

# State Advisory Council Meeting

April 23, 2021 - 8:30am to 10:30am

301 So Park Ave. – Zoom Video Conference Call

**Present:** Chairwoman Edith Clark, Julie Burk, Heather Denny, Brenda Schye, Trudi Schmidt, Melissa Lavinder, Dana Toole, Gala Goodwin, Mercedes Kennedy, April Sommers, Julie Fleck, Carrie Krepps, Megan Bailey, Rochelle Beley, Randal Spaulding

**CFSD Representatives Present:** Nikki Grossberg, Marti Vining, Effie Benoit, Courtney Callaghan, Jason Larson, Eric Barnosky, Sahrita Jones, Laura McCullough, Mick Leary

**Guest:** Matt Schubert

**Absent:** Randy Schwickert, Wayne Phillips, Brandon Wootan, Ken Holmlund, Greg Daly, Lisa Goff, Loretta Rex, Traci Perez, Angie Rolando, Jennifer Hoerauf

## **8:30 – 8:50am**      **Welcome and Introductions and Approve Minutes**

Chairwoman Edith Clark called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM. Nikki Grossberg asked everyone to introduce themselves. Visual Quorum was reached. Trudi Schmidt motioned and seconded by Julie Burke to approve the January 22, 2021 minutes.

## **8:50 – 9:10am**      **CFSD Update – Marti Vining**

- Marti reviewed where the Legislative session is at on new items. There were well over 20 bills this session and will have just a few that are going to require quite a bit of work to move forward.
- HB 90 was passed requiring a five-day EPS hearing be held after a removal instead of 20 day. Not sure if governor has signed yet, but it should be moving forward. Yellowstone and Kalispell are involved in the pilot program. Effective date is July 1, 2023.
- HB 503 is a companion bill with HB90 regarding EPS hearings. HB503, sponsored by Representative Lenz, provides families the opportunity to request a 5-day EPS hearing which will be effective July 1, 2021.
- HB416 requires that all supervisors and above obtain an MSW. We were able to require an annual training for the staff and they would all complete the UofM supervisory training that has been development with them. All new supervisors would complete this training within their first year of hire. All current supervisors will complete this training within one year of the effective date.
- HB459 is being amended. All CPS staff would obtain certification developed by the behavioral board of health. CPS staff must have this training before they could work with youths.
- Amendments that are passed will allow us to develop the certification.
- Dana Toole discussed the Ombudsman bills. There are three bills that impacted The Child and Family Ombudsman at the Department of Justice. HB 398 passed and gives a legislature authority to review Ombudsman's case records that have gone all the way through. Another bill addresses what kind of information the Ombudsman needs to report annually and timelines for interacting with DPHHS when reports on cases are sent over to director. The third bill which is HB625 gives us a structure and authority to be able to conduct systemic investigations and data analysis which expands our work from case specific reviews to being able to identify a trend or pattern that is happening systemically in child welfare in Montana and review a batch of cases which are similar and make a report on that. We have five years of data that CFS is required to send to DOJ. Critical Incidence, runaways, cross reporting are some of the data we are working with.

- Marti discussed three study bills that were sponsored by Representative Lenz from Laurel.
- HB 39 study of pilots, pre-hearing conferences and EPS hearings over the next biennium – passed by governor.
- HJ44 is to study the foster care system barriers and rights.
- HJ45 is a study bill about what is triggering child removals and family reunification.
- Representative Lenz sponsored all three bills.
- Representative Trevis Butcher brought forward a couple bills that weren't as impactful. If a mandatory reporter reaches out and wants follow-up information that they are able to obtain through statute, we change the word from "may" to "shall". We "shall" call and give them the information that we can provide.

Trudi Schmidt asked Dana Toole of DOJ to discuss HB625. HB625 gives us the authority to do systemic investigations. Trudi asked what the purpose is of HB625 and what would happen to all that data. Dana said that we will be able to do a deeper dive into what are the challenges around that systemic issue, why it is a problem and what are the recommendations from her office to address the issue.

Heather Denny gave an update on SB18 that was signed by the Governor on March 26, 2021 and sponsored by Republican Dan Salomon from Ronan. The bill started in the Senate Tribal Relations Committee. It allows any foster care or homeless student who had an education disruption to go to their local school board to give them a state minimum diploma, which is 20 credits. Some larger urban districts require that a student have 26-27 credits. If help is needed, email Heather Denny or Christie Hendricks at OPI. They will advocate on behalf of these students who only have 20 credits.

Marti mentioned that Adam Meier began his role as DPHHS Director February 3, 2021. Marti discussed his expertise on child welfare and how well he fits into DPHHS.

#### **9:10-9:30am Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and FFPSA (Families First) – Nikki Grossberg**

- HB57 regarding the requirements of QRTP (Qualified Residential Treatment Programs). In Montana, we are targeting our therapeutic group homes around that. HB57 put into place a hearing within 60 days of placement of a child in therapeutic group home. Requirements are put into the statute for a qualified individual to do an assessment to identify if a therapeutic group home level of care is needed. We are working on our procedures around that and will be rolling it out in May.
- We are working with our mental health centers who are trained in the CASSIE. Utilizing targeted case managers who are trained in the CASSIE as that qualified individual to do the assessment in conjunction with the level of assessment care team. If a placement is made, then proceeding to a hearing within 60 days and making sure the judge is in agreement. The evaluation needs to take place within 30 days of placement in the therapeutic group home. Will be piloting it through spring. Will be working with a larger group in early May in order to walk through our process and make changes going into summer.
- HB60 changed our voluntary services agreement language in the prevention plan to align with Families First language. It has passed and will go into effect July 1, 2021.
- We submitted our IV-E prevention plan at the end of November of 2020, with reviews pending. We will hear in the near future about the plan being approved by the federal government.
- The five prevention services are:
  - Nurse Family Partnership
  - Parents as teachers

- Motivational Interviewing
- Parent / Child Interaction Therapy
- Healthy Families America
- Watson's Children Shelter is the only program that facilitates the home visiting model.
- The Kinship Navigator Program continues to grow. We have begun a multi-state evaluation process so we have partnered with five other states to really work on that evaluation.
- The ACF has just continued to provide two-year grants that has allowed us to continue to support them through this evaluation process and service delivery. We are working with them for our overall evaluation of Families First Prevention in order to have a good evaluation plan.
- We need to have IT update our CAPS and MFSIS system to be able to report out the information we are required to by the Children's Bureau in order to capture Title IV-E.
- Program Improvement Plan
  - The first goal is about the work we have done to improve, support and enhance our staff in our training. We are in the fifth quarter of the PIP. We have two years to complete all of our key activities and another year for the measurement, which leaves about two years left of the PIP.
  - The second goal is about improving family center in practice, increasing the voice of parents, their case planning, enhancing our safety planning so we can try to maintain children in the home.
  - The third goal is to improve reunification and timeliness to permanency.
  - A Parent Advisory Board has been established that has a group consisting of foster parents, kinship parents, birth parent and two youths with living experiences who are with both parents now.
  - Case review through the past year and areas that we need to enhance.

**9:30-9:40am Program Bureau update – Mick Leary**

- CAN Budget is not available at this time but will be presented at next SAC meeting.
- Need to have council approve CJA (Children's Justice Act) Budget. Funds that come to the department from CAPTA dealing with conviction and investigation of abuse and neglect.
- CJA (Children's Justice Act) budget has not changed much over the years.
- CJA budget of \$93,959 is overseen by Brandi Loch.
- Mick showed the budget on screen to members to show what is projected and explain each program.
- Showed various narratives on what the programs are about and how the budget is spent.
- Motion to approve budget. Motion moved by Brenda Schye and seconded by Megan Bailey to approve CJA budget. All in favor.
- Natalie Lisko, IV-E Program Manager, has been hired and will oversee the IV-E contracts with a variety of entities.
- Responding to CFSR program instructions coming down from the feds.
- Edith asked if the numbers of adoption are affected by COVID. Mick said that the numbers of adoptions are down since COVID. Mick has not received current figures yet.
- Brenda Schye received an email that the Free National CAN Conference is scheduled for July 27-29 and will be virtual. If anyone needs the link, contact Brenda Schye.

## 9:40-10:10am Reports by Regional Administrators

### Region 1: Eric Barnosky

- Working on Family Support team that has been in force for almost a full year now. If CPS assesses any danger and family needs assistance to protect their children, a family support team will be set up so issues can be discussed and figure out what they need in order to provide for their families.
- Enhanced training for staff focusing on substance abuse disorder with four modules available. By end of June we will have completed our first round of training for all job protection specialists.
- Recently provided training on Action and Safety plan for workers.
- Hardin is down two staff members, Miles City has one vacancy, Wolf Point is down two child protection specialists and Glasgow and Malta are fully staffed.
- There is just maintenance and very little drilling in Sidney area and there are no known issues.

### Region 2: Sahrita Jones-Jessee

- Finished “No more violence” week first of April. Focused on hope, being empathetic, and having compassion. Speakers talked about technology and the affects of COVID on our children and mental health at home.
- Family support Teams are averaging 8-10 families per week.
- Had first pre-hearing conference in Cascade County mid-April. Judge Parker, who is new, has pre-hearing conferences on Tuesday and Judge Beth Lasers is on Thursday.
- Had a Meadowlark Program meeting at Benefis in Great Falls and trying to get one on the Blackfoot reservation.
- Three-day Conference with local law enforcement and Daniel Thies Foundation focused on community response by children who are affected by drugs in home.
- Hired supervisor, Josie Plein, on April 12 in Conrad area (Teton-Toole-Glacier-Pondera Counties) and is now fully staffed.
- Havre has two employees who will be leaving this summer. Working on getting the positions advertised.
- Great Falls has one open position. There are nine employees in Great Falls under a year of employment which amounts to a lot of training.

### Region 3: Jason Larson

- EPS pilot court hearing are going well with positive feedback from the three judges.
- Family support teams have only been in Region 3 since December and have been successful.
- Met with Urban Indian Health, Joe Tipton, trying to discuss on how we can work together better. They will participate in an all-staff meeting first part of May.
- Judge Todd in Billings has grant funded ICWA position starting May 3, and Judge Sousa has one starting April 26. They have been filled internally. Judges will be capped at 10-12 families.
- Intake units had one person resign this week so they have two openings now, and the ongoing side of the house has three vacancies.

**Region 4: Jennifer Hoerauf and Laura McCullough**

- Laura McCullough reported since Jennifer is out of the office.
- Domestic Violence training in progress.
- Assisted cross-training Casa staff so they have a better understanding of the system.
- Hired a workforce training position through UofM.
- Started a pilot program in Jennifer's area for motivational interview training.
- Helena is down one worker and close to fully staffed.

**Region 5: Courtney Callaghan**

- Engaged in professional development efforts.
- Working with Empower Montana on Racial Justice and Sensitivity training.
- Received a grant for Vicarious Trauma work.
- There is one open CPS position in Missoula, one open Social Service Technician position in Missoula, one open CPS position in Hamilton, Lake County and Mineral County are fully staffed.
- Hired Facilitator Rachel Gregory for implementation of Family Support Teams.
- Missoula is piloting the EPS hearing process and working out any issues.

**Region 6: Marti Vining for Angie Rolando**

- Participating in EPS hearing pilot project with Judge Wilson and Judge Eddie in Kalispell.
- Have had a few open CPS positions for some time with very few applicants.
- New SST position was created that is focusing on being a liaison between birth families, foster families, and staff to make sure communication is flowing good.
- Staff is losing a supervisor in Libby office who will be retiring this summer.

Marti mentioned that the pandemic is wearing on our staff. Waiting on guidance in the next few weeks. Hopefully we will be on track soon.

**10:10 – 10:20**      **Public Comment:**

There were no public comments.

**10:20-10:30am**      **Wrap Up/Next Meeting: Chairwoman Edith Clark**

Edith Clark gave her thanks to everyone for their help and support.

Nikki Grossberg said the next SAC meeting has not been set yet but will be in July and might be in person. Invite will be sent out for next meeting as soon as a decision has been made on the actual date.

Meeting adjourned at 10:17am