

## **Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council**

**Friday, September 30, 2016**

**BMCW 635 N. 26 St.**

### **Minutes**

**Page 1 of 4**

#### **Members Present**

Mark Mertens, Mallory O'Brien, Judge Mary Triggiano, Christine Holmes, Carey Courtney, Dr. Veneshia McKinney-Whitson, County Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., Delvyn Crawford, Rachel Keith for Senator Darling, Libby Mueller representing the District Attorney's Office, Susan Gadacz, and State Representative Latonya Johnson.

Mr. Mertens called the meeting to order and read the meeting notice:

First, the notice of the meeting was published in the Thursday, September 29, 2016 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 Wednesday, September 28, 2016. The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on Wednesday, September 28, 2016. Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPs building at 635 N. 26<sup>th</sup> St. the morning of Thursday, September 29, 2016.

#### **Minutes**

A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the minutes from the July 29, 2016 Partnership Council Meeting.

Community member, Linda Davis noted that in March, 2016 the Ad Hoc Budget Committee submitted a list of budget recommendations to the Department for the 2017-18 budget period. Per state statues, a response is required within 60 days of submission of the recommendations. It was explained that a letter dated July 27, 2016 was submitted by Secretary Anderson acknowledging receipt of the recommendations. This letter was not read at the July 30 Partnership Council meeting. Later in the meeting it was further explained by Chief Legal Counsel, Randall Keys, that the budget process has several timelines. Therefore, a specific response may not be possible at the current time as there may be items still on the table.

#### **Presentation of the Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement Data for January through June 2016, Hannah Knouse of the Bureau of Performance Management**

The original Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement required that DMCPs (BMCW) achieve specific outcomes in 18 areas regarding permanency, safety and wellbeing of children in out of home care. To date, Placement Stability is the only remaining enforceable provision of the Settlement Agreement. According to this provision, children in DMCPs custody shall have three or fewer placements during the previous 36 months of their current episode in DMCPs custody. The performance standard for this provision is 90 percent. The year-to-date Placement Stability performance is 87 percent, which does not meet the standard and is down one percentage point for the same time period last year. Per the Settlement Agreement, DMCPs must meet the performance standards for two consecutive six-month periods in order to be released from a provision.

**Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council**

**Friday, September 30, 2016**

**BMCW 635 N. 26 St.**

**Minutes**

**Page 2 of 4**

Data regarding provisions that are no longer enforceable was also presented as part of the Settlement Agreement Report.

**Response to the Settlement Agreement Data, Eric Thompson, Plaintiff's Counsel, Children's Rights, Inc.**

Attorney Thompson acknowledged that safety and well-being continue to be a priority and children are safe.

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.

**Provisions No Longer Enforceable**

Health screen numbers have noticeably improved, with numbers for annual medical and dental exams heading back in the right direction. Caseworkers are seeing kids at an average of 98 percent.

The number of children who are adopted within 24 months is 32 percent. DMCPs can take pride in this number.

The percentage for children who are reunified within twelve months is at 57 percent, with the standard being greater than 71 percent. This is the lowest number in years.

Average caseload size numbers are encouraging, but almost half of all ongoing caseworkers still have 15 or more kids on their caseloads. Caseload size is something that needs to be watched.

Although turnover rate numbers are down, Attorney Thompson cautioned about being overly optimistic. The percentage of 18 percent reported in the Settlement Data is only for six months. At this rate, by the end of the year, the turnover rate would be 36 percent.

Overall, kids are safe and this is good; but it needs to be determined why kids are staying in out-of-home care past the three-year mark.

**From the Division, Robin Joseph DMCPs Administrator**

**Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council**

**Friday, September 30, 2016**

**BMCW 635 N. 26 St.**

**Minutes**

**Page 3 of 4**

Overall, Dr. Joseph sees a positive trend at DMCPs. The Division is taking a positive approach to enforcing stability of children and families and are working with partner agencies on an in-depth monitoring tool and more collaboration.

Ongoing Services Section Chief, Deanna Alexander and the new DMCPs Policy Initiative Advisor will be working with DMCPs partners to smooth interagency relationships and collaborations.

There is an urgent need for placement options that work. Limited placement options are really daunting. DMCPs is working on a First Placement workgroup that will be looking at systemic issues around the first placement for children entering out of home care. The group will be focusing on specific placements: teens, children who have been trafficked, medically complex/medically fragile children and children who are behaviorally challenging.

In an effort to improve on placement stability, DCF has also been looking at strategies from other states, and how these states work with difficult to place children. The Department of Children and Families has also been working with the Department of Health Services, Winnebago Mental Health Institute and experts in children's services regarding placement stability.

As part of case practice, the Division is taking a look at placement disruption issues. Caregivers need to be supported. Caregivers need suggestions and techniques to help understand what kids in their care need and how they can help them. When a disruption does occur, second placements need to be staffed aggressively.

DMCPs is working on a CAN Assessment Measure to get an accurate assessment of a child's level of needs that will have a direct impact on the stability of the child.

Currently there is a three percent decrease in the number of children entering Out of Home care.

Staff have begun doing trial reunifications with families. During a trial reunification the child can be back in the home for 93 days while the case remains open and is followed by an ongoing worker. The trial reunification can be extended only once. If necessary, the child can go back to the foster home.

The Department of Milwaukee Child Protective Services is filling in its management infrastructure as part of the move from a Bureau to a Division. DMCPs is working on getting point people in place which will also allow the Division to have more people to go to meetings. People filling these positions come from various backgrounds, and some have been promoted from other positions in DMCPs.

DMCPs has hired nine new Initial Assessment Specialists who will be starting training in October. Some current IA Specialists have been promoted to other positions.

**Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council**

**Friday, September 30, 2016**

**BMCW 635 N. 26 St.**

**Minutes**

**Page 4 of 4**

Overdue cases are under 500 and moving down. There are currently no overdue cases for 2015 and none for January and February of this year.

Question was asked if new workers get new cases. New IA Specialists have been working with overdue cases. Workers have one or two cases and work with supervisors and co-workers. These cases are mostly completed and need to be closed. Having new staff work on overdue files allows for another set of eyes on the case information and allow more interaction with other IA Specialists.

Question was asked about what strategies partner agencies have been using to reduce worker turnover. Agencies reported that they have adjusted the way training is done and note that the Training Partnership is a good partner in this area. Agencies have been creating environments where workers can meet their personal mission. Strength of supervisors and implementing teams of mentors has also helped with staff turnover.

A team approach to continuity of care is being worked on. Cases should be staffed with teams who already know a case and are able to step in with a worker leaves.

Families have been able to participate in AODA Court and Healthy Infant Court.

It was announced that the Families First Prevention Services Act of 2016 died in the U. S. Senate. DSP Administrator Fredi Bove had already started workgroups about Families First would impact our families in anticipation of the Act passing.

**Closing Remarks**

In his closing remarks, Mark Mertens noted that when it comes to reunification and placement stability, percentages indicate that the population is shifting. We need to be looking at how many kids ages 12 and over are also involved in the juvenile justice system and how we can better meet their treatment and overall needs. However, there is optimism about meeting the final existing provision of the settlement agreement.

A community member raised the question regarding staff turnover and promotions. Doctor Joseph explained that promoting from within allows us to keep knowledge of the system internal and keeps us from losing the expertise of the people we promote. A request was made to get information on DMCPs position changes for the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Zellner