

**Division of Children and Family Services
Advisory Board Meeting
April 25, 2008 10 – 12 Noon
Meeting Minutes**

The Division of Children and Family Services Advisory Board Meeting was held on April 25, 2008 from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in Room 5368 in Donaghey Plaza South.

The following members were in attendance:

Anne Wells, Connie Hickman Tanner, David Tindall, Debra Hurd, Gary Ewart, Howard Turney, June Simpson, Karen Worley, Kira Livingston, Michelle Trulsrud, Rose Bates, Sue Madison, Jennifer Ferguson

The following members of DCFS Executive staff were in attendance:

Pat Page, Larry Graves, Paul Lucas, Sandi Doherty, Cecile Blucker

The following individuals were also in attendance:

Rex Jones, Mona Davis, Bob Sebourn, Christina Lynn, Gray Turner, Charlotte Tubbs, Dennis Zeller, Debbie Shiell, Marilyn Carter Counts

Handouts Distributed:

Agenda

DCFS Advisory Board – Purpose and Function

DCFS – Transforming to Excellence – Preliminary Draft for Discussion Purpose Only
Dated April 2008

Minutes:

Pat Page, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services, welcomed every one to the meeting and asked for introductions of all individuals present.

Pat Page discussed the handout “DCFS Advisory Board” and what function the board should have for the Division. During the discussion of the section “Functioning of the Board” a suggestion was made to add to the last item “or as board brings forward.”

It was discussed in the past that the Advisory Board formed committees that actually did work in particular program areas. Pat expressed that the board should not have to do the work of the Division, although their efforts are appreciated and they are welcome to participate in Programs Improvement Committees (PIP).

Connie Hickman Tanner and Jennifer Ferguson mentioned to the Board that the Supreme Court Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the Advisory Board focus on one issue

where actual progress could be made. It was recommended that the issue should be staffing. Pate Page supported that idea as long as the Board would be available for other general advice.

Discussion was held as to what the board could assist with that would have the greatest impact to the Division and it was a consensus of the group that work regarding staffing would have the greatest impact. From getting fully staffed, moral, assessment of quality/mix of staffing and maintaining consistency in field staffing would impact the division and would help to move the agency forward.

The Board agreed to adopt the single focus of staffing for the present but also to be available to the Division for advice on other issues needed.

Gary Ewart, a member of the Worker Retention and Recruitment workgroup, stated the group should have a formal report within two months. He discussed what data the workgroup was reviewing and what aspects were being reviewed. He will share the results of the findings with the board at the next meeting.

It was noted by board members that recruitment includes training and support along with the proper selection of applicants. A suggestion was made to perhaps have an applicant write a case plan to gauge their knowledge base.

Some of the other items of discussion regarding this topic: lack of professionalism, competitiveness between workers, inappropriate relationships between co-workers and how these impede productive client service; professionalism and teamwork missing; workers feeling they are being reported on by CASA staff, misconception of CASA and DCFS relationship; staff feeling beat down, expecting professionalism from the staff but not always treating them with professionalism; DCFS is an embattled structure due to stress, staff shortages, physical environment they work in and lack of providing what the staff need to do their job; staff not seeing fruits of their requests or ideas – need to make it happen vs. just talk about it; breaking down state government barriers that impede delivery of service.

There was discussion on the recommended evaluation of the agency organization structure – is it right? Pat discussed the National Resource assessment of central office staffing structure, the review of supervisor personnel and the front line staff upcoming review. She said the organizational assessment would be sent to board members.

Updates of the Child and Family Service Review, National Convening on Permanence and NGA Policy Academy were given. Debbie Shiell discussed the upcoming PIP meeting to be held on May 5th in which key strategies to address staffing and service array would be discussed. Discussed lack of depth in the field due to staffing turnover. She stated a final report had not been received on the CFSR but stated that DCFS was in general agreement with the findings. It was noted the Division needs consistency in practice and should look at those who do things right and look at what makes it work. Supervision was identified as a critical issue in the review.

There were questions asked regarding the decrease in the funding allotment for 2009 and what that would mean for the Division. Rex Jones discussed the decrease in funding and advocated the board not waste time on things that might not happen but focus on fundamental needs for the agency and what it would need in the biennial. Discussed the board look at what could be done to have a quality agency but stay within the financial restrictions. Discussion of Area 1 getting Wal-Mart grants to help with incidental items, looking at accomplishing things in a different manner; impact of System of Care – recruit more homes would decrease moves of kids into Residential treatment facilities which would decrease impact to Medicaid budget along with DCFS budget and DYS. Need for more funding was discussed but there was also a need to do other things as well. Some board members felt really strong regarding a 100% staffing level along with having a pool of additional workers who could fill in when vacancies occur. The issue of all staff having cell phones was discussed.

Pat Page distributed the handout “Transforming to Excellence” and discussed with the board that it was only a draft and for discussion only – not a final copy. Discussion surrounding this handout was: with a possible decrease of \$9 million where would the division cut. Rex stated the department would look at internal resources and discussed the impact of removing clients too soon and the relationship to finance. There was discussion regarding the “soft freeze” in 2008 along with counseling, drug treatment and psychological evaluations providers not being paid. Pat asked the board member to get specifics to her. Other discussion was more specific to not providing wrap around services in the beginning which resulted in our bringing the children into care. Connie expressed had it not been for her review of cases and pulling those cases the Division would have been assessed numerous No Reasonable Efforts. It was noted that staff are in reactive mode vs. proactive mode. Also mentioned was the philosophy of care and the legal side of removing clients too early, judges placing kids in care who are illegal aliens and the financial impact as all services must be funded with state general revenue, lack of Intensive Family Services in state, mental health needs and the impact on removal of clients.

Next Meeting:

Set for July 18th, 2008 – 10:00 am – 12:00 noon

Conference B – 1st floor