

STATEWIDE ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC) Minutes: July 12, 2021

1. Introductions and Attendance

Members: Sarah Lockery*, Myke Halpin*, Ken Mysogland, Jennifer Nadeau, Deb Kelleher*, Suprena Shuler*, Stephanie Telford, Elisabeth Cannata*, Chris Scott*, Samaris Rose, Regina Moller,

* = voting member

Guests: Sergio Alvarez, Susan Cunningham, Sarah Gibson, Jon Jacaruso, Elizabeth Duryea, Diane Fasano, Sharon Davis, Brianna Fabiano, Tanja Larsen, Lorrie McFarland, JoShonda Guerrier, Christy Knowles, John Saccu, Sellis-West, Allyson Nadeau, Michael Wynne

2. Minutes

- A SAC member motioned to accept the Minutes as they are from June Meeting, Samaris Rose seconded. The SAC approved the June minutes.

3. Membership

- Sarah Lockery - Those of you requiring an appointment from the Governor received applications. That application needs to be printed out, notarized and mailed to the address on the application.
- We still have vacancies for the psychiatrist and the attorney. Laine Taylor will not be able to attend because the meeting conflicts with something else she has on Mondays. Ann Smith has decided also not to pursue an appointment.
- We have two openings for a family member or foster parent of a youth who has been served or is being served by the child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health care systems. If you know some folks who might be interested in joining, please let me know.

4. SAC Member Advisement

RAC Reports

Region 1: Suprena Shuler reported:

- We had a couple of presentations at work. Lorraine and Lindsey reported on minor youth homelessness in Fairfield county. They talked about what they were doing to support the youth and how we can have the community also support them.
- We also had the DCF Child Safety Practice Model completed.
- We provided graduates from Region 1 with gift cards for graduation.
- There will be no meeting this month. Our next meeting is August 20th.

Region 2: Sarah Lockery reported for Judy and Stephanie:

- Region 2 members were sent information to join the Region 6 or Region 1 RACs to hear presentations on the Child Safety Practice Model in June. The model will be presented to the Region 2 RAC in August. Region 2 RAC identified several parents on their RAC to participate in these focus groups.
- The Region 2 RAC co-chairs Stephanie and Judy plan to meet bi-monthly with Dakibu Muley, the new office director for the New Haven area.
- The RAC received information from the Milford DCF office about their Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team reconvening and expect to have fatherhood service providers and at least one father join that group.
- The outreach work group has continued efforts to bring in more stakeholders and have contacted two of the largest school systems in the region to get representation as well as contacted the region's Youth Advisory Board. Co-chair Judy Eisenberg attended the June Youth Advisory Board meeting to introduce the RAC CRP and hear about the youths' concerns.

Region 3: Dr. Regina Moller reported:

- Region 3 had scheduled their Immigration training by Jennifer Avenia but there were technical difficulties therefore it needs to be rescheduled for a new date soon.

Region 4: Jennifer Nadeau reported:

- In our June meeting we had a presentation from our CRP on their annual report. They gave some recommendations and they gave an update on what they're going to be focusing on for this upcoming

year around looking at how DCF links to programs that support post-secondary education, career pathways, and youth employment.

- A few members participated in the virtual National CRP Conference and a few additional family members were able to participate. They're hoping next year they may be able to do a presentation at the national conference.
- Jennifer provided a report related to the staff and we reviewed the strategic plan.

Region 5: Deb Kelleher and Sergio Alvarez reported for Dr. Jennings:

- No Meeting in June.
- Sergio and Deb attended the YAB. They accepted our request to provide a brief RAC report to the youth.
- We continue to work with our CRP that we're trying to build. They held their meeting this past weekend. We are supporting them as they get on their feet.
- We continue with our Implicit Bias Training series. We are hoping to do 2 more at the end of the month. One with our PRFT provider and the 2nd with mobile crisis staff and in August for foster adoptive and kinship families.

Region 6: Elisabeth Cannata Wheeler reported:

- No meeting in July so nothing to report.
- We will submit something.

SAC Member Reports

- Sarah gave kudos to the RACs who are going to the youth and being creative to give them an opportunity to give their input and to hear information.

SAC Legislation Committee Report: Sammi and Amani, Co-Chairs

Samaris Rose putting in the Chat the link 2021 DCF Legislative Summary she received from Vinny Russo who is on vacation this week. She will also email it to everyone. Ken added it is an extensive document. Good idea to schedule Vinny in August to have a greater discussion on the active legislative session.

- Use some of our budget to give Sammie and Amani stipends to recognize the time they are spending on this committee but not sure how much time they will be spending on this. We want to be fair. There will be a vote on it.

5. SAC Budget Balance:

- There have been no changes except our payments to family.
- There is a balance of \$15,946.26. We will use a good portion of the balance for the 2022 Staff Retreat.

6. DCF Report - Ken Mysogland

- Three main things to go over and get feedback on:
 - Legislative Summary
 - Our Strategic Plan
 - Family First Plan
- Ken identified some high-end key pieces of Legislation that did pass despite a virtual environment:
 - Telehealth has been approved through June of 2023. Both individual and group insurance is required to pay for telehealth the same way they would pay for in-person services. What that means for DCF families and youth is we would still prefer in-person but if there are exceptions that should be made according to the child's best interests that can be done on a case by case basis.
- An act concerning social equity and the health, safety, and education of children. One of the components is that a train the trainer program is created. The Youth Suicide Advisory Board and the Office of the Child Advocate jointly administer an evidence-based youth suicide prevention training program in each local and district health department once every 3 years. So basically, training individuals in the community in the *question, persuade and refer training* (QPR training) that then allow those individuals every 3 years to conduct training right in their local communities.

- Part of this bill also says that DCF must provide written notice in our *DCF Right To Know* brochure of the parent's right to have an attorney present at any meeting conducted to determine whether the parent's or guardian's child should be removed. In the brochure we need to provide a link to providers of free and low cost legal services. Ken will send the most recent draft of the *DCF Right To Know brochure* by the next meeting.
- Phone calls now from the Department of Corrections will be free.
- We may want to consider having somebody from domestic violence community come and talk about Public Act 21-78. This bill expands the definition of domestic violence to include coercive control of a family or household member. It's now defined in statute of what coercive control means and how it's applied to hearings and family relations courts and restraining orders. Allows a provision that a grant program should be established to provide legal assistance at no cost for indigent individuals involved in family relations matters.
- Legalization of cannabis in the state of CT. We remain firm that when we are looking to determine that abuse or neglect has occurred, we look for the effect of the substance on the ability of the individual to parent the child. The use of marijuana, like alcohol, is legal but when ingested, if it negatively impacts the person's ability to keep a child safe that is something the Dept should be made aware of. Ken gave examples of factors the Dept would have to consider when assessing abuse and neglect.
- An Act requiring background checks of youth camps, i.e., sport coaches, trainers, and instructors. It broadened who should have criminal and CPS checks prior to working at youth camps (anyone over the age 18).

A SAC member asked what DCF's stance is on the Juvenile Justice repeat offenders. Ken replied there are many factors to that. DCF does not oversee youth in the juvenile justice system. It is under Judicial and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD). The Dept does have an array of in-home services. CJTS is closed. We don't operate group homes - only the 2 Solnit facilities. Factors which lead to JJ are poverty, education, lack of employment, family structure, absence of parents. Our Family First Plan, when implemented, will allow for more supports within our communities. Suprena noted kids coming out of JJ system and other programs are coming into DCF Care the foster families will need transitional support.

Family First Plan Overview: Ken Mysogland and JoShonda Guerrier walked the group through a guided power point presentation.

7. SAC Assignments:

- At the next meeting, the SAC might want to discuss:
 - Legislative update - Invite Vinny Russo
 - Marijuana legalization discussion - impact and messaging; collaboration with sister agencies
 - Juvenile Justice discussion - Include other members of DCF or someone from CSSD or Judicial
 - Domestic Violence and Coercive Control - invite someone from the DV community

Send any notes/comments ahead of time if you cannot attend the meeting.

Next meeting: August 2, 2021, 9:30 am - 12:00 pm