

Department of Child Safety Community Advisory Committee Report of Activities and Recommendations for State Fiscal Year 2018

Background

The Community Advisory Committee was established in June of 2015 by A.R.S. §8-459, “to provide a community forum:”

1. to inform the department, analyze current law and policy and make recommendations to improve the ability of the department to increase the safety of children, respond to child maltreatment and ensure the well-being of and timely permanency for children who are referred to and involved in the child welfare system;
2. for collaboration among state, local, community, tribal, public and private stakeholders in child welfare programs and services that are administered by the department; and
3. to improve communication between mandatory reporters and the department.”

The Community Advisory Committee consists of one representative each from fourteen stakeholder groups. The Committee’s membership includes:

Deborah Burdick, Ed.D., representing schools, with experience in the child welfare system.

Kay Ekstrom, Founder, Retired CEO, Christian Family Care, representing a faith based organization, with experience in the child welfare system.

Denise Ensdorff, President and CEO, Arizona’s Children Association, representing child welfare agencies that directly provide contracted services to children and their families.

Kris Jacober, foster parent, Executive Director, Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, representing current or former foster or adoptive parents. – resigned in 2018

Emily Jenkins, President and CEO Arizona Council of Human Service Providers, Arizona Council of Human Service Providers, representing child welfare agencies that directly provide contracted services to children and their families and child advocacy organizations that deal with child welfare system policy issues.

Robin Pearson, Executive Director, Voices for CASA Children, representing volunteers with the foster care review board or court appointed special advocate program.

Nicole Roskens, Clinical Director of Cradle to Crayons Program, Superior Court of Maricopa County Juvenile Division, and Independent Private Practice, Counselor, representing the courts involved in child welfare issues.

Peter Gentala, J.D., General Counsel and Vice President for Government Affairs and Public Policy with Childhelp. A child advocacy organization that advocates for or represents children who are victims of crime.

Judy Krysik, Ph.D., MSW, Associate Professor, ASU School of Social Work. Representing persons with an academic appointment to a state university who conduct research in child welfare services, child maltreatment or child abuse or neglect.

Cody Conklin-Aguilera, MD., FAAP, Medical Director, Department of Public Health Yavapai County, Pediatric Program Manager, Verde Valley. Medical providers, with a preference for pediatricians, who have experience in diagnosing and treating injuries related to abuse and neglect.

Sergeant Matthew Lawes, Special Victim's Unit, Mesa Police Department. A law enforcement agency. The representative must have experience with the department on cases that involve criminal conduct allegations.

Rita Marie Wright, LMSW, Assistant Clinical Professor, Child Welfare Training Project Coordinator, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Northern Arizona University. Represents a rural area in this state and has experience with the child welfare system.

Tiffany Gavazzo, has experience with children with special needs and the child welfare system

Elisa Manuel, President Three Precious Miracles - Native American Organization that has experience with the child welfare system

As required by A.R.S. §8-459, representatives were appointed by the Department of Child Safety's Director and did not receive compensation for their service on the Committee. The statutory requirements of the Committee are to meet at least quarterly, and produce a report of Committee activities and recommendations each fiscal year.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Improved Communication

The Committee focus for year three was to reengage the Committee on departmental efficacy and a renewed focus of the Committee members for FY 17-18 on the three roles of the Committee: to inform the department, analyze current law and policy and make recommendations to improve the ability of the department to increase the safety of children, respond to child maltreatment and ensure the well-being of and timely permanency for children who are referred to and involved in the child welfare system; for collaboration among state, local, community, tribal, public and private stakeholders in child welfare programs and services that are administered by the department; and to improve communication between mandatory reporters and the department." The Committee reviewed the Department of Child Safety FY 18 Strategic Plan and determined which of the goals and objectives of the DCS strategic planned aligned with the sector representation of the stakeholders on the Committee. It was determined that the focus of the Committee would be on advising DCS in the areas of: mandatory reporters (education) collaboration and child well-being. It was also determined that the Committee would hear presentations on departmental efforts with regard to kinship and prevention.

Actions and Recommendations

In accordance with A.R.S. §8-459, the Committee has summarized several key activities and recommendations that came from the six meetings that were held. The activities and recommendations

are organized into the three areas for which the Committee is charged with providing a community forum.

Inform the department, analyze current law and policy and make recommendations to improve the ability of the department to increase the safety of children, respond to child maltreatment and ensure the well-being of and timely permanency for children who are referred to and involved in the child welfare system.

The Committee reviewed the DCS FY 18 Strategic plan and made a decision in regard to areas of focus for the Committee for FY 18. It was determined that the Committee would focus on mandatory reporters (education), collaboration and well-being with special areas of focus with kinship placements and prevention. The Committee heard presentations on: The Department's prevention collaborations, programs and ongoing projects, guardianship legislation, tuition waver and quality child care.

The Committee supports the Departments FY 18 Strategic Plan and has begun to identify ways in which the Committee can support and advise the Department in regard to the strategic plan by gathering and presenting information from each of the represented sectors.

The presentation on kinship provided by DCS staff indicated that the department is placing a focus and priority on identifying barriers to kinship placement, creating solutions and finding additional ways for support kinship placements and improve placement stability.

The Committee held open comment periods at two of the meetings. Parameters and procedures were discussed and implemented to improve the process for public comment.

A more detailed description of committee activity regarding the focus areas is described in the report below of committee meetings.

Collaboration among state, local, community, tribal, public and private stakeholders in child welfare programs and services that are administered by the department

Through the presentation provided by Sue Smith, DCS Prevention Administrator, it appears that DCS is collaborating with other stakeholders to focus on prevention such as the Substance Exposed Newborn Safe Environment Program (SENSE) which is a collaboration with community agencies and Fast Pass, which is a collaboration with DES.

Improve communication between mandatory reporters and the department

This is an area of focus that has been identified by the Committee; however, it was not on the agenda for meetings held in FY 17-18. This is an area that the Committee members believe their sectors could engage and will be a focus for FY 18-19.

Recommendations for Committee and Department collaboration for the upcoming year

The Committee members will continue the area of focus on improving communication between mandatory reporters and the department in the upcoming year.

Committee Meeting Dates and Activities

The Committee met six times in SFY 2018 to receive information about current law and policy and review data relevant to the Committee's three statutory requirements. In addition to the call to public and option for executive session, the meeting agendas included a variety of topics aimed at educating and informing committee members:

August 2, 2017

- **Annual Report**

The committee discussed and took action on the development of the Committee's annual report that was due in August of 2017.

- **Committee Efficacy and Focus**

The Committee reviewed and discussed Chair Jenkins memo: Planning for Focus of FY 2017-2018. The Committee also reviewed Dr. Krysik's list of Child Welfare Boards, Panels, Groups and Committees. The Committee brainstormed ideas for action in regard to the committee's statutory requirement of collaboration among state, local, community, tribal, public and private stakeholders in child welfare program and services administered by the department. The Department's strategic plan was reviewed by the Committee members and each member assigned a rating to each item on the strategic plan that aligned with the sector the member represents.

- **Meeting Schedule**

The Committee discussed and established a meeting schedule for FY 18. It was determined that meeting would be held every other month on the first Friday of the month.

October 27, 2017

- **Committee Efficacy and Focus**

The Committee discussed the list of Child Welfare Boards, Panels, Groups and Committees previously provided by Dr. Krysik. The Committee was presented with the DCS Strategic Plan for FY18 and discussed the areas of the plan. The Committee members each assigned a rating to each area of the strategic plan where they felt their sector had engagement with DCS and where they could assist. The Committee members then each suggested one way in which their sector could support the implementation of the plan. Members will vote and choose the top three to four sectors for stakeholder collaboration, taking into consideration any initiatives in the DCS FY18 Strategic Plan. The Committee considered and adopted strategies for stakeholder engagement in the identified sectors. Three areas of focus were identified: Mandatory reporters (Education), collaboration and well being

- **Meeting Schedule**

The Committee discussed and established a meeting schedule for FY 18. It was determined that meeting would be held every other month on the first Friday of the month.

December 1, 2017

- **Committee Membership**

Committee Chair Jenkins announced the new committee member and the committee discussed options for filling the remaining one vacancy. The Committee members were encouraged to email Ben Brooks with DCS with any names from a Native American tribe or nation who has experience in the child welfare system.

- **Committee Efficacy and Focus**

The Committee completed the process of selecting strategies from the DCS Strategic Plan and sectors for stakeholder engagement and chose to focus on the following three areas: Education, prevention and Kinship. In regard to prevention the Committee indicated interest in hearing about the Department's Prevention Initiatives and particularly the Fast Pass Program. It was determined that Susan Smith from the DCS Office of Prevention would present on this topic for the next meeting.

- **Kinship**

DCS staff presented the Committee with resources already being provided to kinship by DCS, followed by a discussion between Committee members and DCS leadership to identify areas where intervention from different stakeholder groups may be helpful. Information was presented to the Committee on the Department's Family Finding Model; the focus on maximizing resources for kinship that are already there such as: increasing the kinship payment, making a goal of 100% of kinship placements receiving the TANF Child-Only payment, expanding kinship liaisons to outreach kin, improving awareness of the foster licensing process for kinship, working with licensing agencies to improve relationships with DCS and utilizing foster parent surveys to identify barriers. The Committee discussed sharing barriers to kinship as it relates to each sector represented by the Committee. It was suggested that Committee member Denise Endorf may be able to ask an expert from her area and Committee member Kris Jacober may be able to invite a kinship provider to present. The Committee discussed having a Department Kinship liaison or a Foster Care Permanency Support person present. Chair Jenkins will invite Beth Rosenberg from Children's Action Alliance to speak about guardianship legislation and tuition waiver for the next meeting. Cynthia Weiss reviewed the DCS website, found and provided information on how to access information regarding resources for kinship foster caregivers on the website.

- **Set Agenda for next Meeting**

Ben Brooks and Jenny Bilskie will monitor the CACM email address to determine if committee members suggest topics for the agenda.

February 2, 2018

- **Membership**

Chair Emily Jenkins announced new member Elisa Manual who represents the Native American community. Chair Jenkins announced the resignation of Committee member Kris Jacober. Chair Jenkins discussed the vacancy for a member of the Committee who represents foster parents or the foster parent community. Dr. Conklin suggested from Yavapai County Stacy Gagnon who oversees their child and family health piece for the public health department, was a foster parent for medically fragile children and is an adoptive parent. It was reported that she would have to send her information to Ben Brooks with the Department.

- **Prevention**

Sue Smith, DCS Prevention Administrator presented on the Department's prevention collaborations, programs and ongoing projects. Mrs. Smith reviewed the prevention programs available to the community such as the 17 Prevention Councils across the state whose primary goal is to educate the community about Adverse Childhood Experiences and Protective Factors through trainings in their communities. The Care Portal which started in Pima County and expanded to Maricopa County, which relies on the Faith Based Communities who works with DCS to provide for situational needs of families. Fast Passes were discussed such as urgent child care when enrollment in child care needs to be completed during the evening, weekend or holiday times with the intent to prevent removals and stabilize placements. Another Fast Pass is to speed up the process to apply for AHCCCS, SNAP, and Cash Assistance, with this Fast Pass the DCS Specialist can call in with the family and initiate the process, do electronic signatures and forward to documents to a special email box. These Fast Passes were implemented to avoid long wait times. A Committee member asked a question in regard to their goal in regard to time frames. The answer provided was that it depends on the families who would need to submit additional documents hopefully less than two weeks or sooner, but that it is also designed to be a warm handoff to speed up the process. Building Resilient Families was discussed as one of the newer prevention programs with the Department which started in Maricopa County in October 2015. This Program is the one of the only services that can be offered with a closed case to low risk families to avoid a new report to the Department. Healthy Families has been in existence for 26 years with a unique funding source from the Department of Health, Department of Child Safety and First Things First and is a prevention program for families with infants. The family can remain involved with this program for five years. Substance Exposed Newborn Safe Environment (SENSE) program has been in Maricopa County for close to 12 years and has recently been expanded to Yavapai, Pima, Pinal, and Yuma counties. This program is designed to prevent removal for families with a Substance Exposed Newborn; it is a collaborative program that includes the Department, a Family Preservation Provider, a nurse, Healthy Families and substance abuse treatment provider. The Safe Sleep campaign started December 2016 in response to the unsafe sleep fatalities. This program includes the Baby Box program as one of the resources offered to families. This program is currently only offered to DCS families and the whole premise is to educate families on Safe Sleep and the importance of Safe Sleep. A Committee member asked who the providers are who can assist families with the FAST Pass, it was reported that the 3 SENSE providers are currently trained but there is plans to expand to other providers. Another Committee member asked how the referrals work for the SENSE program, the answer provided was that it has to be a DCS report which often comes through the hospitals or OBGYN offices. Another question asked by the Committee was what percentage of the families identified for a referral choose to participate, the response was that this was the first year that there was a separate services authorization for SENSE so there are not currently data on SENSE specific. A follow up question was

regarding whether the participation rates are solid or if there is a concern about participation rates. The response was that families' feel supported by the program, and with the Maricopa County providers data that was reported shows that over a 90% of families who participated did not have new removals or new substantiated reports within six months of completion of the program. A question was posed by a Committee member in regard to the attention on the Opioid issues and the 10 million dollars in funds for uninsured and underinsured that will be available, will the SENSE program be able to ramp up in increased services as there is an expectation that there will be an increase in referrals and it would be important for all families to be served. Mrs. Smith responded that DCS is already collaborating with the medication assisted treatment provider community along with AHCCCS and others in looking at a learning collaborative as well as providing more support to DCS Specialists. It was discussed that the collaboration between providers in the SENSE program helped with family engagement and increased participation. It was also discussed that there is also collaboration with providers who are working with pregnant mothers with substance issues to talk with them about making a plan, cooperating with DCS and engaging in services. A Committee member who is a part of the Faith Based community commented about the CARE Portal and how effective it has been in regard to heightening the awareness in the church community and with keeping children in their homes. It was discussed that the hope is that the families could then develop relationships with the church community and engage in services through that community.

- **Guardianship Presentation**

Beth Rosenberg, Director of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice from Children's Action Alliance spoke to the Committee about current the guardianship legislation and tuition waver. History was provided in regard to the permanent guardianship program which is an option for children leaving foster care that cannot return home or be adopted. A guardianship stipend was established which was the same amount of the adoption subsidy. From 2002 to 2016 10,000 children have left foster care to permanent guardianship. In 2017 the permanent guardianship program was looked at as an option to avoid foster care and instead go into a permanent guardianship and it is no longer a mandate to first rule out family reunification. Changes that have occurred are: that the TANF Child Only Grant is no longer available to families with guardianship where the child is not involved with DCS and the guardian must now apply separately for AHCCCS. The guardianship subsidy rate is now lower than the adoption subsidy rate as the guardianship subsidy has not been increased over the years. Some of the issues presented are: policies and practices, people are confused about guardianship and the differences between guardianship and adoption, DCS has recognized that this is an issue and are working toward a solution; there are fiscal differences for families who are licensed foster families to move to guardianship and it could be a fiscal disadvantage. Legislative focus is to guardianship subsidy and having a connection for families and the subsidy office. One reason guardianship was looked at was there were concerned raised about children who were about to turn 18 who were moving into a guardianship relationship who would have not legal responsibility to care for the child once they turned 18 and then that child would lose benefit that they would have had if they stayed in care, recommended that there would be services to all children until at least age 21. Other recommendations are: ask DCS to have supports for families after guardianship, to have better assessments of permanency options and good decision making process in regard to what is best for children in regard to going to guardianship or pursuing other options, information about permanency options making it clear and comprehensive and having everyone understand what the options are and what is best for children, putting in a process to apply for guardianship subsidy before the guardianship, changing the law to allow a child to go from guardianship subsidy to adoption subsidy and have an allowance to increase guardianship subsidy. A Committee member asked if there is any push back from the AHCCCS plans or if they are going to be

CMDP enrolled. It was explained that CMDP only covers children who are in DCS custody. SB 1166 that is being presented was explained as it would allow guardians to apply for guardianship subsidy prior to guardianship being granted and it allows guardians to apply for adoption subsidy if a child is adopted after guardianship is granted. It was clarified that the context for the discussion was really around having children in homelike/family like settings and connecting children to their family/significant relationships.

A fact sheet on the tuition waiver program was provided and explained that it is for children in foster care to be able to attend public community colleges universities with tuition wavier. It was a pilot program that started in 2013 and it expires in 2018. The bill is to allow this program to continue and hopefully become permanent. Would like the bill to change the age of eligibility to age 13 (time of entering foster care) to age26 and for the tuition waver to come first so grants can assist with other needs such as housing and books.

Chair Jenkins asked the Committee to think about the information provided and see what the Committee can do to advise and support the overall goal of increasing the number of children who are in a family like setting. From the behavioral health perspective they are very engaged in the substance abuse issues working on a treatment implementation strategy especially for those in regard to Opioids and the next goal will be to look at prevention and intervention around Opioid use. The other issue is doing more in regard to housing and perhaps bringing back the housing trust fund which will take much advocacy and research. It was discussed that often housing is one of the barriers to reunification. A Committee member reported that Mercy Maricopa are opening up and putting into place ICD 9 codes that represent to social determinants of health where agencies will have to document on everyone that they serve which will go a long way in tracking and having data to use to talk to the legislature. A question was asked how much the tribes are benefiting from these programs and it was reported that there is not a lot of communication in regard to the resources that are in the bigger communities. It was reported that an agency has created resource banks and that it would be beneficial for the tribal communities to be connected to the CARE Portal, it was suggested to find the link with churches in their community. It was suggested the Committee could recommend to DCS look at how the CARE Portal model might be applicable within the tribal communities and what the Committee might be able to do to help foster it. The CASA representative recommended that the CASA organization could assist with training on guardianship. A Committee member commented on the Child Care piece of the FAST Pass presentation and finding quality childcare for children could be a focus of the Committee. It was discussed that First Things First and the Childcare Association could be invited to a future meeting for a presentation. The Committee member from law enforcement commented about the DCS having their first option as a kinship placement over a foster placement. A Committee member commented that some of the community providers have a feeling that reports are not being taken to the same extent and preservation services are being put in place instead, and that children are being put back into unsafe environments and that some of the kinship placements that may be unsafe are being selected over other placements. Another Committee member asked for clarification from DCS and a discussion was held. It was asked if the Committee members feel they need more information in regard to the changes or if this is a community issue where there needs to be more education to the community. Another option was to have members of the community come to this Committee to present their concerns. DCS reported that there are quality assurance processes in place at the hotline and there are a second set of eyes on all reports that come in to the hotline.

- **Legislative Update**

DCS Legislative Liaison Kathryn Blades provided members with an update on DCS and DCS related bills currently moving through the State Legislature. She updated on SB1046 which is a foster home regulation bill, SB1071 in regard to adoption subsidy and reimbursement for adoption attorneys, the report consolidation bill to condense the number of reports that the department is required to produce and the court order removal bill. A discussion was held to clarify court ordered removals. A recommendation was made for education to mandatory reporters.

- **Set Agenda for next meeting**

It was suggested to have an agenda item in regard to quality childcare and invite First Things First to present on quality childcare. A Committee member also suggested a presentation on the new focus on preschool expulsion. Another agenda item recommended is to discuss public comment and what would be the process and parameters if reinstated.

April 6, 2018

- **Citizen's Review Panel**

Katherine Guffey, DCS Chief Quality Improvement Officer will discuss the committee's role as a Citizens Review Panel. The Committee voted to serve as a Citizen's Review Panel but requested additional training on the role of the Citizen Review Panel along with the best practice model for Citizen Review Panels and confidentiality. It was also suggested that someone from the DCS Ombudsman office present to the Committee about themes and trends raised by the public.

- **Process for Public Comment**

The committee will discuss and take possible action regarding modification to the current means for taking public comments. Possible procedures and parameters for taking public comments were discussed by Committee members suggestions were: if a member of the public would like to speak they will write their name down on a log provided by DCS staff prior to the beginning of the meeting; fifteen minutes will be allotted during each meeting to hear public comment; each member of the public will be given 2 minutes to speak; the Committee chair will allow as many people on the list to speak as time permits; a member of the public requested that the Public Comment portion of the agenda occur prior to the agenda setting portion for the next meeting.

- **Quality Childcare**

Erin Raden, Executive Director of Arizona Child Care Association discussed quality child care and Michelle Katona, Chief Program Officer at First Things First discussed what First Things First is doing as it relates to quality child care. A Committee member suggested having someone from DES speak to the Committee about quality child care – Mr. Weishart or Brooke Herrera were suggested for consideration. It was also discussed that efforts should continue to improve DCS Specialist education about quality child care.

- **Legislative Update**

DCS Legislative Liaison Kathryn Blades provided members with an update on DCS and DCS related bills currently moving through the State Legislature.

- **Set Agenda for next meeting**

The committee discussed the agenda for the next meeting, as well as the August 15, 2018 annual report due date. Suggested ideas for future agenda items: Annual report, training on confidentiality, training for the DCS Ombudsman office on themes and trends that are identified from the public, hearing public comment prior to discussing the agenda for the next meeting and discussing IV-E funds for use for prevention.

- **Call for Public Comments**

The committee allowed public comment. Each comment was limited to 2 minutes. Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01(H), the committee did not take action on any public comment only on matters listed on the agenda.

June 2, 2018

- **Citizens Review Panel**

DCS Chief Quality Improvement Specialist Katheryn Guffey presented on the functional role of DCS Community Advisory Committee (CAC) as Citizens Review Panel (CRP). It was discussed that the CRP purpose would focus on examining policies, procedures, and practice of the department which could include reviewing cases under CPTA but this would not be required and the committee would need to meet at least one time every three months. A discussion was held regarding case reviews and it was explained that it would only occur when necessary for evaluating the effectiveness of the Department's practices. If a case review was requested the department would look at criteria and whether or not other groups are reviewing the case such as the Ombudsman's Office. It was also discussed that the Department already has a team in place to review child fatality cases. A suggestion was made that it may be more effective for the Committee to receive information from cases reviews that have already occurred. It was also discussed that CAPTA requires that confidentiality be maintained therefore, case reviews would have to be done in executive meetings. The committee recommended that the Committee describe to the Department information the Committee needs in order to understand areas of interest to the Committee. It was also suggested by the Committee there could be a presentation on the Child and Family Review in order for the Committee to learn about other outside review panels.

- **Discussion of Future Agenda Items**

The committee reviewed and considered the list below for discussion at future meeting agendas. These items were noted for future discussion at prior meetings.

- a. Training on confidentiality needed for role as Citizens Review Panel
- b. DCS Ombudsman presentation on observations and themes from regular interaction from the public
- c. DCS Presentation on the implications of the Families First Act for prevention and
- d. IV-E Money
- e. Quality childcare discussion with Department of Economic Security
- f. Discussion on proposal of School Safety Bill (ie: behavioral health & suicide prevention)
- g. DCS Guardian Update

h. Morrison Institute Presentation on recent findings around neglect

It was determined by the Committee that at the meeting in August the Committee will finalize and adopt the Annual Report that is due in August 2018 and have a presentation from the Ombudsman's Office to discuss general overall themes of issues that are brought to their attention. A subcommittee was created to work on the report. It was suggested that a presentation on the Families First Act could occur during the October 2018 meeting as well as a presentation on the Morrison Institute recent finding around neglect. A presentation on Quality Child Care was suggested for the December 2018 meeting. It was also suggested that the Committee review the Department's FY 19 Strategic Plan once it is ready for review. The training on confidentiality will be tabled and scheduled as needed, as well as the presentation on the School Safety Bill and the update on the DCS Guardian system.

- **Call for Public Comments**

The committee allowed public comment for 30 minutes. Each comment was limited to 2 minutes. Nine members of the public chose to participate in public comment. The Committee listened to each public comment but was not able to take action on any of the public comment as the Committee is only allowed to take actions on agenda items for that meeting. There was a suggestion to add to a future agenda a presentation on the current use of psychotropic medication for children.

- **Develop Meeting Schedule for 2018-2019**

It was determined that the meetings for Fiscal Year 2019 will occur on the first Friday of every other month. The meeting will occur on: October 5, 2018, December 1, 2018, February 2, 2019, April 6, 2019, June 1, 2019 and August 3, 2019. One member of the Committee requested that the meetings be held from 3:00pm to 5:00pm and it was decided that the Committee members would be polled at the next meeting to determine the meeting time for FY 19.