

Division of Family and Children Services
State Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2016
1:00-4:00 p.m.
Atlanta, Georgia

Attendees

Board Members (**Present**): Delaine Hunter, Kathy Cooper, Tina Bartleson, Emily Cole, Octavia Fugerson, Columbus Watkins, Belva Dorsey, Roger Bryant, Tommy Hill, Rodney Griffin, Cathy Atkins, Meredith Ramaley, Toni Oliver, Judy Manning, Cindy England, Michelle Zeanah

Guests: Mark Waits, Deborah Johnson, Sonya Williams, Caterri, Leaks, Ashley Fielding

DFCS Staff: Director Bobby Cagle, Virginia Pryor, Jon Anderson, Carol Christopher, Vivian Egan, Melissa Belk, Lucy Smith, Dahlia Brown, Katrina Mitchell, Ann Carter, Lee Biggar, Keith Bostick, Mona Jackson, Cliff O'Connor, Steve Reed, Colleen Mousinho, Trina Massey Davis, Mary Beth Lukich, Ramirez Evans, Mable Gibson, Jeff Lukich, Donna Pettigrew-Jackson, Susan Boatwright, Ellen Geeker, LaWanda Proctor, LaMarva Ivory

The first meeting of the newly formed DFCS State Advisory Board was called to order by Director Cagle at 1:00 p.m.

- Introductions by Board members and DFCS staff
- Overview of reimbursement process by Sonya Williams, Office of Financial Services
- Overview of board makeup by Vivian Egan, Office of General Counsel
- Overview of the Division, Director Bobby Cagle

Presentations were made by each of the Deputy Directors, followed by a Q&A session with the board.

- Overview of the Office of Family Independence, Deputy Director Jon Anderson
 - o **Cathy Atkins:** We are so pleased with the *One Caseworker, One Family* method. Those in our communities have expressed that they much prefer having a local person to work with.
 - o **Tommy Hill** Q: How are the new employees that are being hired going to be dispersed among the regions? A: Yes. We will provide that information to you.
 - o **Cathy Atkins** Q: Regarding the new employees, can we discuss placement of employees in future meetings and the turnover/filling of vacancies? A: Of course.
 - o **Octavia Fugerson** Q: Please review the specifics of the Melanie K lawsuit. A: This requires us to be at least 96% accurate in our SNAP reviews quarterly.
 - o **Toni Oliver** Q: Regarding the system enhancements, will that reduce duplication? A: Yes. The new system will eliminate duplicates and also will notify staff when there is more than one application in the system.

- **Rodney Griffin** Q: Please summarize hiring restrictions in OFI. A: Since July of last year, we have reopened hiring but have had a few internal issues (i.e. backfilling positions) so when a vacancy opens up we try to fill that position in that location.
 - **Toni Oliver** Q: I gather there are differences in caseloads vs. staffing across the state. Are you looking at workload staffing vs. caseload? A: We are. We look at the number of applications, renewals and active caseloads in each county. We then determine the deficit/surplus in each. In some of the larger areas (Metro), we have other counties help and pitch in.
 - **Roger Bryant** Congratulations on the development of the new system for OFI, it is long overdue. Thank you for your weekly memos Director Anderson, it is very positive reinforcement and means a lot to staff. I look forward to a presentation on Georgia Gateway in the future.
- Overview of the Office of Child Welfare, Deputy Director Ginger Pryor
- **Octavia Fugerson** Q: How is timeliness measured? A: We have 45 days to complete an investigation. Once you're over the 45 day mark, a case is considered overdue.
 - **Dr. Michelle Zeanah** Q: Is there a time between when a report is made and when an investigation opens? A: If there is actual physical, visible abuse we go out immediately. There is a level of severity for 24 hours and 5 days which gives us more time to respond. It depends on the type of call we receive. Q: Can we get some numbers on how long it actually takes? Do you all track this? A: Yes. We have a number of efforts going on to address timeliness.
 - **Toni Oliver** Q: Can we see a copy of the staff survey? A: Yes, we will email you the highlights.
 - **Tina Bartleson** Q: I like and am a supporter of SBC. However, I think there are some folks that will have a hard time embracing it. Will the local offices be able to carry on with those who cannot embrace it? A: Yes, we hope to keep those staff. Our goal is to make sure the way in which we engage families translates at the workforce level too. It needs to be a parallel process. We would be happy to have Dr. Christensen come present for you all on solution-based casework (SBC).
 - **Belva Dorsey** Q: Do you anticipate collaborating with other local organizations that focus on prioritizing family partnerships? A coordinated effort makes for a better approach. A: We are doing various trainings with providers and coordinating our efforts. Family-centered practice is very similar to SBC. The Family Connections partnership is working with us to thread this throughout the community. We invite you all to sit in on the advisory committee meeting.
 - **Tommy Hill** Q: I am concerned about caseworker safety. What are we doing to protect our employees who go out into bad situations? A: We are currently piloting the *Safe Harbor Initiative* which is a panic button for caseworkers. This is being done in partnership with Georgia Tech and will be piloted this summer.
 - **Octavia Fugerson** Q: Regarding the reasonable prudent parent standard. Please speak to the term "safety" and what does it mean when discussing the youth? Does it mean "lockdown"? A: Each individual case is different. It gives foster parents flexibility so that they can provide normalcy for foster children and youth (i.e. sleepovers, sports teams, field trips, etc.)
 - **Meredith Ramaley** Q: Where did you come up with your goal for the turnover rate? Your turnover rate greatly affects law enforcement. We work closely with caseworkers and when there is high turnover, we must keep rebuilding those

relationships. A: Director Cagle came up with that figure based on his experience and considers that to be a healthy turnover rate (15%).

- **Toni Oliver** Q: Regarding the new practice model. Do you have certain benchmarks you will be measuring against this new model to see what it is creating positively or negatively as a result of making this change? I'm thinking morale will go up as people will be more connected to the work. A: Yes, we would be happy to share those benchmarks in the next meeting. We will begin the practice in some metro counties in July.
 - **Meredith Ramaley** Q: Will you provide more information on SHINES and the improvements coming to the system? A: Yes.
- Overview of the Office of Project Management, Deputy Director Carol Christopher
 - **Meredith Ramaley** I commend you all for taking on the Safe Harbor Act. I am delighted to know that it will be up and running soon.
 - Closing remarks, along with additional questions and comments by the board members
 - **Emily Cole** Q: Regarding media relations. When the child abuse registry is implemented, can we promote that information? A: We will. We will provide you all information on the registry and information regarding those who can use/access it so you are more familiar.
 - **Toni Oliver** Q: You mentioned foster parents, is there a component of SBC that includes them? A: It doesn't specifically identify foster parents but we've been discussing how we can be more intentional when working with foster and birth parents to encourage them to work together. This will help achieve permanency more quickly for the children and it is good for the children and youth to have relationships with these adult figures. A local university is studying our training for foster parents and will be giving us recommendations on how we can change that for the better.
 - Q: Will we be able to get this PowerPoint electronically? A: Yes.
 - The next advisory board meeting will be held Wednesday, July 27th at 2 Peachtree. There will be a training in the morning with a board meeting to follow that afternoon. During the board meeting elections will be held for a Chair and other positions, as well as for committees.
 - The *Blueprint for Change* Roadshow Tour dates and information will be shared with you all as well.

Meeting adjourned at 3:54 p.m. by Director Cagle