

State Advisory Council Minutes

Monday, December 7, 2015

Members in attendance: Elisabeth Cannata, Claudia Carbonari, M.D., Deb Kelleher, Erica Kesselman, M.D., Stephanie Lizotte, Sarah Lockery, Regina Moller, Alana Parkinson, Sue Sherrick,

Also in Attendance: Commissioner Joette Katz, Susan Smith, Alana Jones, Mary Ellen Hass, Libby Kellert

Members Absent: Lorna Grivois

Welcome & Introductions

Regina Moller

Meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m.

Chair welcomed Commissioner Joette Katz and all in attendance introduced themselves.

RAC Updates

Regina Moller reviewed the RAC reporting process to the SAC for use in the RAC Updates portion of the agenda. The *RAC SAC Communication Form* is to be sent via email to the co-chairs, Susan Smith and Maria Obregon. She asked that the RAC representatives at the table please bring back to their regions SAC's request that the written updates must be submitted via email three business days prior to the meeting.

Region 1-Susan Sherrick and Mary Ellen Hass-

- The work on the RAC Bylaws is ongoing.
- They have focused on parent, community and youth representation. We now have 4 parents. Have reached out to providers asking them to reapply. Flyers created to reach parent groups and youth.
- Next meeting is December 18
- Identified two questions to be brought before the Commissioner: 1. When RAC submits recommendations to the Commissioner, how do they receive a response? 2. The need of emergency beds in Region 1. Commissioner responded that for the past five years she has been trying to bring the designation of beds to where they are needed and has not yet had any success.

Region 2- Sarah Lockery- *RAC/SAC Communication Form (10/30/2015) Attachment 1.*

- Ms. Lockery attended the YAB meeting and will work with Josh Fisher DCF SW/liaison to YAB to connect the YAB and RAC.
- The YAB have communicated to DCF they need help with youth job retention, how to link youth with supportive adults, pro-social activities, organizations, and career mentors.
- The LIST has agreed to carry discussions about family experiences with the JJ system.
- The RAC has formed a Fatherhood subcommittee. They held their first meeting on 12/3/15 and was very well attended. The committee plans to hold a Fatherhood Conference in April and an event in September.
- The RAC will hold four annual open meetings to include the chairs of the Collaboratives, LIST, parent leaders, state department representatives and the youth.
- The RAC requested that SAC review their Bylaws.
- A message to the Commissioner that the RAC is concerned about the impact the budget cuts will have on the services to adults caring for children.

Region 3-Alana Jones. RAC member submitted an update on RAC's activities on behalf of Lorna Grivois. Formal report was not submitted.

- Held their first meeting with the Family Advisory Board. They are a very strong group that supports the RAC.
- It was a combined meeting which opened with the Family Advisory Board then continued with the RAC meeting.
- It was held on a Saturday with a pot luck which has enhanced parent / family participation. Offering transportation and child care is also successful. The CRP monies are used for child care and stipends to parents attending. They offer activities of interest to the children during their care. Last meeting a bullying presentation was offered to the kids while the adults attended the meeting.
- Youth advisory Board attended to share the Foster Kids Bill of Rights.
- Regina Moller added lot of family and youth input and will be done quarterly because the flexibility was a boost to participation and the focus was the youth in foster care and some Fatherhood as well.
- Very impressive were the youth spokes persons for foster care that were now in Community Colleges.

- Region 3 is also piloting the Communications Plan which Libby Kellert will report on later in the meeting. The focus is on the development of a communication flow within the region so all community collaborative and other smaller meetings, like LIST, to assure the information flow back to the RAC.
- Regina Moller attended the recent statewide council of community collaboratives meeting to report and raise their awareness that SAC wants to establish communication with the various collaboratives and is looking to receive information from them. She hoped that the other regions are doing the same.

Region 4-Alana Parkinson. Formal report not submitted.

- Reviewed the Performance expectations and steps for improvement. This portion took the majority of time of the meeting.
- The Committees are struggling getting together
- CQI teams came in to do give a presentation and will be joining some of the CQI teams.
- Bylaws discussions and update given.

Region 5- Deb Kelleher- *RAC/SAC Communication Report (12/7/15) Attachment 2.*

She did not attend the October meeting and there was no November meeting because of the conflict with the holiday.

- Elected a new co-chair, Precious Price, currently an intern and former DCF youth. The internship ends in May but she wants to remain on and fulfill this as long as she is in CT.
- Sergio Alvarez did a presentation on the DCF Data Dashboard. It was noted that it took a very long time because it was the first time many in the region had seen this, particularly families, so much discussion brewed about what the data meant. He provided an explanation about ISS the Integrated Service System and a design applicable to Region 5. Plan to have an Executive Planning Committee, composed of the larger service providers in the area, to identify where the gaps exist. It is a work in progress.
- Discussion regarding youth were carried. It covered on congregate care, S-FIT & homelessness once youth are discharged.
- For the coming year, youth in detention, how to obtain meaning youth involvement, youth aging out will be the focus.
- Youth voice was added to the regular agenda of the RAC.
- The rotation of the RAC in the main hub cities of Torrington, Danbury and Waterbury because of distance and the effect on attendance.
- Discussion about Bylaw and membership was tabled until December. They were aware it would be discussion at SAC and how it worked here.

Region 6- Elisabeth Cannata, RAC tri-chair. The formal report will be emailed after the meeting.

They have met twice since October. Greatest attendance was in November and smallest was in December because of competing obligations with holiday activities.

- Had three family member attended December-three voting providers and well attended by DCF.
- November meeting- new families that had been recruited by other family members attended.
- The discussion over the past two months has been on finalizing the three topics that Region 6 will focus on: Ongoing Membership Committee resulting from review of Bylaws and stringency of current by-laws about how many meetings can be missed and how long a term should be. They will meet for part of every RAC meeting.
- Fatherhood Continuity carried over from last year. They want continued focus and this year specific recommendations to DCF on how to best engage fathers and assuring there are supports that do not exclude fathers.
- Transition Age Youth: looking at DCF policies/practices around transition into adulthood and creativity about recommendations about how to best support young adults.
- Request from Commissioner: question what would be helpful to the Commissioner in terms of the energy you have in Region 6 w supporting fathers- what they can focus that would be helpful to what DCF is doing. there is an awareness of what DCF is already doing to engage fathers and think about fathers differently and reach out to fathers differently – also aware of tight budget environment.

The agenda order is modified from this point to accommodate Commissioner's schedule.

Discussions with Commissioner

The chair outlined three topic SAC was wanted to discuss. They include: what do you (Commissioner) need from SAC, Fatherhood, Issues of homelessness after discharge from DCF care, and the needs of the Adults caring for the children in DCF care- such as, mental health needs and other needs that have not been met.

Commissioner.

Federal law changed last year, and can no longer have OPPLA goals for kids under sixteen other than a permanency plan. State legislation was passed to be consistent. Under 16 is outlawed and if a child is 16-17, judges have to sign off as the only option. This is in part why DCF is focusing on permanency. On Friday we settled on no one under 16 and 50% reduction of kids (kids 16 and 17) with OPPLA goals.

It touches fatherhood engagement, stepping up with all of our relatives, reaching out more for foster homes, getting legislation, which we were actually able to do. We have a lot of foster families who have not been willing to be permanent guardians. Two years ago DCF was able to get legislation that applied to families, but at this point we have a lot of foster families who are essentially kin. You have a foster child in your home for two or three years, you are not biologically related, but now you have become kin. So moving legislation that will allow the foster parent to be a permanent guardian which means you don't have to terminate parental right of children involved. For many youth 16 and 17 there is still some connection to their families and they don't want to see their parents parental rights terminated. What could DCF do to still bring them to permanency and solidify those relationship without severing their ties? There was legislation allowing these families to be permanent guardians but in the eleventh hour it was a technicality that basically eliminated foster families which was the aim. It will be brought back to the table and it will be fixed next session. Commissioner's goal was to reach out to existing foster families to help them understand the benefits of permanent guardianship- and figure out what their financial incentives and disincentives are and allow us to bring these kids to permanency. That is the big push now, particularly with the older youth.

If you refer to one of Susan's data charts, the Independent Living category, Commissioner would like it to be non-existent because it has become the catchall –if nothing else it brings the kids to independent living status-and then they can become homeless. That is not permanency.

If you look at the kids with OPPLA goals a huge percentage, more than 50%, and closer to 75% are living with families. They are not in congregate care. So the department is working towards making those families permanent. In terms of SAC's earlier question, the RACs can help advance this agenda by bringing the conversations to the local and regional meetings. Addressing a question about financial incentives to foster families, Commissioner responded that there would be a subsidy beyond what they currently receive.

Commissioner stated she has approved the adoption and agreements reached for kids over the age of 21. She had recently attended an adoption in Milford of a 23 year old who had been with the foster family for a number of years and the foster family had taken in two little ones who were 3 and 5 and it took three years of litigation to get them to permanency and the older one didn't want to get adopted before the little ones. They waited for the Supreme Court decision that allowed that adoption to go forward. They were all adopted on the same day.

Susan recommended that it would be helpful to have RACs to seek presentations from the permanency folks who used to be the adoption resource exchange. Every region has someone who split their time between central office and the regions who would be able to talk about the work they are doing. They are often doing a variety of community based activities, recruitment and outreach. It would be good to get that information about the subsidy piece as well as how they could be of assistance to youth. An added suggestion was the Adoption Systems Program. Susan will get a list of who those folks are- as they were recently changed and is not fully familiar with all the names.

Alana Parkinson expressed her appreciation to the Commissioner as a parent to foster children for 25 years and in the process of adopting their fifth. They have two adult foster children, who never wanted to be adopted but have always been with them because they cannot go back home. It would have made things so much easier if during their teen years – getting permission from DCF for everything would have been eliminated. It would have made their lives so much easier. She thanked the Commissioner for pursuing this on behalf of foster parents.

Commissioner acknowledged and cited another change in the policy is the reasonably prudent parent standard that was placed in federal legislation and is now is part of the state policy. Foster parents are parents and should be able to make decisions about sleepovers, vacations all of those things without coming to DCF.

Commissioner noted she used to consider the greater challenge was communicating the external goals but has found that with 3400 employees, internally, it is more than communicating the goals but assuring they are being interpreted accurately at all levels. Commissioner Katz cited a couple of examples that demonstrated her point.

Commissioner acknowledged the activism and work of the Youth Advisory Boards who drafted the Foster Care Bill of Rights. It is posted on our website. She will be meeting and having dinner with them on Wednesday night and their next assignment will be their needs when transitioning out which will be announced at the meeting.

Ms. Cannata asked if it would be possible to include the recommendations from Region 5 RAC regarding youth who sign themselves out as soon as they can and then realize that they needed more support than they thought. Can the YAB consider ways to give kids choice but at same time facilitating the option to come back with certain parameters.

This may also address the population that are couch surfing and homeless.

Discussion was carried regarding this topic.

Commissioner will add this topic to the YAB discussions.

Issues with EMPS Services. Region 3 asked that this concern be brought before the Commissioner. It was voiced at the statewide collaborative meeting, and the common theme was that families are having issues with EMPS services. The foster homes want to keep kids out of the emergency room. They don't want to call police so they call the EMPS. If, while the call is placed, and EMPS hears disruptive noise in the background they are immediately instructing the families to call the police. Their reasoning is that it sounds violent, disruptive and unsafe and they cannot place their workers in jeopardy. The question was posed if parents in other regions are experiencing the same thing. Extensive discussion was carried. Region 1 noted that the practice in their region is the police and the EMPS arrive at the same time and are used regularly with kids in therapeutic foster care.

Crossover youth. Commissioner asked how active the RAC and SAC agendas are around this topic as we have a number of youth who are also in juvenile justice system? General silence followed. Extensive discussion was carried. Historically the LIST has been separate and the RACs will have to work to bridge with LIST and the Youth Advisory Board. Commissioner emphasized that this practice further separates and demonizes those youth and their families who are struggling with them, some of whom are foster families.

Commissioner recommended educating the public by way of presentations at the local RACs. Linda Dixon who already does a great amount of work in the community, can conduct the presentations at the local RACs to describe some of the services we have available for those kids. 50% of children at CJTS come from families with mental health issues, and are predominantly children of color.

Commissioner asked the RACs to also address the Racial Justice work.

Stating, "Looking at ourselves as an agency, we have to accept and conclude the fact that we have behaved through very racist lines." In an analysis that Susan conducted, it showed that only 10% of the families seeking Voluntary Services are African American. What kind of message are we delivering to people that they are afraid to come to us for mental health services.

Commissioner noted that these are very broad and significant topics that our RACs and SAC could help with.

Ms. Moller stated that in our work with membership, SAC/RAC have identified that we need to get education, and DMHAS and now, after today's discussions, juvenile justice folks to the table.

In response to Commissioner Katz question, Ms. Cannata stated the purpose of the RAC/SAC Communication Form was to assure meaningful, well-prepared observations from RACs to present to the Commissioner. We need to consider the timing of submitting these requests to the Commissioner to allow her the time formulate a response. We are asking the RACs to be more structured in providing specific items, concerns to SAC. Part of that is having RAC representation present at these meetings with the Commissioner to carry discussions to give the Commissioner the context that she needs. The SAC body needs to discuss the regional requests before they go the Commissioner.

It was proposed that the regional requests be discussed and vetted at the February meeting. SAC would then choose the common themes to present to Commissioner ahead to time and prior to the April meeting.

Susan will work with the Commissioner on the responses to the RAC/SAC.

DCF Update

Susan informed SAC that data we shared with the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC), was posted on the website. It is a PowerPoint with various data about the JJ population including some of the service in and service out if you want primer and some current data on that population.

Susan Smith addressed the DCF Children in Placement Projections graph done every six months (graph Attachment 3) When the Commissioner refers to 90% of kids in the community, or 10% of kids in maximum in congregate care-this is the tool she has based on some empirical work based upon the analytic approach. When we refer to no more than generally our child placement numbers, 4000 at best, if you are talking 10% you have 400 kids statewide and that number includes kids in CJTS, in hospital, kids in all settings. So when you start to get to those ends that is where you can start to see where some settings don't make sense anymore. So this is our most updated projection that was completed in October 2015 and is done every six months because you need a certain volume of data in order to make those determinations. We have been very close. Kudos to the folks in the Office of Research and Evaluation. From the dotted line back, this is the historical data and forward the projections. We are projecting that by end of 2017 we are looking at no less than 9% of our kids in in-care population being in a congregate type setting. We will be hitting 90 in about one year or so in terms of the kids who will likely be at 10%. For the past years we have been trying to maximize the data and make it more accessible and using it to drive some of the decisions. This is a graph that helps to explain how and why some of the decisions are being made and really does amplify the discussion about how do we support these kids, particularly the 90% who are in the community. We all recognize that there will always be kids who will require certain volume so we will ever get to 0 for congregate but

we expect that a large percentage of our kids will be in communities. We need to consider what are we doing and what needs to be done in order to serve those kids both on the JJ side and the other populations as well.

Susan will send the report to SAC.

Susan noted that reporting about data could easily be a daylong session. She will briefly cover some of the items with the intent to invite the experts for a formal presentation to SAC. Susan requested that the February meeting be dedicated to cover FAR and the work being done with Differential Response and an in depth discussion about CFSR because the RAC and SAC are integral to the work we will be doing with this process. The DCF Family Assessment Response, dated August 28, 2015 is Attachment 4.

Foster care data will also be covered with a formal presentation to SAC at a future meeting. Attached is the Preliminary Summary of Foster Home Quality and Satisfaction Survey (Attachment 5).

In terms of state resources, DCF will likely not be getting any new dollars from the state given the budget restriction. Elizabeth Duryea has been working diligently on federal craftsmanship and finding other funding sources, like Social Impact Bonds.

In terms of state resources it does it is not promising that we would get new dollars given some of the budget restrictions. This also is a time we make sure that what we have is working well. We have been focusing on how to be more transparent but also sharing information with the stakeholders.

Susan covered the DCF Data Connect, a mockup of an external web page we are developing to make data we compile available in a timely manner to assure folks have access to information they need to assess the quality of their services. This sample is only a layout of the types of data that we are expecting to make available. It will have hyperlinks and be visually more appealing. We are looking to have it in place by the first of the year. It will have a dedicated section with a link. This is in keeping with the Connecticut Data Portal, developed by Executive Order 39, where Governor required all Executive Branch Agencies to make data sets available on the open data portal. DCF is one of many agencies that has these raw data set. Our children in placement data goes back one decade. We have data tables that break it out by race, gender, region, area office, information about entries into care, and permanency data. It is updated annually at a minimum. It also includes a Kids Report Card that the legislature, under Representative Urban, has created.

The DCF Performance Expectations report card, currently posted on DCF website.

Town pages that have longitudinal data on foster care – children in placement.

Item 6 is called, the fifteen year trend. It is simply a graph that shows the number of kids that we had in placement on January 1, 2000 and shows how many kids we had in care in July. It further demonstrates the trend and the events that have taken place. An example, when we introduced Structured Decision Making and focused on risk vs safety - we saw a drop in the number of kids in placement. She drew attention to this because it was so stark that in 2000 we had 7010 kids in placement and if you are familiar with our census, that is close to 1% of the CT child population that had been in care.

We have about 800,000 kids in CT or a little less. That has dropped dramatically.

The dashboards that folks have been discussing at their RACs will be posted.

Child and Family Service reviews and Legislative Reports will be included.

The PowerPoint for FAR is on our website.

There is a variety of data that the department is producing and we committed to assuring accessibility to folks.

It is maintained by our internal webmaster. Susan Smith is either responsible to create or receives the data which she will pass along to the webmaster for posting.

Susan called attention to the Preliminary Summary of the Foster Home Quality and Satisfaction Survey, (attached) adding that her unit is working on something more comprehensive.

CFSR (Child and Family Services Review)- the department formally begins the process on April 2016. This is a national process for all jurisdictions. All states go through this process and it is run by Federal Children's Bureau. States are expected to achieve a certain level of a variety of items in order avoid entering into a performance improvement plan. If you enter into a performance improvement plan, you must achieve the expected levels in order to avoid monetary/fiscal penalties. A lot rides on this process. This is a redesigned CFSR process. In years past the Feds would bring in consultants/peer reviewers from other states who would look at the department's records/or case file records to assess how we were doing, how our service array was functioning and quality assurance processes. All these areas will still be reviewed but the Feds are now allowing states to potentially do their own review of the case record piece of it. It is very rigorous. We have been trying to stand this up for well over a year and it has been intensive process where we have to outline how we are going to do it, who will do it, the training, the quality assurance, how you will pull your samples. Before the Feds allow the states do this, their requirements are very stringent. Connecticut has opted to do a self-driven process.

We are looking to adopt this and make it a normative part of the work that we do as a department. Recognizing that we seek to exit from the Consent decree –this is another mechanism that will demonstrate our compliance and that we are comporting with national standards in meeting certain outcomes.

Currently there are several reviews done in the department. There is the Court Monitor quarterly review that monitors our performance regarding the 22 Outcome Measures and an Administrative Case Review (ACR), which reviews 15,000 records annually. We are looking to blend these processes and create a singular one, modeled under the ACR rubric which will allow us to look at the work using the federal lens.

We have received preliminary approval from the feds to conduct a self-directed review process. In fact, they have asked us to present tomorrow, at the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors meeting in New Hampshire, to talk about the process that we have set up here in CT. The backdrop is that the SACs RACs, YAB, and families are going to be key stakeholders in this work. In addition to our self-directed review, the Feds and others will be conducting focus groups and interviews soliciting information from a variety of folks about how you all see the system functioning-what is working and what is not. We are considering how to better coordinate these efforts to assure we have a good diversity and multi-discipline representation. Folks participating in those interviews will be critical.

Susan directed attention to the *Child and Family Services Reviews Quick Reference Items List* (Attachment 6) and the *FACT Sheet* (Attachment 7) which outlines the components the Feds will be looking at from a systems point of view. The Feds have laid out a format we must follow. The Outcomes are data driven so those are the outcomes we need to present to them. (both documents attached)

The systemic factors are items 19-30, which covers Quality Assurance System with Staff and Provider Training, Service Array and Resource Development. The last section, Agency Responsive to the Community, requires discussions and feedback from RAC/SAC. We want to give the Feds an honest and objective representation of what is going on in the department. Susan asked to return in February to talk more directly about this. She will be sending SAC some materials over the next month or so in order to get feedback as we begin our assessment to get a sense of what folks think we are doing well, and what are some of the potential areas of improvement.

There is a nexus between the CFSR process and the Child and Family Service Plan and then the annual review, Progress Update Document, that we submit to the feds in order to get a variety of funding. Those documents are posted on the website and Susan will send the links to those documents. You will also receive the links to the APSR (Annual Progress and Service Review). It will give you an opportunity to see where we are, things we are suggesting, what we working on and areas where we need more support.

Review process goes from April to September – it is very intensive, long process. These reviews are conducted every three to four years. The Feds are planning to come on site when they begin to conduct interviews and surveys.

There is a 50 page document that lays out what the data and what the performance improvement expectations were. We received a performance improvement plan and we expect to get one again. No state ever escapes receiving one, which usually go for a couple of years.

The Child and Family Service Plan that we posted goes from 2015 to 2019 and details the past findings.

The timeframe of PIP was achieved within the timeframe and no fiscal penalties imposed.

Most of the issues are typically related to the performance measures. If they are related to items 1-18 you have to re-do case reviews until you get to the level that they want.

The chair recommended that Items 7. RAC Bylaws and 8.SAC Legislation of the agenda be tabled due to time constraint.

The chair presented Libby Kellert- an intern in Region 3 who is working with John Jacaruso on a *Region 3 Communication Plan* (document Attachment 8). She was invited to present the draft process of the plan's purpose and methodology to enhance communications between the local systems, the RAC and SAC. It was drafted for use in Region 3 as a way of gathering information from local groups, like LIST and collaboratives, and bringing it back to the Regional Advisory Council. In reviewing the Systems Table Communication Form portion, Ms. Kellert added that she will amend the form to include an additional question, "What do you think is working well?" This form would go out to the groups electronically quarterly. It would be a way for them to share the issues that are pressing, which are most discussed, how their communities are being impacted and what ideas they have to affect change. The greater challenge is once the RACs have reviewed the form, how to get their feedback back down to the specific groups. RACs sharing their minutes with the groups may be one way send feedback.

In Region 3 this would be given to the systems of care, the Youth Advisory Board and Parent Advisory, LIST. It is up to the RAC to decide which groups. Allon Kalisher wants to have some type of online survey like Survey Monkey that individuals can fill out. This method would be an amended to address only one issue at a time.

Extensive discussion followed identifying the various group meetings throughout the regions, all of which discuss similar issues. Coordination is necessary. Each RAC will need to determine how to reach out and partner with these groups. The multiple meetings for the various community groups is a deterrent to achieve family involvement at individual meetings because they are being asked to attend too many.

Region 2 reported that last year they began to hold one combined meeting with the various community groups. They meet four times a year and includes the RAC, LISTs, and collaboratives. The goal for next year is to form working committees and asking people join the committees at this combined-meeting to develop cross-representation. RACs please consider this topic in your agendas.

Region 3 tried something based out of Gay Kimball partnering with one of the community organizations and call it the NEST, because we had very limited resources in the area. Had a successful start but with decreased funding from governor for hospitals, and a huge cut for DCF funding they could no longer continue. They have great people but need leadership that can be subsidized.

Very supportive of the work Region 3 is doing with the Communication Plan. Hoping that the form itself will help to structure on a quarterly basis to develop exactly what they want to put on the form. That structures the conversation. Just the fact that the form is going somewhere and kept electronically in a data base-information will get relayed. The way it looks like it will be the RAC who will lead it- RAC members will have to go to the systems of care meetings and make it part of their own routine. It will fall on each RAC to find out way to do reach out to those groups. SAC recommends that all RACs put this communication plan work on their agenda.

CRP Funds (application Attachment 9)

Last year it was an informal structure in that the application did not have a lot of parameters but funds are there. The application is here, the amount of funding is \$1239 per region. Application needs to include a fiduciary. You must get it in by December 1.

Maria email another copy to the membership.

Get the completed application to the co-chairs by December 20.

One page is your description and one page is your budget and identify your fiduciary.

New Meeting Schedule the 2015-2016 Revised SAC meeting schedule is attachment #10.

Meeting ended at 11:37 am.