

MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL - DRAFT

Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

Friday, February 10, 2023

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The meeting was conducted in hybrid format by Zoom and in-person at the DMCPs building, 635 N. 26th St., Milwaukee, WI 53233. The hybrid meeting information was made available on the DCF/DMCPs Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council webpage on February 6, 2023 (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>).

Members Present

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

Present were Libby Mueller, Judge Jane Carroll, Carmen Pitre, Chris Holmes, Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr., Supervisor Patti Logsdon, Linda Davis, Bria Grant, Kelly Pethke, Senator LaTonya Johnson, and Steve Gilbertson.

A quorum of the Council was present at the hybrid meeting.

Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Chair Chris Holmes welcomed new Partnership Council member Kelly Pethke. Kelly Pethke introduced herself as the Administrator of Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) a part of Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). She has been attending the meetings as a community member for previous months and is excited to be a new Council member.

Notice of Meeting

Chair Chris Holmes reviewed compliance with Open Meetings Law requirements.

First, the notice of the meeting was published on the DCF and DOA websites on February 7, 2023, and in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on February 6, 2023. Second, the notice was emailed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on February 6, 2023. The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on February 7, 2023. Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPs building at 635 N. 26th St. on February 8, 2023.

This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).

Announcement

Chair Chris Holmes announced that the Introduction to the Special Education Advocacy (SEA) Group would not be occurring as the presenter had to cancel.

Review and Approval of Past Minutes

Linda Davis made a motion to approve the minutes from the Friday, November 11, 2022, Partnership Council meeting. Libby Mueller seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

May 2023 meeting change

Chair Chris Holmes proposed to reschedule the May 12th, 2023, Partnership Council meeting due to schedule conflicts. The meeting has been changed to June 2, 2023.

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Council Member Recognition

Chair Chris Holmes announced that Senator Alberta Darling resigned from the Partnership Council as she no longer serves as a State Senator. The Governor issued a proclamation that thanked Senator Darling for her years of service and all the work she has done for children and families within the State of Wisconsin. Linda Davis acknowledged former Senator Darling as the sponsor of the legislation that created the Partnership Council and as a major contributor to Milwaukee's then Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare, now Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services.

Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services & Governor's Budget Update

Sarah Henery gave an overview of the budget season. DMCP's budget was completed September 2022 and sent to State Budget Office. On February 15, 2023, the Governor's budget will be announced. The budget will go through the legislative process and will be reviewed by the Fiscal Bureau. The Committee of Joint Finance hearings will begin in Spring of 2023. The full legislature will be considering and debating ideally through June of 2023 and hopefully there is a vote and budget that passes before the end of June.

Sarah Henery emphasized that passing the budget is a joint effort between the legislature and Governor's office and recommended lobbying legislators if there are items in the budget that the Council members want to see funded. In the Governor's State of the State address, he declared in his perspective, 2023 to be the year of mental health. There was announced that Governor Evers will request 1.8 million in the fiscal year 2024 and 3.6 million in 2025 to be allocated for behavioral and mental health spending.

Linda Davis added that it is important to advocate and lobby as Council members and to advocate for the Division to be fully funded with financial support from the legislature because this is the first budget without the safety net of the federal lawsuit. Chair Chris Holmes emphasized asking for a wage and salary increase for the Division to be competitive in the job market.

Introduction to the Special Education Advocacy (SEA) Group

This part of the meeting did not occur due to the presenter cancelling.

FFPSA and Breaking Barriers Project Update

Jill Collins, DMCP's Ongoing Services Section Manager, and Toni Rozanski, Casey Family Programs presented on the Breaking Barriers project as a part of DMCP's Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) updates. Toni Rozanski is a national partner and a Senior Director at Casey Family programs. Casey Family Programs is the largest operating foundation across the nation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care in the United States.

Jill Collins gave an overview of the Breaking Barriers Project. In Milwaukee, DMCP and partners are prioritizing moving youth from congregate care settings to family-like settings. Jill Collins shared that the project is not aiming to close group care facilities but is focused on working with community partners, families, youth, and relatives to place more children in community settings. For Breaking Barriers, DMCP wants to focus on the congregate care

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population, to ensure children are placed in a setting that is most appropriate, reduces trauma, and improves outcomes.

Toni Rozanski shared that the movement to end the reliance on group placements was an effort sparked by the “Think of Us Report” which is a collection of young voices from across the nation. *Ending the Need for Group Placements* is a collective effort nationally in partnership with Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, and community partners. There are about 30 sites nationwide each working on projects with an overarching goal to end the reliance on group care facilities for youth placed in out-of-home care.

Seven key levers are being used at the national level in the mission to right size the use of congregate care. The 7 Levers of Change are:

- Engaging partners with lived expertise
- Advancing a kin-first culture. Recognizing that kin are the next best option for children if parents are not able
- Developing trauma informed, healing centered mental health services
- Accelerating provider transformation toward family support. Understanding that this can be business model changes across the board
- Facilitating court partnership
- Creating administrative barriers to group placement
- Partnering with resource caregivers

Jill Collins shared that the “Breaking Barriers” title came from a lived experience expert with the idea that as a system we need to “bust barriers,” work differently, and be positive deviants in the child welfare system. The Breaking Barriers Project began in 2022. Instead of accepting practices that have been historically followed, the intention of this project is to challenge those ideas and enact meaningful change.

Goals of Breaking Barriers:

- Reduce Group Home and Residential Care Center usage by 40% by 2024
- Children/youth will be placed in setting most appropriate for both treatment and placement needs. If a child does require more intensive treatment, the desire is for the treatment to be more acute, and community based or finding the most appropriate treatment center then transition the child/youth back to family-like setting
- Promote diversity, equity, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and inclusion
- Encourage and practice trauma-informed decisions
- Purposefully approaching this project differently. Identify systematic barriers and processes that have historically barred like-kin from taking placements
- Promote authentic youth and family engagement at the center of our vision

The structure of the Breaking Barriers project includes the Sponsor Team, Advisory Committee, Design Team, and Implementation Teams. The Sponsor and Advisory Committee challenge the work and thinking of the Design Team and Implementation Teams to ensure the teams are doing the work differently and create time, space, and allocate resources for the different

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members of the teams. The Design Team meets every other week, and the intention of the team is to bring different ideas and voices into practice.

The Implementation Teams were created in November 2022. All of the teams have dedicated individuals from a variety of agencies and backgrounds. The teams have varying purposes, goals, and action steps. The teams are tasked with identifying practices, ideas, and in some cases, specific subsets of youth, with the goal of overcoming barriers to placement in lower levels of care.

Sarah Henery gave context on the levels of care concept. In Wisconsin, the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tool is administered to every child that comes into out-of-home care. The tool is used in making the determination about the appropriate level of placement for a child. There are 6 levels of need; children assessed at a Level of Need of 1 or 2 are typically able to be served in a general foster home or relative home. For Levels of Need at 3 or higher, children would typically be served by a treatment foster care, group home, and/or residential care centers.

There are currently 5 Implementation Teams. The purposes, actions, and goals of Breaking Barriers Implementation Teams:

- Youth with L1/L2 CANS in Group Homes: The purpose of this Implementation Team is to identify youth who are currently in group home settings that have a CANS score of a 1 or 2 and try to transition them to a family-based setting. Using the CANS to placement match and determine the level of need (LON) of child is the focus. Their goal is to reduce LON of 1 or 2 youth's placement in group homes by 70%. In 2022, this group has done data collection and identified barriers to placement of youth in lower levels of care.
- Kin Forward Culture: The purpose of this Implementation Team is to identify and break systemic practice barriers that prevent youth currently in congregate care settings from placement with relatives or like-kin. One goal is to figure out how to place more youth with people that they know and create alternative routes to placement. Another goal is to identify 20% of congregate care population and transition them to relative of like-kin caregivers.
- Prevention of Step-Up Placements: The purpose of this Implementation Team is to prevent future placements in congregate care at the point of Initial Assessment and first placement into out-of-home care including assessment and stabilization centers. One goal is to prevent 25% of youth from having an initial placement in a congregate care setting within a year. A barrier that has been identified by the team is who to include in the conversations and work to help solve the problem.
- Treatment Foster Care (TFC) Provider Engagement: The purpose of this Implementation Team is to determine barriers to placement of youth in treatment foster homes. This team is focusing on ways to ease the difficulties for older youth to move from group care and residential care centers into treatment foster homes. A goal is to increase the usage of treatment foster homes for youth over age 12 by 20% over the next year. Some barriers identified by this team in 2022 were a lack of respite care providers for TFC providers and misunderstanding of the needs of youth in the child welfare population.

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For 2023, this team would like to determine how DMCPs can support TFC agencies and identify real-time barriers to come to quick solutions using the PDSA cycles.

- Supporting Young People as they transition to lower levels of care: The purpose of this Implementation Team is to focus on the experiences of youth who are out-of-home care and determine how to better support young people in their transitions to lower levels of care. This team will be youth led and the youth will determine the goals for themselves. For 2023, DMCPs would like to engage and ensure youth voices are heard and supported.

Jill Collins showed the data dashboard for Breaking Barriers and rightsizing congregate care. From the baseline in December 2021 to January 2023, there was a 17% reduction overall in congregate care settings.

Questions

Bria Grant asked who made up the workgroup to help with these efforts, how the members are selected teams, and if they are internal or community partners.

Sarah Henery answered that it's made up of internal staff, staff from case management agencies, lived experience including children who experienced group care, and providers. The teams are comprised of people impacted by group care depending on topic.

Linda Davis asked what the ages are of children placed in group homes/group care. Sarah Henery answered that generally in Milwaukee, children do not enter group care unless they are 12 years of age or older.

Bria Grant asked how engagement with the family of origin is included in this project model. Jill Collins answered that it would depend on the implementation team. The implementation teams have been considering how to engage families when working towards reunification or when an out-of-home care placement is necessary, how relatives and like-kin can be supported to take placement. There are also parent partners who are participating on the Design Team.

Bria Grant asked if there was an effort to identify barriers to increasing the number of general/treatment foster homes. Sarah Henery stated people have been working actively on examining barriers to placement in foster homes for older youth. Jill Collins added that the TFC Provider Engagement Team will be working on ensuring there are enough treatment foster homes for older youth and identifying what supports are needed for foster parents to take these youth.

Linda Davis expressed her excitement at these actions, emphasized the significant shifts that will be done systematically and culturally, and stated that the Council would be open to discussing ideas. She asked if there will be a way to track re-entry from the children that return home when transitioning to a lower level of care fails. Jill Collins stated that an Implementation Team brought this up recently and DMCPs will be working on tracking that data.

Chair Chris Holmes asked if there will be new procedures for following youth and staying connected to them as they transition to new placements. Sarah Henery answered that as the

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teams work on a case-by-case basis, other ways of practice will be considered. She added there are already people practicing differently that will be tapped into.

Sarah Henery acknowledged that there are some group care providers that are doing amazing work and gave an example of a facility accepting children that residential care centers will not take. Linda Davis asked if the Department of Children and Families projected on the budget cycle ramifications with the Breaking Barriers initiatives. Sarah Henery answered it will be a learning curve. In the last budget cycle, there were increases in kinship care and foster care rates. More supported funding for relative caregivers was requested.

Linda Davis asked how the judiciary will be involved in this new model of practice. Judge Jane Carroll commented that she believes the judges should be involved with Implementation Teams because they see a lot of placement barriers. Jill Collins shared that the Kin Forward Culture Implementation Team is looking into licensing exceptions/waivers and how to best educate staff working directly with like-kin providers to ensure staff are able to work within and around the system. Wendy Henderson, Administrator of Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), stated that from a statewide perspective, DSP is actively looking into changes in the licensing requirements. Members from DSP are on the Design Team and Implementation Teams.

Jermaine Reed, Executive Director Fresh Start Family Services, ask how this project's work counters the systemic problems and barriers plaguing Black youth in out-of-home care. Sarah Henery acknowledged that when looking at the disparities in the child welfare system, Black youth disproportionately experience group care placements. It is something that DMCPs is paying attention to and is a population that DMCPs and the Implementation Teams are hoping will benefit from the increased efforts to look for relative and like-kin caregivers.

Linda Davis commented that the Secretary used to have a statewide council on child welfare and people from across the state would share and exchange ideas for advocacy. Sarah Henery responded that there are members from the Wisconsin County Human Service Association sitting on workgroups that share and exchange ideas. Wendy Henderson added that the Department had a consultation with 11 federally recognized tribes last summer related to kinship care.

Chair Chris Holmes asked how the Council would be updated on the Breaking Barriers Project and how information would be disseminated. Sarah Henery responded that starting new committees such as the "MKE Teen Supports" Committee that was suggested last Council meeting can create a space for discussion and to share information in Council meetings. Other ways of sharing information, like website updates, will be something that can be looked into. Kelly Pethke is a part of the Advisory Committee and can also share thoughts and opinions in Council meetings.

Community Input

Linda Davis asked how follow-up to questions and concerns that are raised in Council meetings will be addressed in future meetings. She recommended having a part of Council meeting agendas dedicated to questions brought up in last meeting and requested that an update from Children's Court, and from the leaders within the system also be included. Judge Jane Carroll

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stated she would be happy to provide updates on what is happening at Children’s Court. Chair Chris Holmes suggested having a template for follow up to address issues. Sarah Henery stated the meetings have been more content driven but also transparent. She is open to including a director’s report out within the meetings.

Jermaine Reed extended an invitation to all community and system partners to attend the Invitation Color of Child Welfare Conference. More info and registration details can be found for the conference at <https://www.eventleaf.com/e/COCW2023>

Concluding Remarks

Chair Chris Holmes thanked everyone and reminded attendees that the next Partnership Council meeting will be June 2nd, 2023. Meeting adjourned.

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