

Statewide Advisory Council Minutes

5/2/22

Attendees:

Myke Halpin*, Sarah Lockery*, Ken Mysogland, Jennifer Nadeau*, Judy Eisenberg*, Lisa Girard*, Michelle Sarofin*, Rachael Levine*, Suprena Schuler*, Elisabeth Cannata*, Irv Jennings*, Chris Scott, Whitney Rodriguez, Samaris Rose*

(* indicates a voting member)

Guests

Jon Jacaruso, Malcolm Blue, Sergio Alvarez, Sharon Davis, Taylor Ford, Danielle Verderame, Patricia Gaylord, Ginny Monk, Treena Mazzotta, Orlando Cuadrado, Nicole Dionis, Fred North, Monica Rams

RAC Reports and System Development:

The beginning of the meeting is dedicated to RAC report-outs and development.

Region 2 RAC - Judy

- Has not met since the last SAC meeting and plans on continuing to discuss the consumer-driven portion of the RAC self-assessment
- Outreach and orientation workgroup has been putting together an introductory PowerPoint
- In the early stages of exploring a Fatherhood Program for the region--a collaboration between the RAC (Citizens Review Panel), FELT, and the Male Involvement Network (a grassroots organization)

Region 5 - Irv, Deb, and Sergio

- Has not met since the last SAC meeting
- Plan on having two trainings in June on video gaming disorder
 - o One for clinicians and a second one for the general public
 - o Presenter is very knowledgeable about the topic from a clinical perspective, as well as through his own personal interest in video games

Region 1 - Suprena

- SAC held a Calm, Cool, Comply training with the Stratford Police. The event began with a discussion on why communities do not trust the police and discussed solutions to the issue. The Commissioner attended, and the officers were very open to listening. The SAC hoped to have the youth participate, and they will continue to do so. They will continue discussing the topic with youth. They hope to improve the relationship between police and the community, including by naming the ways police have harmed communities.
- Susan put together a PowerPoint on the RAC self-assessment that included several recommendations:
 - o **Communication:** Create a brochure/pamphlet/elevator speech that defines the purpose of the RAC/CRP; inform members of how the budget is used; create a list of benefits of membership; explain how their input is used to change the system; record meetings and send out to members; use more visuals during meetings; create a social media page; bring the voices of those who have parent support groups to the RAC; create an email

box for comments/questions; limit use of acronyms; create acronym guide; use QR codes rather than flyers

- **Recruitment:** Be flexible with schedule; bring more voices to the table through a designated speaker; increase incentives for youth; create surveys specific to youth; provide transportation to meetings; attend YAB to facilitate discussions and obtain feedback; tap into connections in schools/police/etc.; schedule outreach events and attend other community events where youth/families are present; circle back to those who used to come to the RAC and re-invite them back
- Breakout rooms have been very helpful in facilitating conversations amongst small groups. People feel more comfortable discussing in the small group rather than the large groups.

Region 5 - Jennifer

- Met last month with a full agenda, including a presentation from DCF on ChildStat - Performance Stat 4. They also provided updates regarding the SAC retreat and garnered interest. They discussed transportation concerns for members, who may have difficulty attending in person. Finally, they discussed the annual meeting in which they make major decisions about the RAC (in person vs virtual, etc.).
- They will keep meetings virtual for now.
- They've discussed their membership committee and are working on nominations and decisions.
- The RAC tends to send someone to the CRP conference; however, this year, flights are extremely expensive due to its being held in California. This year they will unfortunately not be able to send someone because there is no room in the budget.

Region 6 - Michelle

- At the last meeting, they had a presentation from Planning Across the Spectrum, which helps equip youth on the autism disorder spectrum.
- They also identified action steps to increase youth/family participation in the RAC, including having an in-person open house; reaching out to young adult programs; reaching out to the school systems nearby.
- They will continue meeting with DDS and working towards inclusive involvement.

Region 3 - Lisa

- They met in April where they held presentations on youth suicide.
- The next meeting will be on May 11th, where they will focus on services and programs. They are hoping to increase engagement from those that are at the RAC.
- There will be a listening tour upcoming, and planning is underway for this.
- They want to create an email for RAC leadership generally to be used amongst the leaders.

RAC Self-Assessment: Consumer-Driven

- Sarah suggests using QR codes on public flyers. Tools like SurveyMonkey and MS Forms allow you to create a QR code, so people could see the question on the flyer and scan the code to respond. This would be a good way to get feedback anonymously and works well for youth.
 - One member agreed that youth prefer this, but they were curious if it would differentiate between youth and adults.
 - Others have used this and recommend it for youth and families.

- Using the QR code can't be the only option because it requires a smartphone, so there should be other options.
- It would be important to first start with the question, i.e., what do we want to learn from youth/families?
- Sarah suggests holding off continuing the self-assessments until the fall due to the SAC retreat and the lack of availability during the summer months.

Legislative Subcommittee

- Sammy has been accepted to the Yale Campaign School! The Campaign School will teach her legislative advocacy, running campaigns, and being a strong candidate. Congratulations, Sammy!
- Ken acknowledged Chris Scott and Sun's Scholars, and their recent loss. Unfortunately, one of their participants passed away in a car accident. Chris spoke about their relationship and what Rob meant to him personally and the organization. They also lost a member back in 2020. We will keep them in our thoughts.
- Legislatively, we are sprinting to the finish line. The DCF bill is waiting in the House.
- Three major mental health bills have made it out of their respective committees, and Ken gave a quick update on them. These bills will:
 - Mobile crisis services would be increased to be 24/7, and there would be an increased data repository to better understand outcomes.
 - DCF will establish three urgent crisis centers throughout to state, which will divert youth from going to an emergency department. They can go via ambulance for assessment, and they will only go to the hospital if they are assessed as needing it.
 - DCF will establish crisis centers for youth experiencing a behavioral health issue but are not acute enough to require hospitalization. This would be for situations where a youth needs services outside the home, but the goal is for them to soon return to the home once those services are in place.
 - There is lots of collaboration upcoming: DCF and DPH will look at license reciprocity in other states; DCF will work with DMHAS to do public health campaigns addressing the stigma of mental health services. There will be a pilot program in Waterbury for intensive outpatient services. DCF will work with SDE to develop best practices regarding when to call 911 vs 211.
 - DCF will be part of a committee to look at the 911 commission, which will hopefully divert 911 calls for behavioral health issues to a more specialized line. Mental health providers will hopefully be able to respond rather than the police.
 - There will be more training on the SBIRT tool to help youth with substance use concerns. There will also be a youth mentoring program to help with conflicts, stress management, etc.
- There will soon be more services provided by a variety of departments, but these bills are still subject to change until the session ends.
- One person asked about staffing for the crisis centers; Ken was unsure of the details of this.

- Another member asked about Waterbury's pilot program in the school system--is this going to continue? They wanted to share that the community feels it is an asset to the Waterbury school system and encourages them to continue it. Ken thanked her for this input.
- Elizabeth Duryea added that we are still learning how covid has impacted our kids, and she felt Sergio could add some information on lessons learned from the Waterbury pilot. She highlighted that there are also a lot of good, innovative work happening throughout the state outside of DCF. She agrees that the Waterbury pilot is having an impact and would be happy to share more info.
 - o Sergio added that much of the success has come from the partnership with the community and schools, not just DCF's presence in the school.
 - o The social workers are there to support the school, the kids, and the community.
- One member added that they have a social worker that partners with the police department, and it has been very helpful. She believes this partnership will help families avoid involvement with DCF.
- Another member asked about the short-term centers and wondered how they are conceptually different from SFIT centers. Ken explained that at the June meeting, it would be helpful to have Deputy Commissioner Williams and others explain the stabilization centers and how they are unique. The legislation also still needs to be finalized. The initial intent is for children in emergency departments who do not need higher levels of treatment but still need somewhere to go while services are being set up. He believes others would be better suited to explain the nuances of these facilities.
- Ken was asked about any legislation that specifies youth involvement in planning; oftentimes the planning is done without the youth's involvement, so they wanted to know more about that. Ken clarified that some of the bills involve peer-to-peer mentoring, but he suggested that in June, they would be able to clarify more.

Membership

- Whitney will soon be submitting her application for membership to the Governor's Office.

SAC Retreat

- The group was asked whether the spots allotted to them for the Retreat are sufficient. The members have either already or will soon discuss who is going. Once it is more finalized, they should send their names to Sarah.
- The retreat will start around 8:45-9:30 with a breakfast/chatting. At 9:35, DCF will hold a presentation on the CT Family First Plan. 10:30-11:30, Jerry Milner will go over the ideal Family First plan. After the break, small groups will discuss how we measure up to the ideal plan without discussing next steps. Then the group will have lunch, followed by a discussion of the small-group assessments. Jerry will then facilitate a conversation on next steps and accountability, with a fun group activity to close out the day.
- This tentative agenda is open to edits.
- Ken and Dr. Davis will discuss ideas for the opening presentation, as implementation of Family First has slowly started.

- It may be helpful to have a preliminary meeting between DCF leaders and Jerry Milner's, as it may be that his vision for Family First does not match Connecticut's/DCF. Chris explained that he generally supports keeping families together, prioritizing kinship, and going as upstream as possible. It seems that he will probably align with us. Ken supports having a meeting to make sure the day is quite cohesive, since he has not been at the Children's Bureau in a while.

Family First (Dr. Sharon Davis)

- Dr. Davis gave a presentation on the CT Family First Plan. It is summarized below.
- Family First was federal legislation that gave funding to prevent foster care placements, and it significantly changed funding streams for child welfare.
- There are several major intended outcomes, such as using an upstream approach; using evidence-based programs; establishing standards and oversight for children in residential treatment; supporting kinship providers; collaborating and emphasizing equitable access.
- In Fall 2022, DCF will begin implementation for children known to DCF. In spring, DCF will develop a care management entity.
- CT will use a "No wrong door" philosophy, which promotes stability and wellbeing regardless of funding sources. Caregivers will also receive support.
- Some aspects of DCF practice will remain the same, but some funding, services, and resources will be enhanced as a result.
- CT will utilize FFT, MST, NFP, PAT, PCIT, HFA, and BSFT (see PowerPoint for info on these services)
- Eligibility: 1) children who are candidates for foster care; 2) pregnant/parenting youth; 3) parents of these youth; 4) community pathways (see PowerPoint).
- Candidates will be identified via accepted Careline calls, as well as for non-accepted calls. Voluntary Care Management will also be eligible. For community pathways, calls can go through 211 or the Careline, who will refer the families to the Care Management Entity. Certain organizations can also refer directly to the Care Management Entity.
- There must be a child-specific prevention plan (CSPP) that will identify the strategy for the child. This plan should assess the family's strengths and areas of needs, as well as the services that will address these needs. It will also monitor their progress.
- The Care Management Entity will monitor the child's safety, collaborate with families, and assess progress. It will match with services and offer a warm handoff, as well as monitor the family and change supports as needed.
- Community pathways: These are families that are not touched/known by DCF but who may be dealing with behaviors/circumstances that may impact the child's development. There is not an immediate concern, but there is potential for future DCF involvement.
- Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) are facilities that are short-term, non-family based, and offer high-quality services for youth. There are certain requirements for these facilities to be certified as QRTPs. This also means that individuals will assess a placement in a QRTP to ensure that a child is in the least restrictive placement and it is consistent with the child's needs. DCF has submitted a waiver to include the RRG as able to do the assessment.

- Kinship Navigation Model: This will assist caregivers in accessing resources, providing peer networking, and strengthening the array of supports outside the formal DCF care system. DCF's Kinship Navigation Model will also support informal caregivers with no connection to DCF.
- Sharon asked for any questions or comments.
 - o One person who was involved with the planning commented that Sharon successfully took years of planning and concept-building and synthesized it into one very understandable and implementable presentation.
 - o Another person asked about a contradiction between services being in place as needed, but some of the services are time-limited. Sharon explained that those programs may be time limited, but other community-based supports may be put in place if the family still needs supports. There are several additional supports that may be needed after the evidence-based program, so DCF would use those as well.
 - o Sharon was also asked about an interview for *The Imprint* where someone said that the Care Management Entity would be a new entity. Ken clarified that this was the thought at the time, but we still need to spell out what this would look like and what the budget will be for Family First.

Strategic Planning

- Treena Mazzotta joined along with Orlando Cuadrado, Nicole Dionis, and Fred North. The Bureau of Strategic Planning does:
 - o Quality Assurance (Orlando Cuadrado) reviews case plans
 - o Quality Improvement (Nicole Dionis) looks at outcomes, office-level information, suggests strategy and performance improvement
 - o Data Reporting and Evaluation (Fred North) manages the open data portal, supports research, does internal analytics, federal reporting, etc.
- This Bureau also serves as the leads for federal reviews and annual progress reporting. The IT team will be moving under this Bureau starting in October.
- Two partners from Casey Family Programs are also on the call; they are helping the Department reconsider the goals/strategies of the Bureau. They are working to evaluate the Bureau and get stakeholder feedback to improve it.
- Melissa Palay and Holly Merz joined and offered a Mural link where folks could offer feedback. Nicole Dionis also thanked the SAC for offering their time to this. This team has been going to different groups inside and outside the Department to obtain feedback about the continuous quality improvement work and structure in the Department. So far...
 - o Folks expressed appreciation for the data work DCF is doing, through PIE and other sources.
 - o There has been consensus that data on racial disparities is important, relevant, and helpful.
 - o There is a need to integrate and align various data points. For example, PIE has limitations such as using different time periods in its reports. There also need to be improved alignment with other state agencies.

- There is agreement that communication and collaboration has been better, but we hope to improve upon that and create a real sense of partnership.
- Input that is provided to the Department must be from all facets of the community, including youth and families.
- Melissa and Holly facilitated a conversation about the key questions listed on the Mural: 1) What do you want or need from the Bureau to ensure DCF is improving our ability to meet outcomes for children and families; 2) How might you want to continue to engage and connect with the Bureau of Strategic Planning moving forward?
 - Information should be disseminated, and feedback should be sought before decisions are being made so that it can shape decision moving forward.
 - People struggle with finding certain information and learning how to access things.
 - Also, data without context is not very helpful, so he encourages this.
 - Data should be shared so that the language is clear--providers and family members may have different understanding of certain data points. It must make sense to different audiences.
 - More data on racial justice would be important, as it always results in relevant and engaging conversations.
 - The data could be used to shape SAC agendas--how can the SAC help areas where the data shows there are needs?
 - This is continuous, not a one-time thing. Regional data could also be very helpful to the RACs.
 - Having someone to help you receive and understand the data would be useful to providers. Providers do a lot of data collection, but they may not have someone who is able to interpret the data they receive back. They would appreciate data analytics support to help providers understand the main takeaways.
 - One provider went through an experience that helped them understand what data points to focus on. It would be helpful to have supports on this.
- Trenea closed this portion by reiterating that this is only an initial phase, and they hope to continue seeking feedback and having conversations on the Bureau. They anticipate a follow-up conversation and appreciate the feedback they have gotten thus far.
- Ken added that he commends Trenea and the team. He does not recall a conversation like this with the SAC in past years, so he hopes this can be a regular part of the meetings so the SAC considers data moving forward.

Office of Multicultural Affairs (Monica Rams)

- Monica Rams joined the meeting to discuss the Office of Multicultural Affairs and DCF's racial justice work.
- DCF is committed to eliminating disparities within the agency. DCF has a consultant, Kim Watson, on board to assist in moving the work forward.
- In February, they submitted a legislative report that is available on the website and highlights the work the agency is doing on racial justice. The report goes into depth about this work, including change initiatives, areas of practice being implemented, data trends, and strategies.

- DCF is working to standardize the racial justice equity tool. There are different versions of this tool being utilized by different offices. It is being used to change the ways we have conversations about families. We do not want it to be used as a check box. This is in its final stages.
- DCF is also working to understand its challenges with timely permanency, whether it be with family dynamics or other reasons. Also, different cultures have different conceptions of family, and families may be stable but may not have the legal status that is considered permanent.
- DCF is working to deepen connections with providers. It is working to create an institute on racial justice, as well as use provider voices who are on DCF's racial justice teams. Increased collaboration will help achieve the racial justice goals.
- DCF has also been utilizing its anti-racist framework, integrating it into conversations and practice. DCF hopes to elevate this and create more authenticity, honesty, healing, psychological safety, etc. We also hope to integrate it into the Safe and Sound model.
- DCF wants to equip leaders to have conversations and create spaces on racial justice. They envision round tables with leaders to help them learn how to have these conversations.
- They hope to better integrate racial justice with DCF's fatherhood work and the safety practice model.
- Finally, DCF is trying to take time to listen to staff and get feedback. They hope to then work through the barriers discussed by these conversations. In particular, staff who experience racism both internally or externally need to be better supported with resources and information that will help them move forward.
- The SAC members offered feedback and questions.
 - o One person brought up a list of systems they saw that included how different systems discuss racism (e.g., "health equity," etc.) because while each system seems to be addressing the issue, but there are now silos in how the systems conceptualize racism. Perhaps a common language would result in more unified strategies.
 - o A SAC member asked whether the SAC or RACs could be useful in gathering feedback/information that would help Monica's office. Monica welcomed this partnership and asked for emails if folks have information or feedback.
 - o When it comes to the change initiatives, one member asked if there is a role the SAC or RACs could play. Monica replied that members who sit on the local racial justice groups in their regions are in the best position to provide real-time feedback, see the data, and analyze their approaches. She encourages them to get involved with those groups, and she can connect folks to their local leads if need be.

Next Steps

- Sarah made sure she understood the things to be discussed next month: 1) the SAC retreat; 2) a legislative update from DCF. They may also want to learn more from the YABs.
 - o Another person also suggested holding a conversation about Ukraine and the images circulating on the war. They also suggested a statement of support or offering tangible resources.
- The SAC will meet on **Monday, June 6 from 9:30 am – 12 pm.**