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Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL
Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services
635 North 26th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53233

Friday, January 27, 2017
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Approved by the Council on March 24, 2017

1. Call to Order, Welcome, Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mark Mertens. Introductions were made around the room and attendance was taken.

Members Present: Mark Mertens, Tony Shields, Mallory O'Brien, Christine Holmes, Veneshia McKinney-Whitson, Mary Triggiano, Delvin Crawford, Alberta Darling, Willie Johnson, Jr.

Members Absent: Steve Taylor, Libby Mueller, Monica Young, Susan Gadacz, LaTonya Johnson, Jocasta Zamarripa, Jessie Rodriguez, Steve Gilbertson (Associate), Maria Rodriguez (Associate).

9 of 16 members were present, constituting a quorum.

The Chair notified the Council of the ways in which the meeting was publicly noticed:

“First, the notice of the meeting was published in the Thursday, January 26, 2017 edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Second, the notice was faxed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on Thursday, January 26, 2017. The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on Monday, January 23, 2017. Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPS building at 635 N. 26th St. the morning of Thursday, January 26, 2017. This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).”

2. Committee Staffing

- a. Chair Mertens asked for the membership of the Critical Incident Committee (CIC) to be reviewed and considered. After discussion, Willie Johnson made a motion

to appoint Libby Mueller to the CIC. Christine Holmes seconded the motion and the council voted unanimous approval by voice.

- b. Membership of the Health and Education Committee (HEC) was discussed. Christine Holmes made a motion to appoint Veneshia McKinney-Whitson to the HEC. Mary Triggiano seconded the motion and the council voted unanimous approval by voice.
- c. Willie Johnson, Jr. reported that there are currently only two people on the CIC. Question was raised as to whether members of the committee need to be Partnership Council members, or if public volunteers could be considered. Chief Legal Counsel Randall Keys opined that it is not necessary to be a member of the Partnership Council in order to be a part of a committee.
- d. Alberta Darling volunteered to become a member of the CIC. Willie Johnson, Jr. moved to appoint Alberta Darling to the CIC, his motion was seconded by Mary Triggiano, and the council voted unanimous approval by voice.

3. Bylaws Review

- a. A discussion occurred regarding potentially changing the definition of the Partnership Council “conducting business.” Chief Legal Counsel Randall Keys cited “the Supreme Court in *Showers*” indicates that information gathering for the council’s purposes is still “conducting business,” and because “conducting business” is defined in state statute its meaning cannot be modified by a change of the council’s bylaws.
- b. Christine Holmes moved that an ad-hoc (temporary) Rules Committee be created for the purpose of reviewing the Partnership Council’s bylaws and any related policies and recommending changes to the Partnership Council for adoption. After the propriety of this motion was deemed in order under Article V, Section 5.01(c) of the bylaws, the motion was modified to incorporate appointment of volunteers Christine Holmes, Mark Mertens, and Tony Shields to serve on the Ad-Hoc committee. Mark Mertens seconded the motion. The motion was passed by the council on a unanimous voice vote.
- c. Further consideration of changes to the bylaws was laid on the table indefinitely and without objection, in anticipation of the formation of and report from the newly created ad-hoc Rules Committee.

4. Review and Approval of Past Minutes

- a. Christine Holmes moved approval of the minutes for the September 2016 Partnership Council meeting.

- i. David Whelan requested that the council consider amending the minutes to make the following underlined change:
“However, placement stability remains a challenge. Thirteen percent of children in out of home care are still experiencing four or more placements during the time designated in the Settlement Agreement. Attorney Thompson also noted that children in care 24 or more months is increasing, and that the percentage noted in the report is an artificial measure. The calculation used in the report is based on the number of children (approximately 5533) who were in out of home care in 2002. Using the current number of kids in care today (approximately 2000) the percentage is 34 percent.”
 - ii. Christine Holmes modified the motion to amend and approve the minutes as stated. Mark Mertens seconded the motion and it was approved by the council on a unanimous voice vote.
- b. Christine Holmes moved to approve the minutes for the November 2016 Partnership Council meeting. Mark Mertens seconded the motion and it was approved by the council on a unanimous voice vote.

5. From the Division

- a. Kevin Boland, Deputy Administrator of the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) was introduced to the Council as new to the position of Deputy Administrator.
 - i. Updates on filling positions: Currently there are no vacancies in the Access Section. There are a total of 91 Initial Assessment worker positions and 13 are vacant. DMCPS has 7 staff in training and 7 new trainees who started on January 23, 2017.
 - ii. Update on placement stability: DMCPS is looking closely at placement stability, which is currently at 87%, but which needs to be at 90% or better to meet the requirements of the settlement agreement.
 - iii. In Access the majority of calls are answered in the DMCPS building without having to go to the answering service.
 - iv. The Initial Assessment Bureau (IAB) has started recruitment for a new IAB Director.
 - v. The IAB has been taking a close look at the assignment process, as one of the initiatives to get cases closed sooner. The goal in the assignment process is to make the assignment procedure as transparent as possible. Any worker is now able to see where they are in the case assignment rotation. Access staff are also able to help with cases as availability permits.
 - vi. Transitioning of cases to ongoing agencies is going well.

- b. A question was asked on whether or not there are any requirements to get back to a referral source. Kevin Boland explained that a letter goes out but DMCPD is unable to confirm to third parties what happens in a case due to privacy laws. Council members expressed concern about what may happen to children over a weekend if they do not know whether DMCPD has taken action, or what kind of action DMCPD takes on a referral to 220-SAFE. Some members said they have never received such a letter, so if they see the child again in the context of providing medical care or education, they do not know if a safety concern ever materialized. Chief Legal Counsel Randall Keys discussed 48.981(3)(6m) which indicates that a reporter may make a written request to the agency for information regarding what action, if any, was taken to protect the health and welfare of the child. Various council members voiced opinion that there should be consistency in sending out letters to reporters.

6. Mission and Vision – Partnership Council Duties

- a. Mark Mertens asked the Council what areas they thought the Council should focus on. The discussion resulted in the following thoughts/suggestions:
 1. Leadership training, building relationships.
 2. Investigating sex trafficking
 3. If the partnership council is not actually tied to a lawsuit, but to the community and state relationship, what can be done to foster that relationship?
 4. Parent initiatives to help educate the community. “Know better, do better.”
 5. Are there any efforts to see teen prostitutes as victims instead of as criminals?
 6. Initiatives to help young mothers and fathers become educated on what an unsafe situation is – perhaps in high school.
 7. DMCPD Communications Director, Joe Scialfa, suggested that members check out the DMCPD website for links that are available to families.
 8. A different community response is needed. Families don’t always need to be reported; some families just need help.
 9. Spend energy keeping kids out of the system. Need a “system” of prevention.
 10. Promote early intervention.
 11. Need to be strategic about looking at data. Are children better off as a result of the money being spent? Money in the budget needs to be used effectively. Does the Partnership Council know what the Secretary requested for the upcoming budget? The Partnership Council should look at this again after the budget has been released. The Council would like to see more information regarding the budget at the March meeting.
 12. What are we doing well? How can we build on this?
 13. Child welfare needs to be more engaging with families. Perception is that child welfare is against families. Child welfare needs to be seen as something that can help families.
 14. Work on developing a link between state and community agencies.

15. How do we engage the community and for what reason?
 16. The Health and Education Committee would like to see more representation from DMCPs at its meetings. There is a belief that DMCPs has not tackled education in the same way it has tackled health issues.
 17. Child welfare always needs to improve, but let's not forget our progress.
 18. What are existing resources that can be used to strengthen our community?
 19. The Division has information on zip codes with needs for services. This information should be used to provide services to areas most in need (zip codes 06, 05, and 33).
 20. Contact the child Abuse Prevention Board to find out where their focus is. What is their funding for prevention and intervention?
 21. Representatives of foster parent groups might be appointed to a seat on the Council.
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- b. Mary Triggiano suggested that this conversation is committee work and should be taken up by a committee.
 - c. Mark Mertens suggested that at a future meeting of the council, the Stability Workgroup be able to make a presentation.
 - d. Willie Johnson, Jr. asked that DMCPs staff be present at the meetings and be willing to take on Partnership Council initiatives and help the council to follow through on them.

7. Community Forum and Concluding Remarks

- a. SaintA announced that the Grid MKE App launch, a resource for youth aging out of care, to help connect with housing, healthcare, and other resources, would be unveiled next week and everyone was invited to attend the launch.

Having concluded its business, Chair Mertens asked unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting and there were no objections. The meeting was adjourned.

These minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council on March 24, 2017.