

Department of Child Safety Community Advisory Committee Report of Activities and Recommendations for State Fiscal Year 2017

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:

Members who have resigned:

Kathryn Coffman, M.D., FAAP, representing medical providers, with a preference for pediatricians, who have experience in diagnosing and treating injuries related to abuse and neglect.

Sacha Loving, Registered Nurse, representing current or former foster or adoptive parents and persons who have experience with children with special needs and the child welfare system.

Chief Jerald Monahan, Chief of Police, representing a law enforcement agency, with experience with the department on cases that involve criminal conduct allegations; and a rural area in this state.

Tiffany N. Ryan, Assistant Research Professor and Coordinator, Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Project with Northern Arizona University, representing persons with an academic appointment to a state university who conduct research in child welfare services, child maltreatment or child abuse or neglect; and a rural area in this state.

Tascha Spears, Ph.D., RN and Director of Pinal County Attorney’s Family Advocacy Centers (Eloy & San Tan Valley, AZ) representing child advocacy centers and child victims of crime.

Steve Twist, Community Advisory Committee Chair, Vice President and General Counsel of Services Group of America (SGA), representing a child advocacy organization that advocates for or represents children who are victims of crime. Mr. Twist resigned mid-year from the Committee.

Current Members:

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.

Emily Jenkins, President and CEO, 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.

Denise Yanibah Hobson Ryan, Deputy Criminal and Civil Prosecutor with Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Office of the Prosecutor, representing a Native American tribe or nation, with experience in the child welfare system.

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.

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.

Committee Meeting Dates and Activities

The Committee met four times in SFY 2017 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 5, 2016

- **Report Consolidation Session Law**
Discussed and took action on a session law that required the Department to submit to the Governor and the legislature a report recommending consolidating DCS reports.
- **Committee's Report**
The Committee reviewed and took action on the report drafted by designated Committee members. The Committee report discussed the Committee's activities and recommendations for the fiscal year. The report due by August 15.
- **Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP)**
A list of CFSR PIP activities have been provided to the Committee, and the Committee discussed feedback on selected areas of the plan.
- **Standard Annual Report Process**
The Committee discussed and took action on adopting a standard process for developing the annual report in which recommendations to the Department can be made.

November 18, 2016 – Quorum was not met, so this was not an official public meeting

- **Safety Assessment**
Information was provided pending modifications on the safety assessment specifically as it relates to the present danger analysis. The Committee discussed and provided feedback regarding the implications of such pending modification in the areas represented by the various committee members. The Committee discussed and provided feedback regarding ways to support the implementation of the changing tool.
- **Guardianship as a Permanency Option**
Information was provided on the newly developed Practice Guidelines entitled Guardianship as a Permanency Option. The Committee discussed and provided feedback on ideas for outreach and education as well as provided feedback on how the prospect of guardianship as a permanency option may impact families served by the areas represented by the committee members.

- **Parenting Children with Trauma**

Information was provided on the project sponsored by Arizona Council of Human Service Providers, collaboration with Bruce Perry and DCS, which involves parenting children with trauma, specifically catered toward assisting foster parents, kinship parents, and adoptive parents. The Committee provided feedback.

- **Staff Retention**

Information regarding DCS staff retention was presented and the Committee discussed and provided feedback.

May 19, 2017

- **Safety Assessment**

Presentation was made by DCS representatives providing information pending modification on the safety assessment specifically as a continuation to the present danger analysis discussion that took place at the November Community Advisory Committee meeting. The Committee discussed and provided feedback regarding the implications of such pending modifications in the areas represented by the various committee members. The Committee discussed and provided feedback regarding ways to support the implementation of the changing tool.

- **Optimization of Kinship Placement**

Information was provided about kinship support and working with kinship caregivers. The Committee discussed opportunities to improve information sharing and support kinship caregivers.

- **Process to Receive Access to Confidential Case Information**

The Committee was briefed on the possibility of hearing presentations on certain individual cases. The process for obtaining access to confidential case information was explained, and the Committee took action to authorize the filing of a request with the court to obtain access to confidential case information. The Committee voted to go into executive session to receive legal advice about this item.

- **Committee Efficacy**

The Committee discussed and took action regarding future Committee goals for being most effective in fulfilling its function. Legal action was taken in the course of the discussion.

- **Annual Report**

The Committee discussed and took action as it related to the development of the Committee's annual report. This report was due in August of 2017.

June 21, 2017

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- **Committee Efficacy**

The Committee discussed and took action regarding future Committee goals for being more effective in fulfilling its function. Legal actions were taken in the course of the discussion.

- **Annual Report**

The Committee discussed and took action as it related to the development of the Committee's annual report. This report is due August 2017.

Actions and Considerations 2016-17

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

1. 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 supports the SAFE AZ model proposed by the department for decision making regarding removal of children with a focus on keeping children safely in the home by providing additional supports to the family. This change in practice will require extensive staff and community education and training.

From the presentations by DCS to the committee, it is apparent that progress has been made in reducing the number of children in out of home care and in reducing the backlog of cases. The practice guidelines issued by the department have been well received by community providers.

The committee held open comment periods for the public at the first two meetings. The tenor of the public input led to a decision to no longer allow public input at the meetings. An email address is now provided for members of the public who wish to raise comments for committee consideration:

Communityadvisorycommittee@azdcs.gov. The committee will review comments and decide which items to put on the agenda.

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

The committee believes that the sectors represented by the members of the committee have not been fully engaged through its activities. Engagement will be addressed in 2017-18.

3. Improve communication between mandatory reporters and the department

Based on reports from DCS staff, the hotline is now efficiently responding to calls in a timely manner. The percentage of dropped calls is minimal.

Recommendations for Committee and Department collaboration for the upcoming year-2017-18:

At the meeting held on August 2, 2017, the committee adopted a planning process that it will use to review the DCS Strategic Plan and develop a strategy for increasing collaboration between the department, key sectors represented on the committee, and mandatory reporters. The committee will select sectors that are aligned with the initiatives in the strategic plan. This approach will provide focus for the committee members and an opportunity to engage the sectors more broadly to support the department's strategies and identify areas for improved collaboration.

The committee members asked that minutes be prepared of each meeting and circulated to the members of the committee prior to the meetings.