

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



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DRAFT KCFCCC Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2003, 12:00pm – 1:30pm

Kent County Health Department

700 Fuller Avenue, NE

Members/alternates present: Nanaruth Carpenter (and Jim Koetsier), Laura Clifton (for William Forsyth), Sandra Davis (for Tom Czerwinski), Beverly Drake, Lynne Ferrell, Debra Holmes-Garrison, Jackie Klinesteker (for Paul Ippel), Marvin McKenzie (and Donna Abbott), Patti Nussbaum, Christine Nelson (for Susan Broman), Carol Paine-McGovern, Cathy Raevsky, Diana Sieger (and Wendy Jackson), Mike Weiler, Mary Alice Williams, Andrew Zylstra

Members absent (with no alternate present): Paul Cartwright, Candace Cowling, Mark Lemoine, Mary O'Hare

Others present: Bethanie Archbold, Laura Hutzal and Mary Swanson (staff); Jan Fonger, Jim Madole, Kathy Humphrey, Jeremy Richmond, David Schroeder

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

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

II. Approval of Agenda

An update on the Children's Hour document was added to the agenda.

III. Presentation: Adoptive Family Support Network

Janice Fonger presented a brief presentation and distributed information about the Adoptive Family Support Network (ASFN). She stated that the agency provided post-adoption services, as opposed to adoption placement. She described several services that the Network provides, including:

- An adoption resource guide
- An information packet for adoptive families (including support groups, counseling, etc.); there was a 60% increase in distribution this year due to outreach
- Warmline (24/7 with volunteers calling back) for people exploring adoption, residential treatment, relinquishment, kinship adoption, information on attachment disorders, community resources. About 40% of those calling are special needs adoptions, i.e., physical, psychological, emotional.
- Mentoring (adoptive families mentor other adoptive families) matched by family characteristic. There are currently 13 matches, and the program requires a one year commitment. The agency is trying to recruit more mentor families.
- Some special support groups, e.g., mom's support during the day
- Educational forums

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- Network news
- Adoption celebration
- Collaboration
- Adoption day

She invited anyone interested in more information to visit the website, www.asfn.org.

Jim Madole asked if there were any boundaries for service. Ms. Fonger replied that the Network served all of West Michigan. It began in Kent, and is now branching out.

IV. Children's Hour

Ms. Sieger reported that Executive Committee members and she had met representatives of the collaborative group that developed the Children's Hour document. The document outlined concerns about the increase in the number of adolescents in shelter care awaiting placement. Ms. Sieger stated that the Council's concern upon initially reviewing the document was that the community's work related to prevention and the child abuse and neglect system was not noted. She stated that the Council was concerned that the document could be read as pitting prevention against treatment.

Ms. Sieger stated that after further discussions with the Children's Hour group, the Executive Committee was supportive of the recommendations, but felt that the document needed to be revised to note the whole system and honor the work that has been done, particularly in terms of prevention. She stated that the document should clarify that the issue in question was one component that still needed to be addressed in a continuum of services. Ms. Sieger distributed a summary of the Executive Committee's findings and recommendation.

Marvin McKenzie stated that it was never the intent of the document to indict prevention, but instead to address the growing number of older kids in shelter care. He stated that in 2003, there were 664 kids in KidsFirst, and that number continues to steadily grow. He listed the recommendations, which are aimed at the older kids. The two primary recommendations were for accelerated treatment and specialized foster care. He stated that he could understand how the document could give the perception of pitting prevention against treatment, and would be willing to address the problem in the context of the whole system.

Mary Alice Williams moved to approve the recommendations, with the caveat that the document be rewritten. Mike Weiler supported. Motion carried.

Sandra Davis requested that a list of the recommendations be forwarded to the Council members.

V. Governor Granholm's Great Start Initiative

Mr. Weiler presented information on the Governor's Great Start initiative focusing on early childhood. He stated that in her February State of the State address, Ms. Granholm asked the Intermediate School Districts (ISD's) to include early childhood in their mandate. He stated that there are 57 ISD's (also known as RESA's or RESD's) covering the 83 counties of Michigan, working with the K-12 districts.

Mr. Weiler stated that the Governor has asked the ISD's to talk to the larger community about the important of early childhood brain development. He stated that Kent is ahead of the curve, as

it has several initiatives already in place, and there is an early childhood committee of the KCFCCC.

Beverly Drake asked what KISD is doing for early childhood.

Mr. Weiler stated that in 2001, KISD began the Bright Beginnings program, which is now serving 1500 children. The funding for the program, approximately \$500,000, comes from KISD, local districts, foundations, and the Kent County Board of Commissioners. The program employs approximately 24 – 26 part time parent educators, and includes programming in every school district (including multiple parent educators in Grand Rapids). He stated that the primary issue for the program is sustainability; in addition to school budget issues, foundations generally do not provide long-term funding. He stated that another issue is that over 100 agencies are serving this population, and there is a need to align and coordinate as much as possible.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Early Childhood

Bethanie Archbold reported that the Early Childhood Committee had also discussed the Governor's Great Start initiative, and heard from a speaker from the Governor's office about the initiative. The committee is continuing its planning efforts to coordinate early childhood services through the Connections for Children grant. The committee was also reviewing preliminary results for the Universal Access pilot to determine next steps.

Ms. Sieger asked when the Universal Access data would be available. Lynne Ferrell responded that a subcommittee was looking at the data, and that its findings would be presented to the Early Childhood Committee, and then passed on.

Ms. Williams stated that a big piece that was missing was community awareness and advocacy. She stated that changes will not take place without advocacy.

Ms. Sieger stated that because there are not yet criteria, the Executive Committee reviews requests for advocacy on a case by case basis.

Ms. Swanson stated that the Council's role is education people, which is somewhat different from lobbying, for example, for specific funding for a specific project.

Ms. Archbold reported that the Council had asked the planning committee to look at criteria for advocacy. This is on the agenda for after the planning is complete.

Ms. Drake stated that the group should look at defining education and advocacy, to make sure there is a common understanding.

B. Elementary School Years

David Schroeder presented the next steps report for the Families Food for Thought (FFFT) pilot project implemented over the summer. He stated that the committee was now looking for a more appropriate entity to continue the conversations that it started about coordination, nutrition education, and increasing utilization of government food sources. He reported that the ENTF appears to be the appropriate entity, as it is already addressing many of the same

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issues, and recently received United Way funding to do some planning. Committee members will be meeting with the ENTF later in the month.

Ms. Drake stated that one concern was that the ENTF is a volunteer group, with no paid staff person. She stated that the Council should be careful how much they expect the ENTF to take on.

Andrew Zylstra stated that the switch would in reality be switching responsibility from Ms. Archbold to Mr. Schroeder, as Mr. Schroeder is staff to ENTF. He stated that ENTF was originally established to focus on hunger, but that focus has shifted to preventing hunger.

Ms. Archbold stated that the bulk of the work of the committee was done by the committee members themselves, all volunteers, such as representatives from MSU extension, ACCESS, and GRPS. She stated that the staff primarily organized meetings and served in an advisory role for program development, fundraising, and advocacy.

Ms. Sieger stated that these were good concerns, and that they should be shared with the ENTF.

Ms. Drake stated that the issue of ENTF staff should eventually be addressed. The ENTF is taking on more and more work. She stated that the group is also considering a name change, to more accurately reflect it move to prevention of the need for emergency assistance.

C. Middle & High School Years

Jim Madole reported that the mentorship mini-summit resulted in a lot of positive feedback. He stated that the participants were very vocal, but there was in general a lack of knowledge about one another's program. He stated that the committee's next steps are 1) looking at ways to develop a network to help mentoring organizations share information, 2) quantify the need for additional capacity. He stated that the committee is drafting a letter to invite the mentorship organizations to offer ideas regarding collaboration. He stated that the KCFCCC should not operate such a group, and will need to look at the same issues as the elementary school years committee in terms of handing of the project.

He stated that the Governor's husband was very interested in promoting mentorship, and this was a good time to begin to work on this issue.

D. Ongoing Family Support

Sandra Davis reported that the committee was continuing to use existing resources to create a better community response to addressing the prevalence of substance abuse. She stated that the cross training efforts begun by the committee are being sustained by the member agencies. She stated that the committee is now looking at university-level training and community education and advocacy. Again, the focus will be on using existing structures.

Mr. Zylstra stated this is an example of one of the many cross-systems areas that are "no one's responsibility" to address. He stated that it was important that entities like the KCFCCC and ENTF take on coordinating these issues and making sure that they are being housed somewhere. He stated that if the KCFCCC is doing that, then it is doing its job.

VII. Bylaws

Ms. Archbold reviewed the proposed changes to the bylaws, including:

- Section 4.1: Revise the language regarding required Executive Committee membership categories to allow for greater flexibility in electing Executive Committee membership. The proposed language would still require representatives from each of the categories of Consumer Advocate, Private Funding Organization, Private Agency, and Public Agency, but would change the number required from each category to at least one. The proposed change is highlighted in the attached bylaws.

Current: at minimum, 2 public service providers, 1 private service provider, 2 consumer advocates, and 2 private funding organizations

Proposed: at minimum, 1 public service provider, 1 private service provider, 1 consumer advocate, and 1 private funding organizations

- Appendix A - Definitions: Revise the required number of private agencies required to be “publicly funded child welfare agencies” from two to one, to provide greater flexibility in membership selection. The total number of private agencies will remain three. This proposed change will not affect any current member, nor members whose terms are up for reappointment. The proposed change is highlighted in the attached bylaws.

Sandra Davis moved to approve the recommendations. Andrew Zylstra supported. Motion carried.

VIII. 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 November 4, 2003, from 12:00pm – 1:30pm at the Kent County Health Department, 700 Fuller, N.E.**