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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Cindy Pitlock, DNP
Administrator

Nevada Children's Commission Child Welfare Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE: Thursday, March 31, 2022

TIME: 2:00 P.M.- Adjournment

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

TELECONFERENCE LINE: 1-775-321-6111

CONFERENCE ID: 436 055 30#

- 1. Call to Order** – Megan Miller, Tim Burch, Amber Howell, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks
The meeting was called to order at 2:08 p.m. by Megan Miller.

- 2. Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff
Members Present by Video: Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson (for Amber Howell), Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks

Members Absent: Tim Burch, Judge Paige Dollinger

DCFS Staff: Dr. Cindy Pitlock, Elvira Saldana

Public: Wanda Pena, Jen Spelman, Lea Case, Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner, Valerie Balen

- 3. Public Comment and Discussion**
There was no public comment.

- 4. For Information:** Welcome and Introduce Community Stakeholders- Megan Miller
Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated she was present and supportive.

Wanda Pena from the Casey Family Programs checked in.

- 5. For Possible Action:** Meeting Minutes from February 2, 2022
There were no recommendations for changes or corrections.

Action: A motion by Judge Stephanie Charter was made to approve the minutes, seconded by Shelia Parks, and carried to approve the minutes of February 2, 2022.

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

- Develop implementation plan to fill training gaps identified and prioritized by the Commission. Megan Miller stated at the last meeting gaps in implicit bias training and training on avoiding additional trauma in handling children in the courtroom were discussed. Megan Miller asked committee members if they have any other ideas about training.

Shelia Parks stated implicit bias may be an area to look at as far as additional training.

Megan Miller stated the Court Improvement Program seems to have taken a lot of those additional trainings and perhaps it should be brought up to them.

Ryan Gustafson stated Washoe County is trying to develop a race equity plan and tied into the plan are some elements of implicit bias. They are exploring it as part of their plan. It is proving to be interesting to try to find culturally competent trainings which fit the child welfare population. It will be plugged into the race equity, Washoe County plan.

- Develop implementation plan to fill gaps identified and prioritized by the Commission as well as helpful visual representations and reporting of data. Megan Miller stated some of the gaps previously discussed and identified were the concerns about the DCFS denial rate and helping to increase the budget to recruit and retain assistance for DCFS facilities. Amber Howell also brought up concerns about the SRC assessment and the amount of funding going towards it not being utilized.

Ryan Gustafson stated they have had a lot of increased discussions with the DCFS team. Over the last couple of years for the residential facilities they have had high denial rates. The communication has gotten a lot better over the last 4 to 6 months. They will be seeing some increases in both service provision and in ongoing communication collaboration.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated she agrees with Ryan Gustafson's comment. If nothing else, they have all come to a better place of communication collaboration and transparency. There has been a little bit more luck with staffing in the south. The team has been working very hard together. The relationships have significantly improved.

Ryan Gustafson stated in the last 6 months they lost West Hills (acute psychiatric hospital) and Hand Up Homes (provided treatment for juvenile sex offenders). Next week they will be losing Project Safe and Growing which is an early childhood program. Residential options are needed. Medicaid is working on doing a rate review this year. From the child welfare and children's mental health perspective, high on the list would be to continue to bring providers in that would offer specialized foster care, community-based emergency care, or residential treatment.

Megan Miller stated identifying those needs is a big part of figuring out the implementation plan and how to move forward. Megan Miller asked Ryan Gustafson and Dr. Cindy Pitlock what steps the child welfare committee could be helpful with in helping facilitate those discussions.

Ryan Gustafson stated there is a resource and workforce issue especially when it comes to wages. It is causing difficulties retaining and recruiting staff. Rates are an issue. One of the biggest issues is specialized foster care rates. They have not moved much since 2013. Families First Prevention Services Act is something that recently went into effect. It has made some demands on the system.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock commented an actuarial company has been hired to review the foster rates which have not been reviewed since either 2008 or 2009. Also, the Division will be presenting at the Health and Human Services Interim Committee meeting. One issue that has come up is the definition of group homes being more than 6. If it were to change, it would encourage more smaller, home like placement settings. The topic may be brought up at the meeting as maybe something for a policy committee to consider.

Megan Miller asked if it would be lowering the definition to be less than 6 kids.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock confirmed it would.

Megan Miller asked if it would be like the advanced foster care homes in Clark County.

Ryan Gustafson stated advanced foster care homes/specialized foster care homes are homes which require additional training, and they work with kids with a little bit more complex behaviors. In Washoe County, the beds are limited. They are always looking for feedback and ideas to recruit.

Megan Miller asked if there are any workers who are working on recruiting for advanced foster care homes.

Ryan Gustafson stated in Washoe County they have a unit specifically tied to recruitment and retention efforts.

Megan Miller stated it would be helpful to get input from them or invite them to the next meeting.

Judge Stephanie Charter commented CASA have radio and TV ads going in Clark County. Having a foster parent recruitment fair could increase public awareness. Judge Stephanie Charter thinks it is the worst she has seen it, in terms of lack of resources for the kids.

Shelia Parks believes since COVID there has been a decline in families. It must be an ongoing recruitment process. The more it is put out to the media it is becoming more of a household name and it takes time for people to move forward.

Ryan Gustafson stated in Washoe County since COVID they have lost over 60 foster families. Washoe County has done a few things to help recruit. They have contracts with the Reno Aces and UNR Wolfpack and they do tables and events at the games. They have also done several news stories with the local tv stations. It is important to find ways to get the community aware. They are hoping their efforts start to see the fruits of their labors.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner asked if there are strategies or efforts being taken to retain families or supports provided to ensure retention.

Ryan Gustafson stated Washoe County is looking at a rate increase and increasing resources. There is a family engagement center in the North which has helped with creating a safe family setting

for foster families to visit with biological parents. They have also tried to put their recruitment efforts on digital formats, i.e., in person orientations and training can be done via Zoom. Retention can be tricky. A lot of it is communication and listening.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated the Division has compiled an ARPA request for respite which is huge when it comes to retention.

Megan Miller asked if it is additional funding for respite placements or how it would work in practicality.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated the Division is going to work with all the stakeholders. The families are in desperate need of respite to encourage the family unit to seek the resources they need or a break for their appointments, grocery store, etc. They believe if the families can engage in a strong respite program, the retention rates for adoptions and foster families would increase and decrease the relinquishing of youth at Child Haven and Kids Kottage.

Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner asked if there are other opportunities for peer support and other resources beyond respite care.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated in the ARPA request there is a crisis stabilization package, increase in children's Wraparound in Nevada services, intensive in-home family treatment stabilization services, family resource center supplemental programming, family to family peer support, emergency unplanned respite, mobile crisis teams for Clark County school-based crisis intervention, funding for triage residential and inpatient care for individuals who are uninsured and underinsured. Dr. Cindy Pitlock sees the family-to-family peer support and wraparound services fitting into the model. Hopefully some of the programs can be rolled out.

Megan Miller asked if it is through the mental health committee or a separate committee.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock stated the ARPA request is coming from the Division of Child and Family Services through the Director's Office to the Governor's Office for approval. When the requests are approved, while the DCFS is the custodian of the funds and responsible for the administration and rollout of the programs, Dr. Cindy Pitlock will go to the stakeholders and let them play a role in deciding the allocation of the resources.

Megan Miller asked committee members if they had any ideas on how to fill the gaps identified or necessary statutory changes the committee should bring to the full Commission.

- ID any necessary statutory changes.
No statutory changes were identified.

7. 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)
- Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting
Clark County DFS talk about placement efforts and situation
Families First update (Clark County)
- Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time
Tentative date- April 15, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

Dr. Cindy Pitlock suggested Dr. Domonique Rice who is responsible for the oversight of the statewide implementation of Families First, to provide an update.

8. Public Comment and Discussion

Shelia Parks informed tomorrow is “Go Blue” for Prevent Child Abuse Nevada. They are encouraging people to go on social media, wear blue, and post blue. They will also have a pinwheel planting at the family court.

Ryan Gustafson stated they did their pinwheel planting today outside of their office at Center Street, at the child advocacy center, and the family engagement center. They will be doing a press release on Monday morning for awareness.

9. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn by Shelia Parks, seconded by Judge Stephanie Charter.

The meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.