

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



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DRAFT KCFCCC Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2003, 12:00pm – 1:30pm
Kent County Health Department
700 Fuller Avenue, NE

Members/alternates present: Nanaruth Carpenter, Candace Cowling, Lynne Ferrell, Debra Holmes-Garrison, Paul Ippel, Mark Lemoine, Marvin McKenzie, Patti Nussbaum, Christine Nelson (for Susan Broman), Mary O'Hare, Carol Paine-McGovern, Savator Seldon Johnson (for Andrew Zylstra), Diana Sieger (and Wendy Jackson), Mike Weiler, Mary Alice Williams

Members absent (with no alternate present): Paul Cartwright, Tom Czerwinski, Beverly Drake, Cathy Raevsky, William Forsyth

Others present: Bethanie Archbold and Mary Swanson (staff); James Madole and David Schroeder (committee chairs), Janice Fonger, Janay Jorgensen, Tom Cary, Richard Libertore, and Louis Dean

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Diana Sieger opened the meeting and asked the participants to introduce themselves. Lynne Ferrell moved to approve the minutes from the previous Council meeting. Carol Paine McGovern supported. Motion carried.

II. Approval of Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

III. Presentation: Children's Hour

Marvin McKenzie presented the Children's Hour, a document developed by a collaborative group comprised of child welfare agencies. He stated that the document is a result of a series of meetings held between FIA, CMHSA, and several community organizations to look at the huge increases in the number of children in the child welfare system due to abuse and neglect, and to identify ways to improve services to these children. He stated that the result of those meetings was a 17 page report. The group was then asked to identify its priorities from that report, and the resulting recommendations are outlined in the Children's Hour.

He stated that one problem is that many older children are left to languish in shelter care. He stated that the need for residential programs for these children is being met; however, there are not enough foster care homes for older children. The result is that these kids spend too long in shelter care. One of the Children's Hour recommendations calls upon the State to create specialized foster care for older children, and to fund the increased cost of the specialized foster care by accelerating the residential treatment care. He stated that the result is a cost neutral proposal that moves children from expensive shelter care to foster care homes. He stated that the

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group has forwarded copies of the document to Jerry Kooiman, Bill Hardiman, and Nannette Bowler. He stated that other recommendations can be pursued locally.

Mr. McKenzie stated that the group was looking for the Council's endorsement as the local MPCB.

Ms. Sieger asked whether the purpose of the document was to increase the rate that the State pays for services.

Mr. McKenzie stated that the purpose was broader than rate adjustments. However, he noted that there are State issues that impact the system, such as the foster care reimbursement.

Ms. Sieger asked whether the document was meant to demonstrate that the community's prevention efforts are not working.

Mr. McKenzie responded that no, the group did not make that assumption. He stated that the recommendations are focused on the older kids, usually teenagers, for which there aren't enough foster care homes. He stated that prevention efforts are usually aimed at younger children.

Ms. Cowling noted that the report does not consider the reasons for the increased reports of child abuse and neglect, and that the assumption could be drawn that it is because prevention does not work. She stated that the report does not take into account other factors which could increase the number of reports, such as increased awareness due to increased mandatory reporter requirements and training.

Ms. Sieger stated that the Council would have a concern that the document may be perceived as saying that prevention does not work. She stated that if the recommendations are geared toward the older kids, then the document should perhaps clarify that, to avoid misconceptions. Ms. Jackson concurred that the document appears to read that prevention programs have not worked.

Mary Alice Williams stated that the numbers presented at the beginning of the document are primarily front-end numbers (e.g., the increase in the number of reports), whereas the recommendations are later solutions (i.e., foster care and residential treatment). She suggested that some explanation of the growth in numbers be included, such as the influence of mandatory reporter training, population growth, and the increased attention now paid to child abuse and neglect issues. She stated that the document should be clear that good prevention and early intervention are important in helping to prevent many of the cases from reaching the stage where they must be removed from the home, however, that they may have also contributed to the increased number of cases being identified because of the greater involvement of caseworkers with at risk families. She praised the document's focus on older kids, saying that there is often a tendency to "write off" these kids as being too old to help. She stated that there is a need for more than purely rhetorical support for helping these kids.

Candace Cowling recommended that the Executive Committee review the document and supporting data in depth. She suggested that the committee also look for any unintended consequences that could occur should the recommendations be implemented.

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Ms. Sieger asked Mr. McKenzie if there would be any time constraints associated with referring the document to Executive Committee for greater analysis. Mr. McKenzie said that there were no time constraints in providing the document to the Executive Committee. He reiterated that the document was focused on adolescents. He stated that there is no problem placing younger kids, but that older children needed specialized foster care.

Ms. Jackson asked about how the recommendations would work with the Family to Family model, that is reported to be in the process of being implemented statewide.

Mr. McKenzie responded that there were some concerns about the Family to Family model, specifically in terms of safety standards and screening. He stated that there is also concern about the movement to a standard rate for the service.

Ms. Williams moved to endorse the document, contingent upon executive committee review. Ms. Holmes Garrison supported. Motion carried.

IV. Strong Families/Safe Children Committee Funds

Ms. Sieger presented the Executive Committee's recommendations for reductions for Strong Families Safe Children funds for FY2004. She reported that the State has imposed a 25% reduction for all communities. FIA assisted in developing the recommendations, using other funding sources to cover reductions where possible. For this reason, the Executive Committee does not recommend a 25% reduction for all programs. The recommended reductions for FY2004 are as follows:

- Healthy Start – reduced by 17.6%, a lower level as the program has been identified as a community priority, and is not eligible for other FIA funding sources
- Perspective 21! Early Impact – reduced by 29.5%, a higher level as FIA has other existing funding streams that could be shifted to cover this level of reduction
- Family & Community Compact/Kinship – reduced by 28.3%, as FIA has other existing funding streams that could be shifted to cover this level of reduction
- Adoptive Family Support – reduced by 25%, as the program has been identified as an important program, and is not eligible for other FIA funding sources
- KCFCCC Committee Funds – maintained at 100% as it is a relatively small amount of funding (\$10,000) that has a big impact in terms of encouraging committee action, and is not eligible for other FIA funding sources

Christine Nelson asked whether the ability to shift FIA funding would mean that Perspective 21! Early Impact and the Family and Community Compact programs would be fully funded.

Savator Seldon-Johnson replied that yes, the funding shift would fully cover the reductions.

Ms. Williams stated that she was concerned about reserving \$10,000 for future programs that “might be nice,” while cutting priority services that fill existing needs. She suggested that the committee funds be allocated to other services that are being reduced.

Ms. Ferrell asked which programs would get the committee funds, should those funds be reallocated to existing programs.

Ms. Nelson stated that the community can always find funding for secondary or tertiary programs, but whenever there is a funding reduction, primary prevention programs are cut. She suggested that any reallocation of committee funds go to the primary prevention program.

Mark Lemoine stated that the committee funding is a small amount of money that has proved to be very useful in encouraging action on the part of the committees. He gave the example that the Elementary School Years Committee has identified that the current USDA Summer Food Service Program is not effectively filling the summer nutrition gap. He stated that the small amount of committee funds allocated to that project this year allowed the committee to implement a demonstration project. Evaluation data will be gathered and used to encourage Congress to make the appropriate changes to the current program requirements. He stated that the Council should keep those dollars intact as "innovation funding."

Paul Ippel stated that with the implementation of the County's Prevention Initiative, significant funds were being dedicated to prevention, specifically to Healthy Start. He stated that the \$10,000 in committee funds gives the committees greater flexibility and effectiveness.

Ms. Swanson suggested that the Council keep the \$10,000 set aside for committee work at this time, and when the committees make their requests, the Council can then weigh the requests against the service needs at that time. She noted that the Council can make changes to its FY2004 Strong Families Safe Children plans up until June 30, 2004.

The recommendation was moved by the Executive Committee. Mr. Ippel supported. Motion carried. Three opposed; Candace Cowling abstained.

V. Kent County Prevention Initiative – Primary Prevention Family Support

Ms. Sieger presented the Executive Committee's recommendations for primary prevention family support funding. She stated that the recommendations were developed by the prevention initiative review committee, and the Executive Committee reviewed them and made some changes. She gave thanks to review committee members Susan Broman, Lynne Ferrell, Paul Ippel, Wendy Jackson, and Barb Terry and staff for their serious review and thoughtful recommendations.

The Executive Committee recommends that the Council:

- Recommend to the County to award the full amount of the Kent County Prevention Initiative funds allocated to primary prevention family support services (\$400,00 this year and \$800,000 annually in subsequent years) to the Child and Family Resource Council (CFRC) for the Healthy Start program, with the following provision.
- As a provision of funding, CFRC will be required to enter into negotiations with the goal of subcontracting with Kent ISD in the amount of 25% of the amount awarded to link Healthy Start with Bright Beginnings.

Ms. Paine-McGovern asked that Ms. Sieger share with the Council the offer to fund facilitation of the agreement.

Ms. Sieger stated that the Executive Committee wanted to help the two agencies to develop their plan for coordination. She stated that the Grand Rapids Community Foundation has offered to

fund an outside facilitator to help the two agencies negotiate to make sure the project gets off to a good start.

Ms. Williams asked if the recommendations meant that 75% of the funds would go to Healthy Start, and 25% to Bright Beginnings, if the negotiations were successful. Ms. Sieger indicated that was correct, and that the Bright Beginnings funding would be provided through a subcontract by Healthy Start.

Ms. Cowling stated that she and Mike Weiler had met the week before and both are committed to work together to make the coordination work.

Mr. Weiler stated that alignment of services is an issue for the whole community, particularly in the realm of early childhood services. He stated that all Healthy Start partners would be welcome and encouraged to participate in the facilitation with Bright Beginnings. He noted that the recommendation – to take two competing proposals and combine them – was unusual.

Ms. Swanson stated that the recommendation takes into account the previous discussion by the Board of Commissioners in developing the Prevention Initiative. She stated that the discussion focused around enhancing services and service coordination. She stated that there was a lot of excitement at the review committee, which was comprised of local early childhood funders that were not applicants, to not separate the two services. She stated that the Board of Commissioners likes to see coordination among service providers.

The recommendation was moved by the Executive Committee. Ms. Holmes-Garrison supported. Motion carried. Ms. Cowling, Mr. Weiler, and Ms. Williams abstained.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Early Childhood

Chris Nelson distributed the Executive Summary of the six month Connections for Children report. She reported that the committee is also working on the issue of defining quality services. She stated that the committee is looking at developing a “parents’ guide” to help them identify quality for different services.

B. Elementary School Years

Ms. Archbold reported that the Elementary School Years Committee would be implementing the Family Food for Thought pilot project, beginning mid-June and running through mid-August. The project will be funded by SF/SC committee funds, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, and United Way, as well as by significant in-kind contributions from the Grand Rapids Public Schools, MSU Extension, and ACCESS. The committee is working on raising private donations to cover any additional costs. The committee will be contacting the federal legislators to encourage them to adopt the project as a pilot project under the Summer Food Service Program.

Ms. Holmes-Garrison suggested that the committee also communicate with State legislators so that they can help advocate at the federal level.

C. Middle & High School Years

Jim Madole reported that the committee was looking at increasing positive adult involvement in the lives of adolescents. The committee is pulling together representatives from mentorship programs to ask them how the committee can help increase their ability to serve adolescents. He stated that the most recent research shows that the greatest benefit comes from one-on-one developmental-type relationships rather than a site-based, topic-specific didactic model. He stated that programs that encourage an adult-child relationship, such as the Big Brothers Big Sisters model, are the most effective.

Mr. Weiler moved to add Marvin McKenzie to the committee. Ms. Williams supported. Motion carried.

D. Ongoing Family Support

There were no new updates.

VII. Updates and Administrative Items

A. Executive Committee Actions

Included in the agenda packet were letters sent to the State re: MPCBs and in support of the GRPS 21st Century Learning grant application.

VIII. Other Community Information & Updates

Ms. Williams stated that the community should be careful in assuming that because new funding is becoming available for prevention services, that concurrent reductions will not impact the program. She noted that new funding is designated for new services, and should not be used to supplant reduced State funding.

Ms. Cowling asked if Healthy Kent 2010 could be invited to give an update on their planning.

Ms. Jackson suggested that the Children's Action Network and the Grand Rapids Education Reform Initiative also be included in a future agenda.

IX. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:30pm. **The next Kent County Family and Children's Coordinating Council meeting will be September 9, 2003, from 12:00pm – 1:30pm at the Kent County Health Department, 700 Fuller, N.E.**