

**Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council
Executive Committee Meeting
Friday, May 16, 2008
BMCW Administrative Site
Minutes**

Present: Denise Revels Robinson, Pastor Archie Ivy, Judge Michael Skierawski, Debra Blanks, Reggie Bicha, Dr. Earnestine Willis, Colleen Ellingson, David Hoffman, Judge Mary Triggiano, Julius Agara, Dr. Michelle Urban, Janel Hines.

Excused: Linda Davis

Guests: Wanda Montgomery, Lance Jones, Cathy Swessel, Ken Taylor - DCFS, John Touhy – DCFS/BRL, David Sorenson – DCFS/BRL, Scott Pagelow representing Frank Gaunt, Suzanne Zipperer, Dan Wendt, Diane Welsh, George Gabel, Robert Hill, Mark Testa.

CEO Updates

Cathy Swessel of Children's Service Society of Wisconsin distributed the Foster Care and Adoption Recruitment Report for January through April of 2008.

Monthly Child Death/Egregious Incident Report, Denise Revels Robinson

Ms. Revels Robinson reported one new child death during the month of April. Information on four previously reported child deaths was updated.

The group discussed the following issues regarding the child deaths.

- The Committee would like to receive information on the Medical Examiner's report.
- The BMCW should provide aggregate information on causes of death not child abuse and/or neglect related.
- The Children's Health Alliance and the Department of Justice gather information on child deaths in Wisconsin. Data collected from other sources could help the Bureau identify emerging issues and threats not related to child abuse and neglect.
- The Bureau can be clearer regarding reporting on children as part of an open case as opposed to a case being opened in response to a child death or injury.
- Milwaukee has the highest infant mortality rate in the country for children of color. Racial disparity is an issue for our state. DHFS is actively working statewide to improve health conditions. The Partnership Council should be a partner in this effort. Someone from public health should be invited to a future meeting to provide an update on statewide efforts.

Minutes

The minutes from the April 24, 2008 meeting were approved as read.

Wisconsin Subsidized Guardianship, Westat Evaluation Team.

Westat Evaluation Team members, George Gabel, Robert Hill and Mark Testa presented their interim evaluation report. The report includes results through November, 2007. John Touhy provided information from the Department's perspective.

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The Subsidized Guardianship program operates under a federal Title IV-E waiver to provide ongoing payments to legal guardians of children in foster care. The federal government granted 32 waivers to 27 states. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted waiver authority to Wisconsin in September 2004. State enabling legislation to clarify the use of guardianship as a permanency option and establish the subsidized guardianship payment program was approved as part of the 2005-2007 state budget bill, 2005 Wis. Act 25.

The Subsidized Guardianship Program is part of a comprehensive Guardianship Permanency Initiative to improve permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home care by promoting the use of permanent legal guardianship as a permanency option. Subsidized guardianship is an important movement nationally. Senator Grassley of Iowa will be introducing a bill in support of Subsidized Guardianship the week of May 19th.

The Committee had an opportunity to provide input and ask questions. The group discussed the need to move more children into Subsidized Guardianship and to add a phase to use the data to take a comparative look at the lives of the children served.

A resolution was proposed to send a letter from the Partnership Council to the Governor asking him to support the Subsidized Guardianship and to add a phase to take a comparative look at the children served. The resolution also proposed a press release proclaiming the good news in the Subsidized Guardianship Interim report. The release should include congratulations to Denise Revels Robinson and the Partnership Council for their leadership in this process.

A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to proceed with the proposed resolution.

View from the Bench, Judge Mary Triggiano

Judge Triggiano, BMCW, partner agencies, UWM and the private bar have been working together to mobilize mini training opportunities. Issues identified include:

- Subsidized guardianship
- Placement with relative caregivers.
- Protective Capacity
- Women with babies in substance abuse treatment

Judge Triggiano is working with the Chief Judge on a unified Family and Children's Court pilot. This pilot will allow Judges to use information gathered in Family Court to dismiss CHIPS petitions. Each case will be reviewed by Judge Triggiano.

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Members of the judiciary met with the co-chairs of the health committee and agreed to ask at emergency detention hearings whether a child has a scheduled health assessment.

Safety Plan Update

Suzanne Zipperer presented an update of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Safety Plan. A revised draft of the Safety Scorecard was distributed.

BMCW / DCFS Updates

BMCW Deputy Director – Denise Revels Robinson

Interviews for the Deputy Director position were held on May 12. One candidate advanced to the next round.

Department of Children and Families - Reggie Bicha

- We are 45 days away from a new department and evolutionary changes for the Bureau.
- The Bureau will become part of the new Division of Safety and Permanence.
- There will be a shift in our mission from intervention to prevention and a focus on policy and delivery instead of reporting.
- Reporting and regulation will move to the Office of Performance and Quality Assurance. This will allow the Bureau to focus on high quality policy and programs for children and families. The Partnership Council will continue to get information on performance and quality assurance.
- New leadership for the Department of Children and Families will be announced soon.

Pastor Ivy announced a special Executive Committee meeting on June 4 from noon until 2:00. Lunch will be provided.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00.

Respectfully submitted

Gail Zellner

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