

State Advisory Council Meeting

October 20, 2023 – Virtual via Zoom

Members Present: Rochelle Beley (Chair), Kim Casey, Carrie Krepps, Christy Hendricks, Julie Burk, Megan Bailey, Joshua Kendrick, Valerie Winfield, Bonnie Bear Won't Walk

CFSD Representatives Present: Courtney Callaghan, Deb Cole, Eric Barnosky, Jennifer Blodgett, Brandi Loch, Kate Larcom, Laura McCullough, Nikki Grossberg, Sahrita Jones-Jessee, Logan Ward, Natalie Bahnmilller, Theresa Becker

Guests: Antonica Aleman, Kaci Gaub, Mike Burk, Michael Gallegos, Joy Jones.

Absent: Effie Benoit, Jennifer Hoerauf, Mick Leary, Sarah Liggett, Autumn Beattie, Ben Davis, Sean Schoenfelder, Serena Wright, Dana Toole, Greg Daly, Julie Fleck, Ashley Harada, Adam Larsen, Francis Garner

9:00-9:10am Opening – Call to Order

Chair Rochelle Beley called the meeting to order at 9:00am on October 20, 2023 via Zoom.

9:10-9:25am Welcome and Introductions. Welcome new members: Honorable Judge Ashley Harada of Billings and Billings County Attorney Adam Larsen (Brandi and Nikki)

Everyone introduced themselves. Minutes from July 20, 2023, State Advisory Council meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

9:25-9:45am Recap of July on-site meeting with Connected Voices and Youth Advisory Board (Brandi)

- **Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle**
- **Review Agreements from July On-site**
- **Discussion – Accomplishments and Challenges**

Many members have been on SAC for years and we have two new members, Judge Harada and Adam Larsen. Over the past year CFSD has contracted with Center for the States (Joy, Antonica and Mike) who have been working alongside us to help strengthen our engagement work which includes Connected Voices and Youth Advisory Board. In July 2023, they all got together to talk through permanency to involve the Continuous Quality Improvement Process (Plan-Do-Study-Act process). The SAC group talked about where we currently are as a state, where we are headed and what each of the groups wants as permanency. Out of the July meeting, the SAC had talked about gathering data and more people for the State Advisory Council. The Youth Advisory Board is also working towards recruiting more member and spreading the word around the youth bill of rights that was created. Connected Voices are working towards a mentorship program between resource parents.

9:45-10:15am SAC Past, Present and Future – moving toward a Community Practice Structure by Nikki Grossberg and Brandi Loch

We have had the State Advisory Council for over 20 years which is a requirement under CAPTA (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act). It has always been about coming together and for all the community members who have been a part of it to hear from the CFSD on what we are doing. Around 2018-2019 the

State decided to change direction in order to get input and direction from the community stakeholders and use the knowledge that they have to improve the child welfare system we have. We included the Center of the States to help with this new system. If there are ideas anyone may have or know of interested people, they are welcome to be discussed in order to get a diverse group of people helping to guide the system. CFSD transferred the Childrens Justice Act grant and CAPTA grant to the Childrens Alliance of Montana, but will remain a part of it.

10:15am-10:45am Understanding Communities of Practice and Relevance to the Work of the State Advisory Council (Mike Burk)

Discussion among those in attendance on what their practices are for the SAC group that has worked for them.

Mike Burk (consultant for Center of the States) reviewed the keys to success for the community and membership participation.

- Serve as an important source of information.
- Survey or conduct assessments to identify group needs.
- Conduct activities that help members see similarities with other members.
- Increase community status by bringing recognized experts to facilitate, recruit members with expertise or invite guests.
- Fostering, Learning and Improving Practice.
- Develop methods to store and share information to be easily available to members.
- Allow for Synchronous (i.e. virtual or in-person meetings) and asynchronous (i.e. message boards, shared cloud drives).
- Help members get to know each other.
- Structure and facilitate activities that promote social interactions among members (the importance of those sometimes dreaded icebreakers).

Benefits

- Opportunity to create new structure.
- Encourages focus on key topic areas.
- Allows for subgroups on key interest areas.
- Encourages shared learning and relationship development.

CAPTA Task Force general rules will be sent to everyone after the meeting.

Challenges

- Assistance needed in developing and training.
- Need to develop shared values and purpose.
- Need to identify key topic areas and structures.
- Need to identify and obtain technology (i.e. platforms for information sharing and storage to support).
- Next steps – to be discussed later in agenda.

10:15am – 10:25am Break

10:30am-11:15am What Does this Mean for us? Exploring participant and system roles in improving permanency outcomes

Brandi pointed out that the acronym CFSR stands for Child and Family Services Review. The last review in 2017 was where the State partnered with the federal government to do a holistic review of our child welfare system at the state level. The formal process was interviewing stakeholders, partners, families, and in-depth case reviews. Out of that review were a number of areas on strengths or areas that needed improvement. Out of that last review a program improvement plan was created that focused on certain areas that will improve outcomes for kids and families. We have worked on that over the past few years and just came to a close this last spring. Part of that plan was permanency. It was our ability as a state to create appropriate permanency plans for kids and that it was in a timely manner. That is the only area out of our PIP that we did not end up passing on our last round. We have all been working on this as a state agency to focus on permanency. Part of that work is engaging our stakeholders and partners which is why we brought together our State Advisory Council, Parent Advisory Board and Youth Advisory Board to share the data around permanency and where we are at and where we are headed around that work.

Brandi recited the actual definition of Permanency: “Permanency in child welfare is the goal of providing children with a stable and lasting family connection. Child welfare agencies use various strategies to maintain children within their families of origin or place them with other permanent families, such as relatives or adoptive families. Permanency decisions are based on the best interests of the child and require a sense of urgency, ethical and legal considerations and specialized education, training and resources.” This definition is all meant for the benefits of the child.

Logan Ward reported the total of CPS Reports by Year from SFY 2019-2023

- There were 3200+ hotline calls in SFY 2023
- There were 6,926 reports compared to 10,935 in SFY 2023. There were about 11,000 in 2019
- There were 3,950 total kids in care in SFY 2019 compared to 2,442 in SFY 2023 which is a 38% decrease.
- There were 450 total kids in care under IV-E Tribal Jurisdiction
- There were 2,399 removals in SFY 2019 compared to 1,351 in SYF 2023 which is a 44% decrease. About 200 had cases that were resolved before having to go to court
- Removals by age from 2019 to 2023 of 2,399 are broken down by age groups (Age 0-5, 6-13, 14-17)
- Kids entering care was at 2,457 in SFY 2019 compared to 1,467 in SFY 2023
- Exits should be higher than entries by fiscal year. There were 2,399 entries in SFY 2019 and 1,351 in SFY 2023. There were 1,647 exits during 2023. There was a 43.7% decrease from 2019 to 2023.

Rochelle asked about the discrepancies amongst regions, counties, supervisors and workers about placement figures. There are different numbers given from each person. Nikki explained that one supervisor with one set of specific facts will have different facts than the next person, which is why there is a small discrepancy. There are so many factors that are included in different cases.

- Permanency Outcomes in 2019 had 65.5% kids in care and 58.1% in care in 2023 achieving permanency. Reunification is at 58% which is above national average.
- Timelines to Permanency – want to achieve reunification in 12 months, guardianship is at 18 months, adoption is at 24 months.

- Achievement of Permanency in 12 months for kids already in care 12-23 months at 48% and is above national average.
- Achievement of Permanency in 12 months for kids already in care 24+ months at 37.3% and is also above national average.

11:10am

**What does this Permanency Data Mean for us and What are our next steps (Mike Burk and Brandi Loch)
As a professional serving on SAC and/or participating in a community of Practice? Engagement with children and families through your work, your community, your stakeholders**

Carrie Krepps – Have we looked at the cross section of data of how quickly of a timeline for permanency there is that occurs versus long permanency? Nikki replied that it refers to the re-entry rate. Mike Burk said the re-entry rate for permanency is 8.7% with a 91.3% rate for children maintaining permanency. Anyone can request from CQI what data is needed.

12:00pm – 11:20am Action Plan and Next Steps (Brandi Loch)

Brandi said that the next meeting will be in-person in Helena January 2024. Permanency will be an on-going conversation at the State Advisory Council. Feedback is more than welcome at any time by contacting Rochelle Beley or Brandi.

In order to stay connected, our next steps are:

- You can connect with your Regional Advisory Council.
- You can reach out to Brandi if you have questions or thoughts.
- Identify needs or thoughts for January meeting.
- Members from Connected Voices and Youth Advisory Board will be at the January meeting
- What data or other information do you want or need?

11:28am Closing Adjournment

- “How can you stay connected” email will be sent out from Brandi.
- Michael Gallegos thanked everyone for guidance and participation.
- Next State Advisory Council meeting is scheduled in-person for January 19, 2024.
- Brandi will send out survey to get ideas.

No public comment

State Advisory Council adjourned at 11:28am