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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, March 24, 2017
12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Approved by the Council on May 19, 2017

1) Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 12:05pm by Chair Mark Mertens. Introductions were made around the room and attendance was taken.

Members Present: Mark Mertens, Alberta Darling, Christine Holmes, Mallory O'Brien, Veneshia McKinney-Whitson, Jessie Rodriguez, Libby Mueller, LaTonya Johnson, Mary Triggiano, Steve Taylor, Sue Gadacz, Tony Shields, Willie Johnson, Jr., Steve Gilbertson (Associate).

Members Absent: Anthony Staskunas, Delvyn Crawford, Jocasta Zamarripa, Monica Young, Maria Rodriguez (Associate).

13 of 17 voting members were present, constituting a quorum.

2) The Chair informed the Council of the ways in which the meeting was publicly noticed:

“First, the notice of the meeting was published in the Thursday, March 23, 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, March 23, 2017. The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on Tuesday, March 14, 2017. Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPs building at 635 N. 26th St. the morning of Thursday, March 23, 2017. This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).”

3) Minutes Review:

The January minutes were approved without amendment. The vote was unanimous.

4) Committee Reports

- **Rules Committee** members (Chris Holmes, Tony Shields, and Mark Mertens) proposed changes to the council’s bylaws. Proposals were discussed and voted upon.

Proposal #1: Withdrawn by Mark Mertens because the proposal would have redefined “quorum” for the council’s purposes and the office of legal counsel advised that the council does not have the authority to redefine what constitutes a quorum.

Proposal #2: Regarding the Frequency of Meetings. The MCWPC is required by law to meet 4 times per year. Presently meets 6 times per year. A change would allow the committees the opportunity to meet more often. What we would give up in frequency, we might be able to make up for in more meaningful meetings. The proposal was approved by a vote of the council with no objections.

Proposal #3: Regarding nomination and appointment to committees. Willie Johnson, Jr. asked about process, such as how names would be funneled to the chair for consideration. The Chairman agreed that there could be discussion in council meetings and that he had no intention of making emergency appointments without council input unless absolutely necessary. The proposal was amended by Libby Mueller, and the proposal as amended was approved by a vote of the council with no objections.

Proposal #4: Regarding deletion of references to the Children’s Services Network. The proposal was approved by a vote of the council with no objections.

Proposal #5: Regarding replacing the references to the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare with references to the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. The proposal was approved by a vote of the council with no objections.

Proposal #6: Regarding attendance requirements. The proposal was approved by a vote of the council with no objections.

Proposal #7: Regarding reports from DMCPS. The proposal was approved by a vote of the council with no objections.

- **Health and Education Committee**
Sue Gadacz reported on the February HHC meeting. The committee reviewed information from the 2015 annual report on the Education Liaison (EL). Wraparound has 2 Education Liaisons and DMCPS has 1. 94% of referrals to the EL come from ongoing case managers. All of the children in kinship care or out of home care are categorically eligible for assistance. The next committee meeting has not yet been scheduled.
- **Critical Incident Committee**
Mallory O’Brien thanked Alberta Darling and Libby Mueller for joining the committee. She reported that two cases were reviewed in the Critical Incident Committee. Recommendations for system changes have already been implemented. Mallory

reminded council members that while the meeting is held in closed-session, all council members are able to attend.

5) Presentation of Settlement Data, Hannah Knouse

6) Response, Eric Thompson, Children’s Rights, Inc.

According to Attorney Thompson, the Settlement Data includes “a lot of good news,” although “some areas are still a challenge.” For the most part, DMCPs is keeping kids safe and laying eyes on kids on a monthly basis 98% of the time.

Regarding the stability measure and kids subjected to 3+ placements in the last 36 months in out of home care, the trend is going in the wrong direction. Sometimes kids have to be moved, so the challenge is to get the first placement optimized. All partners need to be looking at placement stability and how we can all do better. Research is very clear that placement moves are detrimental to a child at any age. Even very young children are being removed 4+ times. We look to all partners in the system to balance placement stability with child safety and the other interests involved. He hopes we can also look to the courts to prioritize child stability as they are balancing and weighing the best interests of the child.

Looking at 1B7, the number of children who are adopted within 24 months is at 34%, which is a testament to DMCPs, the courts, and the partners for identifying children that need to be adopted and pushing those through the legal process. This number compares favorably to other jurisdictions.

Looking at 1B4, the number of kids in care has decreased substantially since the beginning of the settlement. That makes this measurement not sensible because it is measured against an artificial baseline. DMCPs and its partners can do better in this area.

Looking at 1B6, we are down from 70% in 2013 to only 54% now. Again, DMCPs can do better. Research is pretty clear that most successful reunifications are those that can be reunified in less than a year, rather than down the line. Our reentry rate is doing better though – only 7% reenter care within 12 months, with is an improvement over 9% in 2015.

Average caseload numbers have gone down to 13.2 children per caseworker, which is continued improvement, but turnover continues to be a chronic problem. This has caused a situation where as of December 2016, 40% of caseworkers had 15+ children on their caseloads. Noted that CHWCS has 123 of 126 available case-carrying positions filled and SaintA has only 88/106 available case-carrying positions filled. Overall, 85 workers were lost in 2016.

7) Agency Response, David Whelan (CHWCS), and Alison McMorro (SaintA)

Both agencies are using various strategies and protocols to meet the needs of children in out of home care.

1. Goal is to stabilize kids as quickly as possible.
2. Placement stability protocol is being used at all levels.
3. Placement stability is discussed at all staff meetings.
4. Working on foster relationships between bio parents and foster parents.
5. Agencies are taking recruitment seriously and looking at how to fully engage staff, especially when hiring millennials.

SaintA and CHWCS are working on a vision to stop competing and start working more closely together.

CHWCS had over 200 enrolled in Wraparound Milwaukee. Youth age 13 and older make up most of the CHWCS-serviced population. Kids with 4+ placements are more likely to have a HLOC need, needing TFC, Group Home, or Residential care. These are higher cost options; when a child is not in a family setting, the goal is to stabilize as quickly as possible. Noted that while SaintA and CHWCS language is sometimes different, the agency concerns and actions are often similar or the same.

CHWCS has also developed a position on its placement team specifically for HLOC placements. There was also a management restructuring in January 2017 that opened up a manager to focus directly on placement stability. CHWCS agrees that 4+ placements are not good for children; we also need to look at performance in relation to federal measures. On the children's bureau website, WI was at 87.1%, which is 19th in the country. While DMCPS falls below the settlement measure requirements in terms of placement stability, we are not outside of the expected practice for child welfare and now that the number of children in care has decreased, the children remaining in care tend to have higher needs.

SaintA staffs all placement moves, and the Director of Child Welfare gets involved with the third move. SaintA talks about placement stability at all meetings and is active in QPM. SaintA uses transition plans to move from one home to another and tries to help build relationships between caregivers. SaintA agrees that having more stable staff will impact stability and permanency. There is a prescribed process for case assignment, and SaintA anticipates seeing more equal caseloads going forward.

Chair Mertens asked the Council if there were any additional comments on the subjects discussed.

Judge Triggiano reported that there are currently eight judges making decisions about kids and placements. There was discussion about whether there are ways to audit some of these cases. Five to eleven year olds tend to have a lot of behavioral issues. The judiciary is willing to look at cases to see if changes can be made, and would appreciate if case managers attending court could flag cases for them that would involve a third or subsequent move.

Ann Leinfelder-Grove discussed the importance SaintA places on training staff, and recruiting more staff. SaintA has taken a really deep dive on employee engagement – particularly with millennials. SaintA is putting an emphasis on developing the technology that meets their needs. She noted that one of their higher performing case workers, which had been recruited from outside the county, maintains a 96% placement stability rate amongst their cases, and Ann seeks to hire more qualified staff capable of achieving such good results in their work.

Alberta Darling expressed being very optimistic about the report, she remembers numbers like 6,000 children being in out of home care. The progress made is phenomenal, really impressive. On the state legislature’s finance committee, she has worked to see that a lot is invested into child welfare.

Mark Mertens thanked Eric Thompson for holding us accountable to be the best CPS we can be.

8) DMCPS Updates

A different bureau or section at DMCPS will be highlighted each time the Partnership Council meets, so as to help Partnership Council members become more familiar with staff, functions, relationships, roles, and responsibilities at the Division.

Access Section Chief Lee Johnson presented an overview of the Access section:

The access staff receive approximately 1,300 calls per month. Approximately 550 of these calls are screened in. The number of calls received “live” in January of 2016 was at 70% and the goal was to reach 88% by the end of the year. At one time this statistic had only been at 55%-60%, which is not good at all for a call center. By December of 2016, the percentage had increased to 90%, and by March 2017 over 95% of calls were being answered live, which is an excellent improvement.

One of the strategies being used in Access is forecasting, which enables DMCPS to look at what volume of calls will be at different times and how to assign staff according to the volume of calls at different times during the day. Currently the peak hours for calls are 10:00am to 6:00pm. Television monitors that are viewable by all staff are being used to monitor the status of each Access worker at any given time. Staff are now in friendly competition with each other to perform well and be shown on the boards as doing well. There was a cultural shift needed, we had to get buy-in from the staff, and we believe that has been achieved.

About 25% of all calls received by Access staff are informational. A triage pilot will be starting soon to screen calls before going on to Access staff. Triage staff will take the

initial call and determine if it is informational or a CPS issue and handle calls accordingly.

Even with the great work of supervisors, sometimes Access has to ask IA supervisors for help. So there is now an Access mentor position which can help out with both case practice development and serve as a fill-in when needed.

9) CFSR, Jayne Penner-Hoppe

Jayne participated by phone and explained the CFSR (Child and Family Services Review) process. There will be a meeting on May 18th to provide more detailed information. Everyone is welcome to attend.

10) DCF Budget, Secretary Eloise Anderson

Secretary Anderson reported that budget requests recommended by the Partnership Council were submitted to the Governor and he responded to some of the requests:

- a. \$2M for services for victims of sex trafficking
- b. More time is needed to evaluate the request for money for infant court. Money might be available in the next biennium.
- c. Health care for youth aging out of foster care is covered by Care4Kids and Medicaid.
- d. Youth aging out of foster care can get SSI or earned income tax credit through work.
- e. Mental health services are a part of DHS. Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an evidence-based program that provides new skills for parents and helps to connect them to the community.
- f. Foster parents will be getting and increase in payments.

Secretary Anderson says that she has worked in state government for a long time and “this is a halleluiah budget” because of what CPS is being granted.

11) New Meeting Schedule

Regarding the vote to reduce Partnership Council meetings from six meetings per year to four meetings per year, it was agreed to keep the May 19, 2017 meeting for this year. The July and November meetings will be eliminated, and the September meeting will be moved from September 22 to September 29, 2017.

12) Community Forum

Pat McManus of the Black Health Coalition indicated she has a lot of concerns regarding the CPS system. Too many blacked children are “farmed out”, and not all adoptions are “right” adoptions. She said that she has filed civil rights complaints and she is glad they decided to

investigate. The community discussions about CPS are not presented very well and she wishes the Council would look more at the system and what is going on.

Jermaine Reed stated he would like more time to be allotted in the Partnership Council meetings for the community to speak about questions, concerns. He would also like to see the community forum portion of the meeting to take place earlier. He would also like to see more time given to other foster care agencies. Partnership Council Chair, Mark Mertens, indicated that he would like to see the Council take up the subject of community involvement. Jermain also said that while CHWCS and SaintA talked a lot about placement stability, TFC agencies were not discussed at all and we need to “weave these other folks into the discussion” in order to properly promote placement stability. Eric Thompson was noted as agreeing with this suggestion.

Mike Wallace recommended looking at the Michigan model regarding staff turnover. DMCPS could be partnering with universities and social work schools. He recommends setting up a child welfare training certificate that guarantees an internship with a child welfare agency. People will stay longer when they have been trained well. Michigan reduced their turnover by 70% by doing this.

Romell Smith commented and asked if there could be more time in the future with specific action items for community forum discussions. He wants to hear specific stories. The Office of Legal Counsel then opined that specific cases cannot be discussed in open session due to confidentiality laws. Romell responded that he believes “we need to cut through the red tape; to break a rule, but to bend a rule within its limits.” Mark Mertens commented that he believes we could do that to some degree in the future, while remaining solution-focused.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35pm.

These Meeting Minutes were approved by the Council on May 19, 2017