

Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council
Friday, September 19, 2014
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Members Present: Linda Davis, Sue Gadacz, Kim Kampschroer, Chris Holmes, Dr. Earnestine Willis, Representative LaTonya Johnson, Steve Gilbertson, Colleen Ellingson, Judge Mary Triggiano, State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd, Tom Wanta, Tony Shields, Pat Kenny for DA John Chisholm

Eric Thompson of Children's Rights attended the meeting. Linda Davis opened the meeting with greetings and introductions.

Meeting Notice

The notice of the meeting was published in the Monday, September 15, 2014 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 Friday, September 15, 2014. Finally, the notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on Tuesday, September 9, 2014. This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).

Opening Remarks

Linda Davis offered congratulations to Judge Triggiano on being named the "Jurist of the Year."

Creation of Ad Hoc Budget Committee

A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to establish an Ad Hoc Budget Committee to include Partnership Council members Tom Wanta, Linda Davis, Sue Gadacz, and Deanna Alexander.

Presentation of Settlement Agreement

Mark Sarvela of the Bureau of Performance Management presented the latest Settlement Agreement Report. The meeting attendees had the opportunity for input and questions.

Response from Children's Rights

Eric Thompson from Children's Rights provided the Response to the Settlement Agreement Report. His remarks focused on systemic challenges, good practices and recruitment. Systemic challenges referenced included: staff turnover which remains a chronic problem and significant challenge- both in Wisconsin and at the national level; and, significant increases in

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caseload size that have occurred so far in 2014. He noted that it is too early to tell if the numbers regarding maltreatment in care are part of a trend.

Good practices that should be recognized and built upon include the rate of adoption compares favorably with other child welfare agencies.

Recruitment issues that were highlighted included turnover. He suggested that we consider reaching out to academic partners for ideas on recruitment. There also may be generational issues to consider in how we are recruiting. Traditional ways of recruiting may not work for the new generation. Raising the pay rate of entry level staff was also a suggestion that might improve recruitment.

Announcement of Community Meetings about BMCW Leadership

Community meetings will be held on October 8 and 29 from noon until 2:00. Locations are still to be determined. The community will be asked for input regarding the attributes of the new Director for the Bureau.

State of the Bureau,

Mary Pat Bohn, Acting Director for the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare provided updates on several activities.

- The Bureau is continuing to evaluate staffing needs for Access and Initial Assessment.
- Also looking at After Hours process.
- Thirteen new Initial Assessment Specialists will be starting on September 22; 8 of these are pool codes. This leaves two pool code vacancies.
- Since hiring staff in September 2013, the Bureau has been recruiting and hiring every 3-4 months.
- Work on the backlog continues. In June there were 2,900 cases in backlog. To date, there are just over 1800 cases in backlog.
- Looking at Initial Assessment Specialist – Advanced positions to assist supervisors and provide technical assistance/training to current staff.
- The Bureau's new Community Liaison, Jessica Kotsakis, has been hired and has been contacting universities and colleges to help us with retention.

From the Agencies

Professional Services Group

Mr. Moeller reported that the Placement Referral Unit has 14 staff working two shifts, and on call from 11:00 pm to 7:00 am.

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW)

Amy Herbst reported about agency activities of CHW including the following information.

- The maximum caseloads size for staff are 25 children.
- For workers with less than one year experience maximum caseload is 15 children.
- They are working on ways to ramp up their hiring of staff

SaintA

Ann Leinfelder Grove provided SaintA's update including the following information.

- There have been 355 applicants for positions since January 2014, 68 have been hired so far. July candidates will be starting to take cases soon.
- They are looking at mentoring position which would be non-case carrying workers to support staff and help enhance their skills.
- SaintA has developed a "Five Pillars of Family Stability" tool which will help staff assess the needs of their families. The Five Pillars include education, housing, employment, health care and caring connections.

From The Bench

Judge Mary Triggiano reported that the courts have been receiving a lot of Initial Assessment cases, and it seems that the right cases are coming to the courts. She also made the following comments.

- The Courts DA's office and BMCW need to act collaboratively, including the need to communicate more regularly, including talking on a daily basis, if necessary.
- Stakeholders meetings have been reinstated to assist in improving communication.
- It is important to look at trends, including the volume of cases, inability to make improvements on particular cases, and other issues that affect the child welfare population of families such as homelessness and related issues.
- Turning the turnover trend around would help everyone.
- We need to work together to deal with capacity issues.

DCF Updates

Secretary Eloise Anderson reported that the Department is looking into the possibility of changing the Bureau's status from bureau to division.

Fredi Bove, DSP Administrator thanked Mary Pat Bohn for her strong leadership during the current transition period. Other updates were:

- As of August 1, youth ages 18-21 will be allowed to continue in out of home care if they are still in school and have an established Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Data requests from last meeting will be sent out via e-mail.

State Biennial Budget Update

Each agency submits its budget request on September 15. At that time, the Governor reviews the requests and puts forward his budget in February. The Legislature makes its decision in July.

- In the Department budget proposal, the Department is requesting:
 - o permanent funding for Case Aide positions:
 - o increased funding for after-hours shifts to improve compensation levels:
 - o an increase in block grant funding to non-Milwaukee counties to strengthen core child welfare services; and,
 - o statewide increase in rates for foster and kinship care for 2016 and 2017.

Committee Reports

Health Committee

- The Committee met with the director of children's mental health services.
- Discussed preventing root causes of mental health issues.
- Need to take a public health approach to mental health.

Community Forum

Community members expressed concern that not enough time was left during this meeting for the public to discuss the backlog project. The backlog will be put on the agenda for the next meeting in November.

Additional issues and questions raised included the following.

- How many cases currently in backlog process needed a 24 hour response time?
- Partnership Council needs to be more transparent.
- There are better ways to look at retention, e.g., should we consider meeting with universities with accredited program to get their input?
- The importance of social workers in the child welfare system need to be considered as efforts are developed to improve staff retention efforts.
- What is the Bureau going to do to increase morale and retention that has not been done before?
 - o BMCW has changed the job classification – diverse backgrounds of new staff are benefitting us internally.
 - o Staff has received pay increases.
 - o The Department is requesting increased compensation for afterhours.
- Compensation is not the issue that is driving staff out. Expectations and lack of support are part of the problem.
- How are unanswered calls to 220-SAFE handled?
- How are re-entry referrals screened in?
- Meeting minutes need to be posted so they are available to the community.

Respectfully submitted

Gail Zellner