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# 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 Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 14, 2023

**TIME:** 10:30 A.M.- Adjournment

**VIDEO CONFERENCE:**

[https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_N2U3MDdiYjltZDg5Zi00NzkzLWEyMTMtN2FmMjYzZTE0Yjg5%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e4a340e6-b89e-4e68-8eaa-1544d2703980%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22be58909a-421c-4f56-857e-c5f7d4ef6f7f%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_N2U3MDdiYjltZDg5Zi00NzkzLWEyMTMtN2FmMjYzZTE0Yjg5%40thread.v2/0?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:** 479 256 082#

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:33 a.m. by Megan Miller.

2. **Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff  
**Members Present by Video:** Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Shelia Parks

**Members Absent:** Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter

**DCFS Staff:** Elvira Saldana

**Public:** Vanessa Dunn, Amy Honodel

3. **Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

4. **For Information:** Welcome and Introduce Community Stakeholders- Megan Miller  
Amy Honodel stated she is with the Children's Attorneys Project at Legal Aid of Southern Nevada. Under her title, it includes strategic initiatives.

Vanessa Dunn stated she is with Belz and Case Government Affairs and is monitoring for notes.

5. **For Possible Action:** Meeting Minutes December 15, 2022

Megan Miller asked committee members if they had any changes or corrections.

No recommendations were made.

**Action:** A motion was made by Ryan Gustafson to approve the minutes, seconded by Shelia Parks, and carried to approve the minutes of December 15, 2022.

Agenda item #7, For Possible Action: Discuss and Identify Child Welfare Priorities, was taken out of order and discussed before agenda item #6, For Possible Action: Workplan Committee Goals.

**6. For Possible Action: Workplan Committee Goals – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks**

- Develop implementation plan to fill training gaps identified and prioritized by the Commission.
- Develop implementation plan to fill gaps identified and prioritized by the Commission as well as helpful visual representations and reporting of data.
- Identify any necessary statutory changes.

Megan Miller stated training gaps were previously discussed. The committee talked about implicit bias training. Prior gaps identified were related to mental health. Megan Miller asked committee members if they had any ideas about the topics since the last time the committee talked about them.

Ryan Gustafson stated from the implicit bias stuff, in Washoe County they have a race equity committee which focuses on some of the biases. They had a contracted staff who helped their agency get a workplan together. They are also involved in the statewide ADI group.

Megan Miller stated she is hoping at the Commission meeting on Friday there is an update about where they are headed with the Commission as a whole and that can give the committee a better idea of how to come together and implement those things. Megan Miller asked committee members if they had anything to add where the committee is at regarding the implementation plan.

Amy Honodel stated they have been talking a lot and listening to presentations from other states on trauma. They would love to see it be more uniform across the state, stakeholders, and parties involved. They have done TBRI training through Raise the Future and found it to be beneficial.

Ryan Gustafson stated he loves the idea of getting some of the trainings in place. The key to making it successful is to do it consistently statewide. Since nationally they are not moving fast to getting standards figured out, perhaps as a state they need to come up with standards and expectations for what trauma informed really means and what the training is, then pass it down to appropriate agencies and entities.

Amy Honodel stated she agrees with Ryan Gustafson. One of the things they have talked about is their DEI initiatives. Something that keeps coming up is if they should do it internally on their own, hire someone, or consult with an expert.

Megan Miller stated the committee has some good ideas to take to the Commission. Hopefully at the next meeting they can get an idea of where they are headed.

**7. For Possible Action: Discuss and Identify Child Welfare Priorities – Megan Miller, Ryan Gustafson, Judge Paige Dollinger, Judge Stephanie Charter, Shelia Parks**

- Discuss and identify new and emerging trends of concern in child welfare.
- Discuss and identify top priorities for change and impact in child welfare.

Megan Miller stated the committee is at a point where it would be helpful for the committee to start to discuss trends and emergent topics, they are seeing which are appropriate for the full Commission to be aware of. Megan Miller would like to have a brainstorming session to identify 2 or 3 topics to bring to the full Commission. Previously, challenges with placements were discussed. Mental health services have also been a concern. Megan Miller asked committee members if they had any thoughts about what has been coming up in cases which are of large concern.

Ryan Gustafson stated some of the previous concerns are probably still the largest concerns. In the North, they sometimes have challenges when they have to go to commitment hearings to get children into residential treatment centers which are seen as locked centers. The entire process can be lengthy. It requires the psychiatrist to make a recommendation and the recommendation be presented in court. There are not a lot of less restrictive settings available. By the time they ask for a commitment, they have burned through the less restrictive options and the process tends to take months. It results in kids ending up in shelters or placements where they are not getting the appropriate level of care.

Megan Miller stated she thinks opening it up to what they are seeing in the community and larger concerns. Something the committee has talked about a lot is not having less restrictive options and Residential Treatment Center (RTC) options in general.

Ryan Gustafson stated some things have been done legislatively and at a local level. For example, specialized foster care rates were increased by \$20 a day. Money is not the only factor. They are usually at full capacity when it comes to specialized foster care beds. Ryan Gustafson hopes the increase in payment will help leverage some more providers.

Amy Honodel stated she thinks placement should remain one of the priorities. From the Children's Attorneys Project standpoint, lately they have received a lot of complaints from foster parents about being treated more as a disposable commodity versus a valuable resource. Getting everyone to start to look at the value provided by foster placements would greatly help.

Ryan Gustafson stated he agrees with it. They have received the same feedback from foster families; there is a lack of sense of value. They are trying to address it as much as they can. Ryan Gustafson stated Amy Honodel is right, there needs to be more value placed on foster parents.

Shelia Parks agrees they need to continue to look at increasing foster caregivers in the community. Another thing that is happening due to there being few foster caregivers in the community, is children are being placed in homes or left in homes which are not good for them. Foster homes are needed, and the agency needs to support them. A lot is asked of the caregivers. Shelia Parks thinks they should get the great foster parents who are providing the service to help message what is needed to get more foster parents like them.

Amy Honodel stated regarding trends, one of the things she has been watching is there is a movement of foot to start taking bigger efforts to preserve a child's social security disability benefits. There is advocacy across the United States.

Megan Miller stated it had not come up and is an interesting thought.

Shelia Parks stated to add to what Amy Honodel said, there is a department within Department of Family Services (DFS) which is supposed to look at applying for the benefits as soon as possible.

Megan Miller asked if as a continuing item, the committee should have someone from placements from Washoe County and rural attend a meeting, and potentially invite foster parents from Washoe and Clark County to provide their perspective or thoughts. Megan Miller stated she would reach out to DFS to see if there are any foster parents interested. Megan Miller asked Ryan Gustafson if he would be willing to reach out to any from the North.

Ryan Gustafson stated he will check with his placement team and see if they will reach out to their involved foster parents who would be comfortable.

Megan Miller stated it would give some good insight to take back to the Commission.

Ryan Gustafson asked if it would be specific to what they see as concerns, successes, and gaps in services.

Megan Miller stated that is how she sees it, unless there is anything else anyone thinks would be important information to get. Megan Miller asked, in addition to different levels of placement and social security benefits, if there are any other areas of concern for the committee to address.

Ryan Gustafson stated two sessions ago they started talking about getting services in place for CSEC youth, and it was carried over into SB 283 with an expected implementation date of July 1, 2023. In Washoe County, they put a Request for Information (RFI) out, to get information from providers. There are not a lot of national best practices yet when it comes to CSEC. They are still working on getting plans together. They do have a robust clinical team which has had specialized training. They are trying to come up with a service array which will meet as close as to the legislative language as they can. Clark County has made some positive moves towards getting something in place. Perhaps it is something they could have more discussion about.

Megan Miller stated it has been a frequent topic of discussion. Megan Miller stated she would be in favor of bringing it to the Commission as a discussion item. In the future, someone from the At Risk Youth Support (ARYS) Unit would love to attend a committee meeting to talk about what they are seeing and the effect the bill will have on the kids they serve. Megan Miller asked Ryan Gustafson if there is a counterpart in Washoe County who is dedicated to that population.

Ryan Gustafson stated they have staff specialized in it. They are trying to build up their internal resources.

Megan Miller stated she would like to have someone come to the next meeting from Washoe and Clark County to talk about what the new concerns are after July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ryan Gustafson stated it is a great idea and he would work on it, on the Washoe County side.

Megan Miller stated those are two solid areas to bring to the full Commission. Megan Miller asked committee members if there were any other areas, they feel the committee should focus on.

There were no recommendations from the committee members.

Megan Miller stated the committee could keep it as a continuing topic.

Amy Honodel stated one other thing to consider is revisiting independent living. Post pandemic and housing being what it is, maybe seeing if enough is being done for the population.

Megan Miller stated previously the committee had talked about having a foster youth present at a meeting. Judge Stephanie Charter had suggested a youth. It might be a topic the committee can focus on at a future meeting, to have a youth talk about their experience.

**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 11:12 a.m.