



# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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



## Nevada Children's Commission Child Welfare Committee Draft Minutes

**DATE:** Wednesday, December 1, 2021

**TIME:** 9:00 A.M. -Adjournment

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

**TELECONFERENCE LINE:** 1-775-321-6111  
**CONFERENCE ID:** 737 043 733#

1. **Call to Order** –The meeting was called to order at 9:12 a.m.by Megan Miller.

2. **Welcome and Introductions (Roll Call)** – DCFS Staff

**Members Present by Video:** Megan Miller, Shelia Parks, Amber Howell

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

**DCFS Staff:** Elvira Saldana

**Public:** Brigid Duffy, Angelica Pena, Dr. Tiffany Tyler-Garner, Lea Case, Jeremy Stocking

A quorum was not present. There was no action taken on agenda items.

3. **Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

4. **For Possible Action:** Meeting Minutes from June 10, 2020

The item was tabled.

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

Amber Howell stated children's mental health crisis, Family First Prevention, CSEC implementation, extension of foster care are areas the committee can focus on. The biggest issue for Washoe is there are no children's mental health placements. All the acute psychiatric hospitals have closed. West Hills Hospital is closing in two weeks. These issues are having domino effects in other areas.

Megan Miller stated Clark County is having the same challenges particularly with mental health placements. Clark County is having a hard time meeting the resources for teenage girls. Megan Miller asked Amber Howell about CSEC and Family First since she is not familiar with either.

Amber Howell stated Family First is a federal implementation plan they have had to write a plan for, and it limits the amount of use of congregate care and services provided to families before removal. It is more about prevention and intervention on the front end. There are several federal requirements in what can and cannot be claimed for IV-E. For the CSEC bill, both Clark and Washoe Counties have to create a receiving center for victims of sex trafficking and have specialized foster care homes for those individuals. Both counties have put in fiscal notes in the legislature however it passed without the funding.

Shelia Parks asked Amber Howell when Family First should be implemented by.

Amber Howell stated she does not know. There are some benefits to it. The benefits are whatever is not invested on the back end can be reinvested on the front end similar to what Clark County has had for their waiver.

Shelia Parks stated another challenge is having the resources that can be used since they have to be approved in the clearinghouse.

Megan Miller stated a couple of years ago they had training for attorneys in child welfare about NRS and the child welfare system. Megan Miller asked Amber Howell and Shelia Parks if they are aware of any other training.

Shelia Parks stated all the stakeholders participated in the Safe Training. All the CASA staff took the training. When Family First was initially talked about there was training to cover what it was going to entail.

Brigid Duffy stated they are trying to get the judges to watch some online training.

Megan Miller stated regarding technology and data systems, in Clark County they use UNITY. Megan Miller does not know whether it allows to search by a specific diagnosis or if it is tracked in UNITY.

Brigid Duffy stated she does not think the information is tracked.

Amber Howell stated she does not think there is a tracking characteristic. Medicaid can and they have robust reports they can pull on diagnosis specific, utilization of services, therapeutic hours, etc.

Shelia Parks stated their case management system they use is one where they can set up different data tracking, however it is difficult. When they received a grant from National CASA to address families who have children exposed to opioids, they encountered challenges to track them.

Amber Howell commented there is a tracking characteristic now in UNITY for opioid removal and opioid exposure.

Megan Miller asked if there is a way to track by race, ethnicity, and gender in UNITY.

Amber Howell and Shelia Parks both replied yes.

Megan Miller asked if LGBTQ status is tracked.

Shelia Parks stated that is another category they are trying to identify for their youth since they have to report on it on their national surveys. They are working on tracking it.

Megan Miller asked if there are any other areas not tracked that would be helpful for the Commission know.

Shelia Parks stated she cannot think of any. They are hearing about cyberbullying and incarcerated parents on a national level.

Amber Howell stated parental incarceration as the cause of removal or at the time of removal can be obtained.

Megan Miller stated at some of the first committee meetings, the committee talked about a system that was going to incorporate UNITY and Odyssey together and merge data sets with the court's data sets for everyone to have the same information. Megan Miller is not sure if anything happened with it.

Amber Howell stated they had received a grant for INSPIRES. It fell off with the pandemic.

Megan Miller asked committee members if there are any other challenges they would like to bring forward to the Commission about racial and ethnic disparities and mental health. In the court room in Clark County, Megan Miller stated she is experiencing a vast shortage of mental health placements and mental health services for teenage girls.

Amber Howell stated in Washoe County they have a researcher doing a lot of work on disproportionality from removals to mental health. Amber Howell can share it once it is complete.

Megan Miller asked if they are looking at removals caused by mental health, i.e., parents saying they cannot handle the child.

Amber Howell stated they are looking at parents experiencing no services available for their child, disproportionality or racial disparity at removal, and connection with services depending on race. They are seeing families that would have never come into the child welfare system. It is hard to research disparity during a time where the entire system is in crisis.

Shelia Parks stated there was a study being conducted which was looking at removal rate and how it would impact the removal rate of children of color if the race piece was removed. When talking about race/ethnicity, it needs to be looked into.

Megan Miller asked Shelia Parks if it was a national study.

Shelia Parks stated she would forward the study to Megan Miller to forward to the committee members.

Megan Miller asked if there was anything specific the committee members are experiencing, individual difficulties members are dealing with.

Amber Howell stated when they started to look at percentage of denial rates for DCFS facilities, they had a 92% denial rate. The state has had difficulty with recruiting nurses and staff retention. The ask for Washoe County was find a way to get to yes for the kids so they are not going out of state or ending up in Kids Kottage. It is more around retention and recruitment of nurses for the facilities. Washoe County's two big issues are the high denial rates and situations where services are not provided to parents, and they become a child welfare case.

Megan Miller asked Amber Howell if Washoe County is doing voluntary placements with parents. It has been recently discussed in Clark County, about the provision in the NRS that would allow parents to voluntarily place kids with DFS for up to six months.

Amber Howell stated they talk about 386 a lot with the state. It has not been finalized.

Shelia Parks asked if the Safe Homes program is still in place. There were families recruited and the recruited family agreed to help a child or family in crisis on a temporary basis. It would prevent the family from going through Child Protective Services. Shelia Parks asked Brigid Duffy if it is still ongoing.

Brigid Duffy stated she is not sure.

Megan Miller asked if there was anything else the committee members would like to touch on.

Amber Howell stated there was nothing else from Washoe County.

- 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 action taken.
  - Specify Agenda Items for the Next Meeting- No action taken.
  - Confirm Next Meeting Date/Time- No action taken.

**7. Public Comment and Discussion**

There was no public comment.

**8. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 a.m.