

**Division of Children and Family Services
Advisory Board Meeting
October 24, 2008 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon
Meeting Minutes**

The Division of Children and Family Services Advisory Board Meeting were held on October 24, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon in Conference Room A in Donaghey Plaza South.

The following members were in attendance:

Connie Hickman, Gary Ewart, Lisa McGee, Dean Burbank, Connie Dyer, Karen Worley, Consevella James

The following members of DCFS Executive Staff and other divisional staff were in attendance:

Janie Huddleston, Cecile Blucker, Lisa McGee, Greg Crawford, Lisa Ferrell, Mona Davis

Handouts Distributed:

Agenda
Field Contacts List
DCFS – 2008-2011 Biennial Budget Request

Minutes:

Janie Huddleston opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions from attendees.

There was a lot of discussion surrounding the changes being made in Pulaski County and that major changes were needed. DHS noted the need to implement more accountability within the system statewide. The changes that had occurred in Pulaski were discussed which included the change in Area Manager in Pulaski County and that Beki Nance had been asked to serve as the Interim Area Manager for Pulaski County. The plan for the cleanup of Pulaski County was also discussed. It was noted caseworkers in other counties are volunteering in Pulaski County. The Division of Childcare has stepped up and is helping out in Pulaski County along with other sister agencies. As a result of the child deaths in Pulaski County and statewide the central office staff is reviewing safety plans statewide. In addition Beki Nance and Ratha Turner (DCCECE) are assisting with looking at case files, etc. DHS had closed 5 foster homes at the time of meeting.

It was discussed the job Cecile Blucker was doing as Interim Assistant Director. She is calling the field staff, going on site visits and talking to the field staff. Melissa Singleton, Sandi Doherty and Milton Graham they are helping out and assisting Cecile. DCFS will start doing unannounced visits to the foster homes. Cecile will meet with Judges. Milton Graham is going around the State doing reviews in the county offices.

DCFS will review all safety plans and make sure caseworkers understand DHS Policy. DCFS will interview children not in the presence of foster parents. Caseworkers will verify every child being seen. Some caseworkers are falsifying documents when children in foster care have not been seen.

It was noted that CHRIS information is being updated with lots of changes. The goal of Information Technology is to make CHRIS more accessible to users.

It was announced Marilyn Counts has assumed the role of Adoption Manager. Statistical data shared regarding adoption were: 980 children are ready for adoption, 27 had pending appeals and over 200 children are not in database that are ready for adoption. The division is trying to find a better way to run reports that can be updated each month by the adoption specialists. How adoptions subsidy are counted on the caseload report was also discussed. When the staff reviewed adjusting caseloads for subsidy cases it adjusted caseloads from 197 to 54. It was noted the issues with paperwork being lost when foster parents are trying to adopt and that there were a lot of foster homes in NW AR ready for children to be placed.

When discussing budget it was noted that there is a decrease in federal funds. DCFS is requesting money over the next year to fill 104 positions by 2010. DHS is requesting a Supplemental Budget to hire new positions. DHS will hire 9 a month. 50 positions will be Administrative Support. Governor will cut B funding, DCFS asking for operational 21 million next 2 years.

The next meeting was set for January 15, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon in Conference Room #5368.