

MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL
Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services
Friday, September 24, 2021
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the meeting was conducted by Zoom rather than in-person. The Zoom meeting information was made available on the DCF DMCPs Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council webpage on Monday, September 20, 2021 (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>).

Members Present

At the request of Chairperson Christine Holmes, a roll call was taken to identify the Partnership Council members present for the meeting.

Present were Ms. Libby Mueller, Ms. Carmen Pitre, Ms. Christine Holmes, Mr. Tony Shields, Ms. Santana Lee, Mr. Victor Barnett, Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr., Supervisor Patti Logsdon, Ms. Bria Grant, Senator LaTonya Johnson, Senator Alberta Darling, Judge Laura Crivello, Supervisor Sequanna Taylor

A quorum of the Council was present on the Zoom meeting.

Notice of Meeting

Chairperson Christine Holmes reviewed compliance with Open Meetings Law requirements

First, the notice of the meeting was published on the DCF and DOA websites on September 20, 2021, and in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on September 22, 2021.

Second, the notice was faxed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on September 17, 2021.

The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on September 20, 2021.

Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPs building at 635 N. 26th St. on September 20, 2021.

This satisfies the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. § 19.84(1)(b).

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Partnership Council Member Appointments

Christine Holmes expressed her gratitude of being the newly appointed chairperson of the Partnership Council. She is the president at Penfield Center and has served on the Council for 20 years.

Ms. Santana Lee, a Milwaukee County resident, has fostered and adopted family members. She is passionate about the foster community and child welfare.

Representative David Bowen was appointed by the Assembly Minority leader and will be taking over for former Representative Jocasta Zamarripa. Ms. Holmes thanked former Representative Zamarripa her for the service while on the Council.

Review and Approval of Past Minutes, Christine Holmes, Chair

A motion was made by Ms. Libby Mueller to approve minutes from June 11, 2021 meeting. Judge Laura Crivello seconded to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

Jeanine B. Settlement Update, Mary Burke, Deputy General Counsel, Department of Children and Families

Mary Burke stated that parties to Jeanine B class action lawsuit filled a joint motion with the court explaining that substantial compliance has been accomplished and asked for the courts to release the parties from the Consent Decree and requirements of the Settlement Agreement.

The hearing is scheduled Wednesday, September 29th at 1:30pm Central Time at the Federal Court House in Milwaukee. The hearing is open to the public. No opposition has been made to the joint motion at this time. Ms. Burke stated that this has been long coming and represents the efforts of thousands of people who are acknowledged and appreciated.

Presentation of the Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement January – June 2021 Performance Data, Tyler Oettinger, Bureau of Performance Management

Tyler Oettinger summarized the key performance measures for the first six months of 2021 by the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. The complete performance report is available on the DCF website.

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Highlighted Key Measures:

- Placement stability monthly average of 1,738 in Out-of-Home Care. 87.5% of these children had three or fewer placements.
- 12% of children in Out-of-Home Care were for 24 months or more
- .014% of children substantiated to have been maltreated by their Out-of-Home Care provider while in the jurisdiction of Milwaukee County.
- Face-to-Face Contact was 97%
- Ongoing Case Manager Turnover was at 17%
- Number of children per caseload average was 13.3 children

Mr. Oettinger expressed no child is maltreated while in out-of-home care continues to be one of the highest priorities of the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services and the Department of Children and Families.

For more information or copies of the Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement Semi-Annual report, please contact Gina Paige at GinaM.Paige@wisconsin.gov.

Response – Plaintiff’s Counsel Eric Thompson, Children’s Rights, Inc.

Eric Thompson stated that the percentage of maltreatment in out-of-home care in the first six months of 2021 represents only three children. Mr. Thompson congratulated all staff and community members that helped to keep children in out-of-home care safe. He said we should be proud of the system now keeps children safe and takes action when maltreatment occurs. This is the result of decades of effort.

Mr. Thompson stated the statistic of 12% for children that have been in out-of-home care more than 24 months is deceptive because it is calculated against baselines from when the case was settled in 2002 which was over 5,000 children in care. There is now well below 2,000 children in care. The actual percentage of children that are spending more than two years in out-of-home care is well above 12%. Mr. Thompson stated there has been a lot of progress on permanency and children are not growing up and aging out of foster care.

Turnover rate has been a chronic challenge and remains an ongoing area of concern, but this is a struggle for many child welfare systems to retain caseworkers. Mr. Thompson stated the need to keep caseloads down and make sure there is continuity in case management for children particularly those in out-of-home care. The system has been strengthened and as a general-rule children in out-of-home care are safe and reaching permanency without undue delay. Mr.

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Thompson's hope is the federal court will recognize the progress that has been made.

Mr. Thompson's call to action for the Council is to continue monitoring these benchmarks and others to make sure there is no regression. As Children Rights and Plaintiff's Council bow out legally, they are looking to all to continue this wonderful work.

Council Member Questions

Santana Lee asked were the statistics that Eric Thompson presented only based on the settlement or overall statistics that are occurring in the system?

Eric Thompson responded the report is specifically tracking data that is required for the settlement. There is other data tracked by the Division on their website.

Supervisor Sequanna Taylor: The settlement brought changes, more accountability, and enhanced what went on in the child welfare sector. Will we continue the checks and balances and keeping track?

Sarah Henery, DMCPs Administrator stated DCF and DMCPs are absolutely committed to continue evaluating the quality of work and have been developing new ways to collect data and on taking the next step to transforming the system to be better for children and families.

Supervisor Taylor asked how will the settlement and steps forward be conveyed to the public eye specifically communities of color?

Ms. Henery answered there is now a Community and Policy Development Specialist who will work with DCF Secretary office staff to develop a process for other ways than Council meetings. Ms. Henery stated she is hoping to have more strategies in the next 6 to 8 months.

Comments of Council Members of Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement

Senator Alberta Darling applauded all those who helped accomplish these goals especially the case worker's tremendous accomplishments in this tough work. She stated that is significant and amazing the number of resources and investments poured into Milwaukee by the State of Wisconsin, Governors and legislators.

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Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr. acknowledged Senator Darling for providing the legislation to create the Council and thanked Eric Thompson for diligence and patience. As a former child welfare worker, he thanked present staff and calls for the Council to continue to do what needs to be done for parents and children of Milwaukee.

Supervisor Patti Logsdon applauded all involved for achieving is accomplishment and looks forward to developing future strategies.

Mr. Tony Shields shared appreciation for all the work that has happened. He stated it has not been easy but is a great outcome. He expressed this is an opportunity to enhance work moving forward and continue the momentum.

Ms. Bria Grant asked how does the Council attend to present the overall community with the achievement and maintain the outcomes? Sarah Henery responded to this question in her updates regarding DMCPs.

Comments – DMCPs, Sarah Henery, DMCPs Administrator

Sarah Henery stated there is more to come after the court makes its ruling. There have been conversations about how the information on the future settlement ruling will be distributed such as the DCF webpage. She stated that suggestions to inform the stakeholders and people who have been involved throughout the years in other ways than calling would be appreciated and can be emailed to her. Ms. Henery stated DMCPs staff have been pleased with the settlement metrics earlier this year, but she expressed that staff are weary now due to the toll of the pandemic and the number of tough cases that are coming in especially within the last month. Ms. Henery thanked all who have sent well wishes to staff and encouraged more wishes.

Ms. Henery spoke about Child Welfare Appreciation Month. DMCPs hosted an Ice Cream Social that brought staff together to connect and celebrate. DMCPs has been hiring but Ms. Henery stated the hiring market has been challenging. DMCPs is working on putting together a more comprehensive look at what is done in the staffing, recruitment, and retention space including reporting out the on the upcoming grant with the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development next year.

Ms. Henery stated DMCPs is planning for 2022 on best ways to engage the Council and community on all their work and areas of interest. There has been

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preparation to release some funding opportunities that are more prevention focused to strengthen families.

Santana Lee expressed a possible way to improve turnover is to focus on training and there are a few things that can be implemented in the training of case managers on dealing with children with trauma. Sarah Henery responded she would love to talk further about the training ideas.

“The Centrality of Housing: What do we know? How can we integrate what we know?”, Hilary Shager Ph.D., Associate Director of Programs & Management at the Institute of Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Presentation materials can be found at:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>

Ms. Shager presented a learning exchange between the Department of Children and Families and Institute of Research on Poverty based on presentation given by Professor Marah Curtis at the UW School of Social Work. The presentation took a holistic view on the role that housing plays on the well-being of families. The presentation demonstrated how housing can affect labor market success, health, education, and family circumstances. Housing instability and homelessness are strongly associated with maltreatment risk and high rates of trauma. Factors such as race, income levels, health, COVID-19 and others can create housing barriers. DCF programs and other safety net programs that can provide an increase in income or goods may be a strategy for economically challenged homes, but long-term financial stability plays an important role in housing.

Ms. Shager posed the following question after the presentation: what additional data or research would help with the work that DCF staff does and be helpful moving forward?

Comments on Presentation

Sarah Henery stated that staff at DMCPs have been trying to find ways to be creative and get families better connected to the services available. There has been cross training with the 211 Wisconsin/Milwaukee on how DMCPs staff can connect family to housing support as early as possible including trying to referral through DMCPs' Access line and having Initial Assessment staff connect clients to 211 as well.

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Dwayne Marks, Vice President of Children and Family Well Being, SaintA, spoke about importance to focus on the mobilization to mitigate redlining, lack of subsidies to build houses in certain zip codes and rent and lease issues. He is interested in the groups' overall thought of the needed collaboration and mitigation to help. He stated in the work they do at SaintA and Children's, 81% of families that enter foster care have a history of housing instability. He states that they continue to build within their advocacy group for housing.

Susanna Leggio, Representative of Children's Wisconsin-Community Services, stated Children's Wisconsin is trying to tap into the housing resources for families, but they are limited. Children's Wisconsin have been doing work in our programs focused on enhancing economic self-sufficiency within the family. She echoes Dwayne Marks call to action. Children's Wisconsin sees housing instability as barrier to effective in-home safety planning.

Senator Darling expressed her concern about homeless children and their education. She questioned how can we keep continuity to education for homeless children or children who must move continuously? She spoke on the challenges for children who must change schools because of the constant moving.

Santana Lee added that teenagers in the foster care system credits are usually not transferred when moving from school to school and it can hold them back from graduating.

Hilary Shager commented on the school mobility piece. She stated that a lot of the research comparison may be faulty between children in the child welfare system compared to children outside of it. However, statistics of high school graduation rates for children in the child welfare system are different and lower and that may be because of mobility and moving around.

Senator LaTonya Johnson expressed that she believes the Council needs to concentrate on the statistic of 81% of families in the foster care system that have a history of housing instability. She is personally interested in the data regarding the housing instability piece to see if something can be done at the state level to invest more funding or even restructure the funding to address these issues and see if we can lower foster care numbers.

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Ms. Henery stated that if people are interested this can be a topic discussed in a future Council Meeting and that it would be great to have someone from Housing First Milwaukee to talk about the housing space and to also invite a representative from the MPS District.

FFPSA Update

Sarah Henery shared DCF is getting ready to submit their prevention plan. Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) legislation passed and working on getting the QRTP certification process up and running for providers to complete. Now that some of the statewide pieces are in place, DMCPD has been trying to put together some snapshot data on the Family First strategic transformation. DMCPD staff are having conversations with Casey Family Programs on the working reduction of group care in Milwaukee and are excited of the potential partnership.

MCWPC Subcommittees Updates

Health and Education Committee, Christine Holmes

Christine Holmes shared in the committee meeting about two SAMHSA grants (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services grant) for children are in Milwaukee community. One grant is through Penfield Children's Center for children ages 0-6 and the other is through Milwaukee County for youth. At the next committee, SaintA will present about their SAMHSA grant.

Out-of-Home Care Committee, Judge Laura Crivello

Last meeting Susanna Leggio and Dwayne Marks presented on placement stability. Oriana Carey from the Coalition of Children, Youth and Families spoke on Out-of-Home resource strategies. There will be a representative from La Causa who will speak about services available for kinship families and the intersection between formal and informal placements next meeting scheduled October 7, 2021 at 12:15pm and Ann Leinfelder Grove from SaintA will speak on Project Thrive which is a new partnership between SaintA, Boys and Girls Club and Medical College of Wisconsin with a targeted goal to operate eight new mental health offices to serve Milwaukee's community.

Critical Incident Committee, Libby Mueller

Ms. Libby Mueller stated the committee has been meeting regularly and there has been full participation at every meeting. Earlier in September, the committee discussed the new system of review process, went through new cases and saw

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what system mapping looked like. The committee is determining what recommendations they would like to make to the new review system.

Community Input, Chris Holmes, Chair

Bregatta Wilson, Department of Children and Families, Lived Experience Coordinator for the Division of Safety and Permanence, gave her input on the housing area. She suggested looking at other states and seeing their relations with housing and child welfare. She seconded the idea Senator Johnson had to use funding we already have to address the housing insecurities. She stated we also need to focus on how families can maintain housing with jobs and other factors that can create stabilization.

Concluding Remarks, Chris Holmes, Chair

Senator Darling thanked Supervisor Willie Johnson for his remarks, work in the child welfare system and on his long-term leadership.

Next meeting is scheduled on November 12th, 2021.

Ms. Holmes thanked Eric Thompson and Children's Rights for many years of participation in helping with the improvement of the child welfare system. Eric Thompson stated, "carry on everybody" and he is looking forward to the Council and DCF taking the ball forward from now.

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Shields. Motion passed unanimously.