



MINUTES

DCFS Advisory Board Meeting

2/10/20 3:30 p.m. | *Meeting called to order by* Gabriella @ Five Points Community Ctr, Cleveland, Ohio

In Attendance

Gabriella Celeste, Beverly Charles, Dr. David Crampton, Christin Farmer, Dr. Andrew Garner, Debra Rex, Angela Newman-White, Victor Ruiz, Lakecia Wild, Cynthia Weiskittel, Tamara Chapman-Wagner, Jackie McCray, Donna Rojek (recorder)

Welcome

Presented by: Gabriella Celeste

Welcome to everyone in attendance.

Call to Order

Presented by: Christin Farmer

Meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m. on 2/10/20.

Update: Progress on Panel Recommendations *Presented by:* Director Cynthia Weiskittel

As the result of a child death, DCFS had recommendations from a panel of local and national child welfare experts convened by County Administrator Armond Budish. The recommendations centered around strengthening investigative skills; the inclusion of fathers in the work of keeping children safe; balancing parental rights with child safety and collaborative and neighborhood relationships as critical to child safety. Director Weiskittel provided the following updates in response to the Child Welfare Panel Recommendations:

- **In response to the recommendation around elevating qualitative case practice to equal the emphasis on qualitative measures**, DCFS has since significantly expanded its Performance Evaluation & Improvement (PEI) department. 4 additional staff were hired approximately a year ago. This expansion has increased internal capacity for more in-depth qualitative reviews. Through targeted review and random record pulls, staff have been checking to ensure alignment between practice and policy. The agency is reviewing not only for work according to policy but through the lens of continuous quality improvement.
- An additional 100 frontline workers were hired last year. Cindy noted that the reality is that the turn-over rate is high for child welfare. It is a job many people take out of college, so there is a young workforce who is unprepared for the magnitude of what the job entails. There is much concern in child welfare in assigning new staff to what is called investigations-or the front end of the system. You are a young worker who has

had 12 weeks of training, now you are going to do investigations. There has been a push to put them in Extended Services (which is not easier-but a slower pace). In response, DCFS has expanded the use of Transition units for new staff coming out of training. The Transition units serve as a bridge from new worker training to placement into their permanent units. In these units staff receive a limited number of new case assignments and more hands-on coaching and supervision.

- **ShadowBox** has also been added as a training method to help support staff development. This is a practice that the Casey Foundation has invested in. It is designed to help people in high stakes jobs (such as first responders) to try to think critically/ strategically. Workers must think critically and evaluate how a child could have received an injury, for instance, a bump on the head-does it match what mom says? Or does something not add up? Workers must think through if that is the only way that child could have received that bruise. In ShadowBox a case-based scenario is shared and workers tell what they would do next. Then, what the experts are saying and why is shared. This is a fast track way to share an experience while they are still learning their job. Both veteran and new staff are involved in Shadowbox training to enhance critical problem solving and decision-making skills.
- **Licensure:** While licensure is not required for child welfare workers in Ohio, there has been a push to bring more licensed social workers on board. Additionally, there is work going on to identify all licensed staff currently working within DCFS. Supervision opportunities have been put in place for staff seeking advanced licensure.
- **Community Involvement:** Efforts are underway aimed at revitalizing the agency's geo work as well as relationship with Collaboratives. The Collaboratives support families with emergency services like support with food and utilities to prevention services for a mom who might be struggling with her family. They are key to our engagement with families. DCFS is taking steps to return to geo case assignments in some capacity with emphasis on community connections. As an initial step, Senior Managers have been assigned to each of the Collaboratives as a point of contact. Geo case assignments were lost in part due to the agency's model shift. With the support of CWRU the agency is revisiting the redrawing of the geo map/ geo lines and moving in the direction back to true geo work.
- **Community Education:** Two daycares lost their license stemming from this particular child death. DCFS has done more trainings for mandated reporters since the death. The community trainings have been well attended. The training is being done collectively with Senior & Adult Services. We are saying to the community that if you see something, then call. The community doesn't have to worry about whether it rises to the level of agency involvement. DCFS has the responsibility to determine if it should be screened-in.
- **Improved Working Relationship with DCFS & Law Enforcement:** With this recommendation came the idea of hiring retired/ former law enforcement to assist/support staff in locating people. In New York they hired former law enforcement people to locate families. There are families that are evasive and do not want to be found or make it difficult for staff to engage. They have had success in New York to help workers and guide them to help find people that do not want to be found.
 - A Sheriff has been assigned to DCFS and located in the building. She works directly with staff helping them with investigations. If they are having difficulties

finding someone, she can look it up in other systems to find a better address. Sometimes, she can help research criminal histories.

- DCFS has updated its MOU with Law Enforcement and trainings have been done.
- **Including Fathers:** The agency is making strides in identifying fathers on cases. 92% of our Extended Services cases have an identified father or fathers. We are getting dads to the TDM (team decision-making) meetings. Overall, we can do a better job engaging with the paternal family and are tracking incremental improvements.
- **Safety & Parental Rights-** Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) shifted the pendulum more towards parent rights. DCFS cannot make someone who is the subject of an investigation open their door and come into their house. Getting a court order is difficult. The agency must be able to show eminent risk of harm. The agency has made some steps in addressing this parent right issue to the state. However, the state has not removed any barriers in a significant way. In this situation, mom was very good at keeping us away and pushing back with threats. Currently, DCFS is screening in cases involving younger children differently and doing legal consults with our legal department in those situations involving evasive families.
- **Additional Staff & Transportation Aides:** We were given 3 new aides and 32 new workers positions. START paraprofessionals were also approved for hire as part of the Opiate settlement.

Data

Presented by: Gabriella Celeste

The Advisory Board would like some data reporting that can be shared so they can review at the meetings and track progress. It was recommended that some thought first be given around developing a Dashboard because looking at all the available data could be overwhelming. In the meantime, DCFS will begin identifying some data points they think might be of interest for review/ discussion.

Action Item: Cindy will check to see if the Panel Recommendations and Update Report can be distributed to the Board.

Christin Farmer

Presented by: Gabriella Celeste

Chair Christin Farmer is stepping down from the Board. Her replacement recommendation is Verna Darby. A letter of interest and resume was passed around. She has been a foster parent for 19 years and she is familiar with the work. This is Christin's last meeting. Gabriella will Chair in the interim for the next 2 meetings whereas by the 3rd meeting, a new chair should be in place. The Board can recommend a person for the seat, but County Council can still put someone else in. A first and second motion were given for the recommendation of Verna Darby to be recommended to Council. All were unanimous, and no one was opposed to this recommendation. Jennifer has all this background and should get it expedited. Next meeting is 4/28/20.

The Interim Chair position (Gabriella Celeste) should be for 2 meetings and the last quarter of this year for the new Chair. Beverly made the motion and Andy second. No one opposed.

Governance Committee

Presented by: Gabriella Celeste

Decided to recommend someone during the Board meeting for Christin's replacement. This

committee is Lakecia, Victor, the new person and Gabriella.

Prevention, Child Protection Team, Intervention in Government *Presented by:* Christin Farmer

A forum was hosted by the state. The Governor's Office was present. Andy, Gabriella, David, and Natasha attended the forum. Turn-out was great. People that shared their stories seemed to need some help after they left the podium to debrief regarding their feelings. That meeting was charged and full of energy. The Governor released the preliminary findings. Jennifer needs to send out these preliminary findings to the Board.

A board member followed up with John Ladd and he followed up with Dr. Joshua Friedman. They need to know the relationship between Metro and DCFS. Child Protection Team wants a medical director and have all hospital systems work together and be on the same page. Protocols should be the same. This can be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

Intervention in Government -meetings are scheduled.

Locations for April 28 & June 15 meetings will be handled by Jennifer.

All were in agreement to put item #9 on the next meeting agenda.

Adjourned

Presented by: Christin Farmer

Meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.