

CWAC 6/21

Members present: Paul McWhinney, Alex Kamberis, Deborah Eves, Sharon Lindsay, JoAnn Wilson Harfst, Patience O'Brien, Lori Battin, Lelia Hopper, Deborah Forkas, Denise Gallop, Denise Dickerson, Phyl Parrish, Judy Gundy, Tiffany Gordon, Cheryl Fryer, Carol Wilson, Cathy Pemberton, Celest Williams, Mallory Stephens, Christie Marra, Emily Womble, Rita Katzman, Mattie Satterfield, Kathy McElroy, Jennifer Cooper, Makita Lewis, Amy Atkinson, Ellen Nau

Paul McWhinney, Deputy Commissioner for Program and Director of Family Services called meeting to order and the group provided self introductions. There were a few slight changes to the agenda, mostly related to order of presentation.

At the April CWAC meeting, the group asked for examples from local departments about promising practices and best practices. Tiffany Gordon and Cheryl Fryer with York/Poquoson Social Services graciously agreed to present about their Supervisory Tool. The concept was developed as a result of the need to quantify performance or outcome measures for family services staff. After a list of criteria was developed identifying good social work practices, monitoring forms were developed and the database was created. The criteria used in the tool were given a numerical value which translates to a score. Those scores help determine ratings of performance such as satisfactory, above standard performance, and identify areas needing improvement. Although the forms and inputting data take time, supervisors and workers like having the clearly defined performance indicators and the payoff has been an increase in results desired, or improvements in performance. Supervisors are required to review one case per worker per month and score that case using the tool. In addition to using the supervisory tool, supervisors are required to join social workers on at least one home visit each month and evaluate them on their social work practice. They have been working on revising these forms to incorporate policy changes, incorporate QSR findings, and to fine tune them. New areas that will be added to the forms are teaming, family engagement, and reasonable candidacy. There was a question from the group asking how SafeMeasures is used with this process. Ms. Gordon responded that the SafeMeasures reports were used to confirm results and is taken into consideration along with the supervisory tool when determining rating of performance. If there are any questions about the tool, please contact tiffany.gordon@yorkcounty.gov.

In a change in the agenda, Ryan Kelly joined Alex Kamberis to talk about the Governor's "Virginia Adopts – Campaign 1,000." The focus of the campaign is to match 1000 children in foster care with 1000 families. As part of the Virginia Adopts 1,000 campaign, local departments of social services are also assessing the 100 longest waiting children and youth in foster care for a permanent home. Virginia averages between 650 and 700 adoptions of children in foster care each year. Because of the length of time for a child to become legally free for adoption, the focus of this campaign is making the match, or connection between the child and a family. The match will be recognized when the family expressed interest in adopting a specific child from foster care.

Mr. Kelly is married to Janet Kelly, Secretary of the Commonwealth, and is in the process of adopting a child. Mr. and Mrs. Kelly were asked by the Governor to spearhead this campaign. The goal of this initiative is to find a "place of permanency" for children in foster care. To reach this goal the Governor has allocated money, about 1.5 million, to help with recruitment of families that are interesting in adopting and creating matches between children in foster care and those families. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was recently posted and is targeting the "Extreme Recruitment" model of family finding. Once family or other people in the child's network have been located they will be funneled to the local

department or adoption contractor that is working with that department to see if they can be a match for the child. There will be a referral process from local departments specific to the 100 longest waiting children. It is anticipated two more RFPs will be posted soon. One will focus on more general recruitment that uses targeted data and the second will focus on creating an innovative pilot(s) for delivery of post adoptive services. There was a question from the group concerning the issue of family engagement. Local department workers do not have trouble finding family members, but they do have trouble engaging those people and creating that opportunity to make the match. Mr. Kamberis indicated that there is money available for training around engagement of families. Mr. Kelly encouraged the group to let him know how to get connected to the community. In July, there will be regionally based launches for the initiative. For more information go to <http://www.virginiaadopts.virginia.gov/>.

Judy Gundy provided a brief training update. There are four Subject Matter Expert (SME) workshops scheduled for FY14. The first is related to adoptions and successful assessment and matching of adoptive families with older youth and children where there are high levels of behavioral issues. This workshop will go beyond family finding and work on engagement of families. The second SME addresses Mental Health and Substance Abuse issues with caretakers. There has been an increase in the number of caretakers who have mental health and substance abuse issues and training is needed to assist workers in dealing with those caretakers. The third SME is Trauma Informed Care for Caseworkers. Sonia Aronow (Fairfax) and Gretchen Brown (Henrico) attended the Train the Trainer event for the National Traumatic Stress Network will share the Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit for Caseworkers. The fourth SME, "Measuring Substantial Progress by Using Visits as a Reasonable Efforts Search" is being presented by Rose Marie Wentz. Ms. Gundy informed the group of a special adoption event "Working the Case for Promoting Successful Adoptions". At this event Monique Myers will present workshops where participants will bring a case to review and develop a plan by mining the case and breaking down barriers and challenges to find and maintain successful adoptions.

Ms. Gundy highlighted the Family Services CORE Supervisor Training, a series of four courses that are scheduled for two consecutive days per month over a period of four months with transfer of learning activities between sessions. These courses are intended for new LDSS supervisors with less than two years of experience, however if there is space these courses are also beneficial for supervisors seeking refresher training. There are trainings in each of the five regions beginning in July in the Central Region and started as late as September in the Western Region. You can register for these classes through the Knowledge Center. Ms. Gundy also shared information with the group about the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's Leadership Academy for Supervisors. There are two components of the Leadership Academy: a core leadership program and the "Take the Lead Series" which is currently available online for eligible supervisors. For more information about the Leadership Academy for Supervisors go to www.ncwwi.org/las.html. Ms. Gundy shared with the group a Transfer of Learning Matrix that covers supervisors, trainers, learners, and co-workers. If you would like more information about the matrix contact Judy Gundy at judy.gundy@dss.virginia.gov.

Makita Lewis, project manager for Engaging Families for Success (formally the Strengthening Families Initiative), brought the group up to speed on progress made. The Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI) set out to align policies, programs, and resources with the guiding principles and values of VDSS utilizing a holistic approach that looks beyond clients as individuals and focuses on the entire family unit. The VDSS Practice Model was revised to guide the way we work with individuals and families. There was a shift in practice to look at families more holistically. This shift was not specific to Family Services, but

reached across the entire department and got all divisions thinking about ways to improve work with clients and how best to support them and their families.

There are now three critical areas of focus: adoption, fatherhood, and family well-being. There is a steering committee that is tasked with overseeing the development of strategies to address the critical areas of focus and to strategically coordinate and manage the key strategies. The steering committee has several subcommittees including; data management, policy alignment, fatherhood, LDSS engagement, community outreach and development, marketing and communications, and training. The goal is to continue to strengthen and engage families by focusing on family well being and incorporate protective factors by aligning policy and resources. The Innovators for Success Council has 23 local departments that are working to share promising and best practices and pilot creative strategies.

Alex Kamberis reviewed permanency data with the group but because of a lack of time there was not extensive discussion. He did highlight information about average length of time spent in foster care for a child that is adopted. The national standard is adoption within 24 months from removal. In Virginia, there is an average of 33 months from removal to adoption. It appears in most cases that the delay is not in achieving the termination of parental rights but in the placement and finalization of adoptions.

Mr. Kamberis mentioned that VDSS is participating in a National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Review on June 26 and 27. Our federal partners are coming to Virginia to have an in depth look at how Virginia gathers the data for NYTD and provide technical assistance as needed. Mr. Kamberis reminded the group that youth age 14 and older are required to have a Transitional Living Plan. SafeMeasures tracks Transitional Living Plans and it is clear they are not being entered into OASIS.

Deborah Eves shared with the group that Virginia has officially completed the Child and Family Services Review PIP without penalty. Our federal partners are going to join CWAC at the next meeting, September 20th to help celebrate and plan for future progress. CWAC members are encouraged to come to this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00.