

**Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council
Executive Committee Meeting
Friday, February 15, 2008
BMCW Administrative Site
Minutes
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Members Present: Pastor Archie Ivy, Judge Mary Triggiano, David Hoffmann, Janel Hines, Denise Revels Robinson, Julius Agara, Jennie Dorsey, Milwaukee County Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr. and Linda Davis.

Also Present: William Fiss, Diane Welsh, Frank Gaunt, Cathy Swessel, Wanda Montgomery, and Dr. Michelle Urban.

Pastor Ivy opened the meeting with greetings and introduction of meeting attendees.

Announcements

Pastor Ivy and Denise Revels Robinson announced that William Fiss, “the god parent and guardian angel of the Bureau”, is retiring on March 31 after 36 years of State service. The Committee expressed their gratitude for Bill’s work with the Bureau.

Minutes

Minutes from the January 18, 2008 meeting were approved as corrected (spelling of Dianne Jenkins’ name).

Closed Session

A motion was made, seconded and approved unanimously for the Executive Committee of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council to convene in closed session, pursuant to Wis. Stat. sec. 19.85(1)(g), for the purpose of conferring with legal counsel from the Department of Health and Family Services regarding the Jeanine B. v. Doyle Settlement.

The Executive Committee resumed open session at 12:45 p.m.

View from the Bench - Judge Triggiano

Children’s Court has been focusing on visitation in hopes of developing a better type of “up front” plan for families. Judge Triggiano and the Committee discussed visitation issues:

- The better the visitation plan, the earlier reunification can happen.
- We need to do better on the “front end”.
- The Bureau and Judge Triggiano will be meeting with the District Attorney regarding protective capacity.
- We do not have enough foster parents who live near biological parents. How do we deal with distance in visitation and/or placements?
- Currently working with Meta House on a pilot for keeping infants and mothers together in treatment. The pilot is based on a California Model. A group recently met and anyone interested is welcome to join. Funding is an issue. The group is examining ways to blend funding to cover costs. Francine Feinberg has technical assistance funding to help with program design.
- The Safe Mom/Safe Babies grant at Mt. Sinai hospital for domestic violence services may be a resource. It is a planning grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield to figure out how to work with community partners. Blue Cross Blue Shield funding should be explored.

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Workforce Issues – Frank Gaunt, Wanda Montgomery and Cathy Swessel

The CEOs from LaCausa, CFCP (Children’s Family and Community Partnership), CSSW (Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin) and members of the Executive Committee discussed the issues regarding staff turnover and retention:

- What does staff turnover mean for our families?
- The problem of staff retention and turnover involves many issues. We may need to start over and be creative in finding solutions.
- There seems to be a lack of understanding by the “persons who hold the purse strings” about the complexity of the jobs of Bureau workers. The intensity and volume of child welfare work is greater in the urban community and needs to be acknowledged. We need to keep our State legislators informed. The Partnership Council is sending a response to the letter from fellow Council members, State Senator Alberta Darling and State Representatives Suzanne Jeskewitz and Tamara Grigsby, regarding their concerns about workforce, recruitment and retention issues. The Partnership Council will work to find a funding stream to help in this area.
- How do we define “stay” in relationship to a job? Need to hear from staff on the job as well as getting the perspective of students and workers outside Milwaukee County. Find out from front line staff what works for them.
- The media has an impact on staff morale. Workers need to feel that the community has respect for the work they do and that they are competent at their jobs.
- The Bureau tends to attract younger workers. How do we approach the issue of well-intended, committed workers who feel, “I’m young, I’m mobile and I’m trying this out”? Need to be looking at ways to attract older, more experienced workers to the Bureau as well.
- The Bureau may not be able to solve the problem of staff turnover, but needs to ensure the continuity of services and family care no matter what.

Monthly Child Death Report, Denise Revels Robinson

There have been no child deaths since the last Executive Committee meeting.

UPDATES

Teen Suicide Training, Denise Revels Robinson

Denise Revels Robinson reported that BMCW and the Bureau of Regulation and Licensing recently co-sponsored a training session for group home and residential treatment center staff regarding teen suicide. The response was “overwhelming” and helped to open up dialogue with staff of these facilities. Dr. Urban has sent a letter to the training staff thanking them for the good job they did.

Safety Plan Update – Suzanne Zipperer

Suzanne Zipperer provided an update on the Safety Plan. Suzanne’s update was followed by questions and discussion.

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- IA training is complete and whole segments of other areas are complete as well. The next phase will be Safety Services training.
- The team is rethinking “fit and willing”. Fit and willing applies to the assessment of relatives.
- We are in the process of identifying a target population regarding child safety training.
- The role of the Partnership Council is expanding.
- The CART process is being reviewed.
- What is the target population for the Community Response Pilot? Janel Hines is meeting with people in the community and will forward information via e-mail as it becomes available.
- The medical task force is on hold.
- Timelines appear to be appropriate

CEO Updates

Wanda Montgomery reported that CFCP (Children’s Family and Community Partnership, Inc.), working with Children’s Hospital, has developed a Critical Incident Stress Management program for its staff. The program makes trained staff available to Provide support to workers who are involved in egregious incidents or stressful situations. This program is available to workers in addition to the Employee Assistance Program.

Cathy Swessel reported that CSSW (Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin) continues to work on its recruitment of foster and adoptive families. CSSW is advocating for assessment homes and working on finding foster and adoptive parents to talk to the media in conjunction with Foster Care Month in April.

Frank Gaunt discussed the continuing issue of staff turnover. During the period from 2006 through 2007 turnover at LaCausa has almost doubled. According to Mr. Gaunt, although we can see the evolution of how practice has improved, the area of staff retention continues to be a roadblock for the Bureau. There seem to be no basic reasons why turnover continues to occur despite efforts by LaCausa to work closely with new incoming staff. The work of Bureau caseworkers needs to be acknowledged. Suzanne Zipperer will work on coordinating a regular recognition of caseworkers by the Partnership Council.

Subcommittees

Each of the Partnership Council subcommittees will prepare a bi-annual report. The reports should be submitted to Janel Hines by March 29th. The reports will be shared at with Executive Committee and full Council in April.

Meeting adjourned at 1:50.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Zellner