with the child. They get worried there are no resources available. There are a lot of dynamics and logistics that make it difficult for the foster community.

Megan Miller commented she does not think anyone would accuse being a foster parent as being easy.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated she agrees with everything Ryan Gustafson said. It is an emergent situation regarding the lack of foster placements and resources. As Ryan Gustafson explained, they are both tied together, and it also goes with the bullet point about the sibling groups. For example, if a call for a warrant is received and if there are 4 or 5 siblings, the agency struggles to keep the siblings together. Another difficult placement scenario is where there is a new sibling, and they cannot be placed with the sibling who is already in care.

Megan Miller commented they see it a lot. It creates problematic scenarios.

Judge Paige Dollinger commented there is such an impetus and significant impact to cultivating the sibling bond while they are in care. There are many ramifications, not just the immediate concern of wanting to place them together.

Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any other issues regarding placements they would like to discuss.

There were no additional comments from the committee members.

- Discuss and identify concerns surrounding placement for children who are also involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice Services.
This topic was discussed with children with mental health or behavioral needs (1st bullet point of this agenda item).
- Discuss and identify issues surrounding congregate care.
This topic was discussed with placements for sibling groups (2nd bullet point in this agenda item).

8. For Possible Action: Discuss and Decide Upon Next Steps – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

- Assign Tasks to Committee Members (if needed)
Tasks were not assigned.
- Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting
Agenda items were not identified.
- Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time
The next meeting date was not confirmed.

9. Public Comment and Discussion

There was no public comment.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.