

Statewide Advisory Council Minutes

6/6/22

Attendees:

Sarah Lockery*, Deb Kelleher*, Irv Jennings*, Lisa Girard*, Jennifer Nadeau*, Damien Grasso*,
Stephanie Telford-Cotton, Elisabeth Cannata*, Michelle Sarofin*, Whitney Rodriguez,
(* indicates a voting member)

Guests

Johanna Schmidt, Patricia Gaylord, Sergio Alvarez, Susan Cunningham, Jon Jacaruso, Malcolm Blue,
Elizabeth Duryea, Maguena, Paul Guerrero, Maria Feliciano, Sharon Davis

Minutes

- The SAC approved the minutes from the May meeting.

RAC Reports and System Development:

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

Region 1 - Susan

- Region 1 worked on the self-assessment and created plans to implement action steps.

Region 2 - Malcolm

- Region 2 discussed their CRP function and fatherhood. They considered ways they can advise DCF from a father's perspective. They also held a presentation on Transitional Age Youth (TAY) from the Transitional Supports and Success Division.
- Judy added after the meeting that a workgroup came together to develop their own Power Point Introduction to the RAC/CRP which they will screen for the group in August and discuss using as part of their outreach and orientation efforts. Their RAC does not meet in July.

Region 3 - Lisa

- At their last meeting, the Region 3 RAC had a robust conversation on mental health.
- There will not be a June RAC meeting, and they are finalizing the list for the SAC retreat.
- Region 3 is sponsoring a presentation on Family First that will be held on June 14th.
- Leadership has also planned on holding listening tours and getting feedback from folks. They will be holding these meetings throughout July and August, then they will meet back in September to move forward from there.
- Region 3 has had great success with getting youth feedback, which has been influenced by:
 - o Partnering with Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) to strategize ways to make the RAC's purpose clear and the environment comfortable/welcoming;
 - o Putting the meeting on youths' event calendars;
 - o Sending out the questions and agenda at least two weeks before so that youth can decide how to respond. They can attend the meeting, do so in the chat, or send a text;
 - o Dedicating specific time in the agenda to hear from youth/families;
 - o Encouraging and thanking youth for their input;
 - o Ensuring a good feedback loop between the RAC and DCF so youth know when their feedback is changing practice.

Region 4 - Jen

- Region 4 will be hosting their membership meeting and vote on certain positions in the RAC.

- They have discussed how they will hold the election virtually. The YAB also gave an update and discussed their accomplishments and plan for the next year.

Region 5 - Irv, Sergio, and Deb

- Irv asked that his time be reserved for the later discussion on Ukraine and gun violence.
- The Region 5 team described some of the robust discussion the RAC had on some of the legislative changes intended to address the mental health crisis. Specifically, there was lots of discussion around the changed licensing requirements, with some folks' understanding that this change would allow people to work in private practice rather than just in clinics. Some folks are concerned that this will dilute clinicians' abilities, since private practice often does not have the same level of oversight and supervision that one would find in a clinic. Others on the SAC call felt the legislation was somewhat different than what the RAC members described. Some clarification on this would be valuable for the group.
- There is also some confusion on how the new crisis stabilization centers differ from SFITs.
- The group also held an orientation to the CRP and RAC/SAC. They will also be holding a DCF 101 Training so that participants have a better understanding of DCF and how they fit in.
- FAVOR and DCF presented on data (including pathways data), and the RAC will choose to focus on one aspect of data.
- The fatherhood engagement leads also held a presentation, and the Youth Service Bureau discussed the Juvenile Review Boards.
- The RAC has been promoting an upcoming training on Video Gaming Disorder. They recommend this training, especially for clinicians. They also noted the correlation that this has with truancy and social anxiety.

Region 6 - Elisabeth

- Elisabeth recommended that the SAC discuss licensure at the next meeting and get clarity on the legislation; she understands it differently than some of the discussion in Region 5. From her perspective, the legislation seems to ease a hiring barrier by changing how long folks are allowed to practice while waiting on a license, and she notes that this status still requires that they work under the supervision of an independently licensed practitioner. The SAC agreed that this is something they would like to discuss in more depth so that everyone is on the same page.
- Region 6 will problem-solve the issue of youth engagement by moving the meeting time to better accommodate youths' schedules and increasing the stipend amount.
- Region 6 is excited for the retreat, and they are also working to identify goals for their CRP.

SAC Member Updates

- The Children's Behavioral Health Advisory Board will meet in summer and discuss the impact of this year's legislation.

SAC Retreat

- The retreat will be held in a spot adjacent to a paved trail and near restaurants.
- At this point, it is unclear whether there will be a remote option for the meeting. Several SAC members explained that they know individuals who are immunocompromised or caring for someone immunocompromised and who would like a virtual option. Many folks requested a

hybrid option. Sarah will speak with the venue to learn more about the possibility of a virtual option as well as what covid safety procedures they have in place.

- Anyone who has not yet sent their attendee list must please do so.
- Sarah encouraged members to watch a video of Jerry Milner speaking if they have not already; there are plenty of short and long speeches available on YouTube, and it would serve as an excellent preview before the retreat.

Discussion on Ukraine and Gun Violence

- A SAC Member asked to discuss these topics as a group because the news recently has contained many violent and graphic images and stories about both.
- One member discussed their experiences after the shooting at Sandy Hook. It occurred in Region 5, where this member is located, and they worked on Project Joy, which worked to train teachers and community members to provide support to youth. They are also working with groups in Uvalde; currently, there is a high level of support, but they hope to create something sustainable for the lasting impact of the shooting.
- They expressed frustration with the lack of funding for staff; the children's mental health epidemic requires a strong workforce. Despite good work by the legislature, they still feel this lack of funding will impact their ability to address the crisis.
- During Sandy Hook, this member recalled going to the firehouse, where they congregated with folks from other agencies, politicians, and parents who were waiting to hear what had happened to their children. They remembered the Governor coming in and having to tell those parents that their children had passed away.
- Afterwards, they set up tables and made a plan for a clinic, which held 3-4 sessions per week. They had many volunteers, but eventually, outside organizations took over many of the efforts. They believe that it is important to have strong community support, talk about these issues, and give the topic space.
- They were concerned that this particularly hurts children, as they are less equipped to handle hearing about these events. Another member pushed back on this from her perspective as a Black woman. Hearing these stories is also retraumatizing for her, even though she is an adult. "If you want healthy, strong, and safe children, you have to start with healthy, strong, and safe families...you can't look at one without looking at the other," she affirmed. She believes we must dedicate more money to the issue and destigmatize mental health.
 - o She also highlighted that when it comes to African American youth, we have less data on suicide rates. We need to be proactive and look at suicide in all populations and contexts.
 - o When her son was younger, she just wanted him to make it to adulthood without becoming a statistic. Her son is now 34, and she is still concerned for his safety. She has felt increased animosity and feels very unsafe.
- One member also added that they have spoken with their coworker, who is a Black woman from Haiti. This coworker did not identify as Black until moving to the United States. She now keeps her door closed at work due to fears of violence.

- Others in the group also discussed the ways they and their family feel unsafe. One person highlighted how worried children are for their friends. Another shared that they pay attention to what their children are wearing every morning, in case they should have to identify them.
- A SAC member criticized the common narrative about gun violence being linked to mental health; they explained that we need to shift the narrative that mental health issues mean someone is violence. This creates stigma and makes it harder for people to get help.
- Others who have spoken with folks from other countries realized that they do not understand how the United States can still be struggling with this issue.
- The Behavioral Health Plan was created due to Sandy Hook. They are working to expand access to mental and behavioral health resources, but ongoing workforce issues pose a big challenge.
- It is important to look at mental health from a cultural lens; it may not be discussed or may be discussed differently in some cultures.
- One person highlighted the hope that she gets from conversations with people like those on the SAC call.
- Another likened this issue to a slow cooker which is gradually turned up. We do not notice how bad it has gotten due to being steeped in it.
- Another person highlighted the gender component to gun violence. Not only is the vast majority perpetrated by boys and men, but a large portion are committed by people with a history of violence against women. Many mass shootings are themselves an act of domestic violence targeted at a girlfriend, spouse, or former partner.
- "I am pretty at a loss for words," said one member. They pointed to the 246 mass shootings that had happened in 2022 as of the date of the SAC meeting. There are many components, but we need to learn from these tragedies. They find it mind-blowing to see it still happening.
- A member added that there is a large portion of the country living in communities in which violence is common and has been for decades. In some urban areas, it is a part of everyday life. In the past and in those communities, people attributed it to people making poor choices rather than a mental health issues. Now that it affects more white communities, people are starting to see the ways that gun violence is linked to gun access. Young, immature people should not have this level of access to guns. They feel that the positive points are the increased unity on the issue, and it seems possible to hit from all angles and all communities. They also brought up the amount of violence towards Black youth--we must prioritize this as well.
- Another member shared the story of their cousin, who was shot and was permanently impacted by the emotional and physical trauma. This event is a significant driver of their beliefs on the role of guns in our society. If we care about our kids, we need to look at how it impacts their trajectory into adulthood.
- The SAC agreed that this discussion should be continued. Perhaps this is a topic area the group would like to advocate on next legislative session.

Next Steps

- Next month, the SAC hopes to clarify some of the legislative changes that occurred this session.
- The SAC will meet on **Monday, July 11th from 9:30 am – 12 pm**. At that meeting, we will evaluate the retreat and discuss next steps, as well as continue conversations from today.