

Steve Sisolak  
Governor



Richard Whitley, MS  
Director

# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
*Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.*



Cindy Pitlock, DNP  
Administrator

## Nevada Children's Commission Child Welfare Committee Minutes

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 2, 2022

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.- Adjournment

**VIDEO CONFERENCE:** [Click here to join the meeting](#)

**TELECONFERENCE LINE:** 1-775-321-6111

**CONFERENCE ID:** 965 018 876#

1. **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 1:34 p.m. by Megan Miller.
2. **Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff  
**Members Present by Video:** Megan Miller, Amber Howell, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

**Members Absent:** Tim Burch

**DCFS Staff:** Dr. Cindy Pitlock, Elvira Saldana

**Public:** Morgan Briscoe, Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner

3. **Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

4. **For Possible Action:** Meeting Minutes from June 10, 2020, and December 1, 2021  
Megan Miller asked if there were any additions or corrections to the meeting minutes.

There were no recommendations were made.

**Action:** A motion by Amber Howell was made to approve the minutes, seconded by Shelia Parks, and carried to approve the minutes of June 10, 2020, and December 1, 2021. Shelia Parks abstained from the June 10, 2020 meeting minutes.

5. **For Possible Action:** Workplan Committee Goals – Megan Miller, Tim Burch, Amber Howell, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

- Identify and prioritize gaps in training to include research on evidence based or best practice trainings, emergent issues, and evolution of seminal concepts, i.e., evolution of cultural competence to cultural humility.

Megan Miller stated the last time the committee talked about potential gaps in training. The next step would be to prioritize the gaps in training to include research on evidence based or best practice trainings, emergent issues, and evolution of seminal concepts. Megan Miller asked the committee members if they have gaps in training they have noticed.

Shelia Parks stated she sent a copy of the study completed concerning the removal rate of children of color. One gap that may be missing is training on implicit bias.

Megan Miller commented she attended a conference last week and a helpful session they had was ways implicit bias plays into the investigations.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated it is in line with the Blueprint for Racial Justice National Commission she serves on. That Commission would be wholly in favor of more implicit bias training in child welfare.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated another training, maybe some training specific to judges. Perhaps training geared towards how best to interact with youth when they are appearing virtually or in person who have been exposed to trauma. It would be helpful to have and ensure the judiciary is acting in the best interest of the kids when they are talking to them.

Megan Miller stated the courthouse would benefit from it. Megan Miller asked Judge Paige Dollinger and Amber Howell if in the North they are using the SIPS (Safety Intervention Permanency System) model.

Amber Howell stated they do use the Safety Model.

Megan Miller asked if periodic trainings are conducted or if it was only when it rolled out.

Amber Howell replied the UNR partnership helps with a piece of it. Washoe County's workers go through a training academy for a period of 3 to 6 months. They have less cases and have a supervisor buddied up with them. To exit the training, they must achieve certain core competencies.

Megan Miller stated she thinks the workers understand SIPS however there is a problem translating to the rest of them.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated part of it is a vocabulary issue.

Amber Howell stated as they talk about trainings and things they may want to implement or fund; the Children's Justice Act Task Force grant is up for ideas to be submitted. Training of judges and case workers are something the Children's Justice Act pays for. If there is consensus on what they want to train on, it can be placed in the application. It is something the committee can think about as they determine what kind of trainings they want to do.

Megan Miller asked if it was specific to Washoe County.

Amber Howell stated it is not. All three child welfare agencies get to apply for it.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked if Clark County would apply for it separately.

Amber Howell replied they would do their own submission. Jill Marano would know about it. If the committee decided to something, Amber Howell could feed it out to her peers in the other jurisdictions and ask them to add it.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked what the deadline is for applying for it.

Amber Howell stated she thinks it is February 18<sup>th</sup>. It does not have to be specific on the application.

Judge Paige Dollinger commented she likes Judge Stephanie Charter's idea of training for judges in how to interact with children who have a significant trauma history. The more training judges receive and how to apply it in their interactions with kids would be good.

Megan Miller asked the committee members if there were any other gaps in training.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Ongoing training and training for new judges is important to understand why the Indian Child Welfare Act exists and why it is important for children to maintain connections to their tribes. It is also in line with implicit bias and being sensitive to cultural issues.

Megan Miller stated she agrees it is an area most are not familiar with.

Amber Howell commented DCFS several years ago in the Programs Office had an ICWA Specialist. The Specialist went around and trained the agencies and workers. Amber Howell stated she wonders if it is still available.

Megan Miller stated they have a specialized unit and one District Attorney who handles all the cases. Megan Miller will ask what type of training they have completed.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated they do not have the number of ICWA cases Clark County does. The training is important.

Megan Miller stated she would reach out to the ICWA District Attorney to see if she has any resources she would recommend. Megan Miller asked the committee members if there were any other gaps in training they would like to discuss.

There were no recommendations.

- Identify 2-3 priority data points for collection, i.e., YLS scores, ACES scores, etc.

Megan Miller stated at the last meeting the committee discussed what is being tracked and not tracked. Megan Miller asked the committee members if they have any ideas about data points that are not being collected and would be helpful to.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated it would be helpful for the IEP component, whether the child has special education needs and if they already have the IEP.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked if opioid removals are already being tracked or if it is being added to the data points to track.

Megan Miller stated Shelia Parks had asked about it at the last meeting and Amber Howell informed there is a way to track it UNITY.

Amber Howell stated it is a new tracking characteristic added for an opioid grant. The enhancement was made approximately 9 months ago. Parental incarceration can also be pulled at time of removal.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked if data can be pulled for the last 5 years.

Amber Howell stated due to the tracking not starting until 9 months ago, there would not be a baseline of before, however they would have substance exposed. Trends could be looked at monthly to at least see the data for the last 9 months. Amber Howell informed hospitals do not drug test for specific opioids, i.e., fentanyl.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked if it is due to an additional cost or if they simply do not do it.

Amber Howell stated she is not sure.

Shelia Parks stated the reason she had asked about the numbers in the data was due to the grant they received. Shelia Parks asked how she could access a report of the children in the grant to see if the children meet the criteria of having a parent incarcerated or with opioid exposure. Shelia Parks asked if she could provide a list of names to someone.

Amber Howell stated she would be happy to try it. Each child can be searched however it is not a fast query.

Shelia Parks stated it is not necessary since there is not a quick way to do it.

Megan Miller asked if there is any tracking in UNITY of children's ACES scores.

Amber Howell stated there is not. It is tracked in the Safe Babies Program.

Megan Miller asked if there is a way to track children whose mental health needs are not being met and try to catalog the reasons why, to help identify where specific problems are.

Amber Howell commented AB387 is a new legislative requirement for all the children whose parents are wanting to give up custody of their children to get mental health services. In Washoe County they have tracked their denial rates of facilities since they started seeing a trend. They have a 92% denial rate for DCFS facilities. The state has met with them and has been responsive about how to solve it.

Judge Stephanie Charter asked Amber Howell if Clark County is doing anything similar, tracking the rate of denial by DCFS.

Amber Howell stated she talked to Jill Marano, and she thinks they were going to start tracking it.

- Identify steps the Commission should take to address prioritized challenges and discuss how those steps can be taken.

Megan Miller stated lack of mental health services, in particular the acute psychiatric placements was identified at the last meeting as one of the biggest challenges. Megan Miller welcomed committee members for any ideas for steps the Commission could take to address the challenges.

Amber Howell stated DCFS needs to have a budget that is attractive to recruit people, retain them, and offer sign on bonuses. Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility North is a great program and they have relied on it heavily. The Family Learning Homes are great. There are capacity issues due not being able to fill vacancies. The other area is the assessment paid to SRC since they have not had a placement in over a year. It is time to have a discussion where the money goes.

Shelia Parks asked what SRC is.

Amber Howell stated it is Sierra Regional Center. It is placement for children with developmental delays. The SRC assessment is something to look at, why they continue to pay it. It is like the parole and juvenile justice assessments which pays for staff however, Amber Howell is not sure where the SRC one goes.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated the lack of mental health resources has been identified for a long time. Judge Paige Dollinger asked if there is a representative to lobby at the legislature.

Amber Howell stated the counties have an opportunity to submit a budget to DCFS every legislative session. Amber Howell expects they will get together and put something in the budget which captures some of this crisis. They need to have some champions at the legislature to help push it forward.

Megan Miller stated a unified response with priorities from the Children's Commission would be persuasive in the process. It may be an idea to take to the full Commission. Megan Miller asked Amber Howell if the SRC payment is dictated by statute.

Amber Howell stated it is codified in statute.

Megan Miller asked committee members if there any other places there are issues or solutions to those issues which can be taken to the full Commission. The idea behind the workplan is to have the same discussions on racial and ethnic disparities as well.

- Discuss and identify stakeholder individuals to invite to future Child Welfare subcommittee meetings. Megan Miller stated previously the idea was for the subcommittee to invite boots on the ground stakeholders who relate to each of the other subcommittees to meetings. Inviting a foster parent, a CASA volunteer, someone from DJJS and Education was discussed. The other aspect is to split it equally between Clark and Washoe County to have adequate representation from both areas. Megan Miller stated it would be beneficial to have a foster parent, a child's attorney, and someone who could speak to education. Judy Tudor from DFS is working on a subcommittee about racial and ethnic disparities and she is interested in attending in the future.

Judge Paige Dollinger asked about having a representative from law enforcement. In Washoe County they have an ordnant number of black youth in foster care in comparison to the black population. The removals Judge Paige Dollinger sees are associated with some type of arrest.

Megan Miller commented they had previously talked about having a Parole Officer. Having someone from law enforcement would touch on a different piece which would deal more with the parents involved in the cases.

Amber Howell stated it is a great idea. A couple of years ago there was a high removal and return rate within 3 to 8 days.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated the person she is thinking of is Sheriff Balaam.

Judge Stephanie Charter stated she has a former foster youth in mind.

Megan Miller stated both suggestions would be phenomenal. If there are no objections, Megan Miller informed Judge Paige Dollinger and Judge Stephanie Charter to invite the two individuals to future meetings. Having a child's attorney and a foster parent would be helpful.

Judge Paige Dollinger stated Jennifer Jeans with Washoe Legal Services would be good for a child's attorney. She is very active and a good advocate.

Megan Miller stated she would try to track down a foster parent in the South who is willing to participate.

**6. For Possible Action:** Discuss and Decide Upon Next Steps – Megan Miller, Tim Burch, Amber Howell, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

- Assign Tasks to Committee Members (if needed)  
No additional tasks were assigned.
- Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting  
No recommendations made.
- Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time  
The next meeting date was not determined.

**7. Public Comment and Discussion**

Dr. Cindy Pitlock, Administrator of Division of Child and Family Services formally introduced herself to the committee. Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated it is an amazing time to be in the position and they are the most challenging times. Dr. Cindy Pitlock hopes to partner with everyone to make a genuine difference.

**8. Adjourn**

A motion was made to adjourn by Judge Stephanie Charter, seconded by Judge Paige Dollinger, and carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.