

CWAC minutes February 19, 2010

Members present: Nancy Fowler, Sherri Goggins, Deborah Eves, Therese Wolf, Gary Cullen, Janine Tondrowski, Denise Dickerson, Charlotte McNulty, Vernon Simmons, Pamela Cooper, BJ Zarris, Lori Battin, Lelia Hopper, Allison Lowery, Phyllis Groomes-Gordon, Matt Wade, Susan Taylor, Dorothy Hollahan, Martha Kurgans, Tawana Ols, Virginia Powell, Denise Gallop, Melody Galloway, Hayley Brooks, Rita Katzman, Brenda Macklin, Paul McWhinney, Natalia Pereira, Mary Nedell, Rat Ratke, Rebecca Hjelm, Cate Newbanks, Elizabeth Hutchens, Heather Jones, Kaylin Chandler Howell, Tracey Jackson, Susan Taylor, Melissa O'Neill, Suzanne Fountain, John Freeman

Paul McWhinney called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. The group provided individual introductions. Mr. McWhinney shared some information updates, including that the Governor is committed to continuing Transformation activities. The Resource Family Regional Collaboratives are about half way through their first meetings. Feedback from these collaboratives is very positive. The Steering Committee for Training is dealing with proposed budget cuts and remains committed to reengineering training.

The Managing by Data workgroup continues to meet regularly. SafeMeasures training, Applied SafeMeasures, will begin in the next few weeks. There has been one training already for state and regional staff. The focus of this training is to use SafeMeasures as a tool for looking at performance. Matt Wade, with the Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis unit, again encouraged everyone to use SafeMeasures. Part of the justification for refunding SafeMeasures will be its use and ability to help inform practice. The Applied SafeMeasures trainings will be held as follows: Eastern Region in Portsmouth on February 25 -26, Northern Region in Warrenton on March 11-12, Western Region in Abingdon on March 23-24, Central Region in Henrico on April 8-9, and Piedmont Region in Roanoke on April 21-22. Registration is through the Knowledge Center.

Charlotte McNulty provided the Community Programming Transformation update. The State Executive Council (SEC) established two workgroups to examine policies related to Family Partnership meetings and carve out funds. Guidance around Family Partnership meetings has been created and will be shared with SLAT the first Thursday of March. The guidance contains seven items. The first six relate to families' need to be involved and the role of the CMPT. The seventh item speaks to integrating CSA policies with other agencies that use CSA funds. There is a SEC meeting scheduled for March 25. There was a question from the group around training on the new guidance. The training will be planned after guidance has been accepted.

Paul McWhinney informed the group about the Agents of Change leadership program. This program is co-sponsored by VDSS and the Annie E Casey foundation. There are 58 participants in five cluster areas from all of the Transformation partner agencies. The five clusters are Fredericksburg, Charlottesville/Albemarle, Winchester/Frederick/Clarke, Harrisonburg/Rockingham, and Richmond (state). The first meeting was held in January in Charlottesville with all participants. The next meetings will be in each area and the final meeting will be with everyone again.

BJ Zarris provided an update to the group about Family Engagement efforts. You are able to find information about Family Partnership meetings at www.vafamilyconnections.com under the Family Engagement Building Block link. Ms. Zarris referenced two Broadcasts (6050 and 6083); they are attached to the end of these minutes. There is technical assistance being offered as the first phase of implementation goes forward. Family Engagement Roundtables will be facilitated by the regional consultants. The roundtables are an opportunity for localities to learn from each other, share information, and problem solve around issues related to family engagement. It is a forum for localities that may be further along with implementation to talk about the challenges and barriers they faced and strategies used to overcome them. The roundtables will be held quarterly in each region beginning with the Phase One localities. In addition to the regional roundtables, directors will have the opportunity to call in and speak with Paul McWhinney, Division Director, and Tamara Temoney, Family Engagement Project Manager, concerning any issues or questions they may have about Family Partnership meetings.

There will be several trainings offered. The one day intro training goes live the first week of March. The three day plus one training is for facilitators. The additional day is a follow up to talk about barriers and successes with Family Partnership meetings. The Division of Family Services is also working on creating a half-day training specific to diligent family searches. This training will be piloted at the April regional office/central office (ROCO) meeting. There will be a second training developed to address engaging those family members that have been located. Cate Newbanks, with FACES, questioned Ms. Zarris about offering training and education for foster parents. The response was that a training for foster parents is in the works but not formalized yet.

Paul McWhinney brought up a letter from the Virginia League of Social Service Executives (the League) that was sent to the Commissioner of VDSS asking that we stand down from requiring localities to participate in Structured Decision Making and Family Partnership meetings. While the Commissioner will formally respond to the letter, Mr. McWhinney provided some comments. The division of family services believes that Family Engagement is a key building block and will move forward with the roll out that has already begun. There is data that show a decline in case loads and other benefits for those localities that are using Family Partnership meetings. Mr. McWhinney reaffirmed that he is listening to local department staff and directors and is trying to be mindful of the amount of work that is being required. Change is difficult but now is the time to keep at it because these changes will affect practice in a positive way. As a point of clarification, Suzanne Fountain – speaking on behalf of the League said that the League’s issue is related to resources. She stated that most people agree that Family Engagement is a worthy program, but when the resources are not aligned with the amount of work that is being required, there are problems.

Matt Wade talked to the group about monthly worker visits. Not only is case worker visits with child a CFSR item that needs improvement, all states are also mandated to have foster care monthly worker visits at the 90% level by 2011. Visits are occurring, but we are finding out that those visits are not being entered into OASIS. Mr. Wade has created a report on the percent of visits by each local department that will go to regional staff. SafeMeasures can be used to see monthly worker visits. Soon SafeMeasures will include reports on worker visits with family,

CPS worker visits, and child visits with biological family. If you would like access to SafeMeasures, please contact Matt Wade at matthew.wade@dss.virginia.gov.

The remainder of the meeting was used as a working session for the Program Improvement Plan. People self selected into one of the four primary strategies and provided feedback on them. The facilitator for each discussion recorded suggested additions to the work plan, suggested deletions, and other comments. Each group reported back and the comments and suggestions have been incorporated as appropriate. The PIP is due to the Children's Bureau on Friday, February 23, 2010. Once it is sent, it will be posted to the VDSS website as well as to SPARK.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm. The March meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2010, location to be determined.

BROADCAST 6050

DATE: January 19, 2010

TO: Directors, Child Welfare Supervisors and Staff in Local Departments of Social Services

FROM: Paul D. McWhinney, Director, Division of Family Services

TIME: 4:42 p.m.

SUBJECT: **Family Engagement**

CONTACT: **Tamara Temoney, Family Engagement Manager** (804) 726-7538 or tamara.temoney@dss.virginia.gov

This is the third in a series of broadcasts regarding the implementation of a consistent and disciplined approach to family engagement in Virginia. Broadcasts [5820](#) and [5856](#) provide initial information. The purpose of this broadcast is to supply information about the guidance, training and technical assistance that will be provided to localities to support the implementation of Family Partnership Meetings. Before the details are outlined, allow me to provide a framework for this broadcast. Through the Children's Services System Transformation, Virginia has made a clear and decisive commitment to the principle and reality that families are the experts on what is best for their children. Family Partnership Meetings reflect our commitment to having family members at the table, whenever possible, to participate in permanency planning for their child or relative. This practice is driven not only by research that commends a structured family engagement model, but also by our recent Child and Family Services Review that, for the second time, informs us that we do not adequately involve families in the decision-making process. It is also driven by our personal and professional commitment to do what is best for the children we serve. Other information related to family engagement can be found on the Transformation website under the heading of family engagement at <http://vafamilyconnections.com>.

Throughout the country and in Virginia, there is evidence that a deliberate, structured approach to working with families, professionals, and community partners can make a significant difference in the lives of children and families. Data from agencies using family engagement models demonstrate that the implementation of Family Partnership Meetings results in better outcomes for youth in care and a cost savings to localities. Additionally, evidence-based family engagement practice also

improves worker satisfaction through a shared responsibility in decision-making and reduction in caseloads.

Because the implementation of a family engagement model represents a significant practice shift for those localities that may not be using a structured approach, the Virginia Department of Social Services commits to providing strong guidance, training, and technical assistance to properly support localities in this effort. Recognizing the varying availability of staff and resources across Virginia, the Department has built in flexibility for local agencies so that they may choose a structured model that is most appropriate for their locality. (For example, local agencies will not be required to hire a facilitator. Facilitators may be hired jointly by one or more agencies; they can be contracted for on a case-by-case basis, which is a valid CSA expenditure; or, existing staff or supervisors may be trained as facilitators.)

Family Engagement Guidance

The guidance entitled “Family Engagement Guidance” is now available on SPARK at http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/dfs/family_engagement/ and the public website at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/about/manuals.html>. Family Partnership Meetings utilize a team approach to making decisions throughout the family’s involvement with the agency. Family Partnership Meetings involve the parents and their identified supports, relatives, the social worker, professionals working with the family, and other relevant community partners. These meetings are facilitated by a trained individual who is not the case-carrying social worker for the child or family and the group as a team collaborates on decisions at the following points:

- Determination of high or very high risk
- After emergency or when considering removal
- Prior to change of placement
- Prior to change of goal
- At the request of the parent (birth, foster, adoptive, legal guardian), or social worker

With training and technical assistance provided, the expectation is that by December 31, 2010, each locality will have Family Partnership Meetings in at least one of the above decision points.

Training

Family engagement training will be offered in phases beginning in March 2010. Localities have been assigned to one of the training phases based on the responses submitted in the second section of the Readiness Assessment Tool. The Readiness Assessment Tool was developed to provide an opportunity for localities to identify their values related to working with families and their level of preparedness for family engagement, and to identify any challenges or barriers to implementation. Localities were surveyed through the Readiness Assessment Tool as to identification of a facilitator; identification of a location for Family Partnership Meetings; identification of a population (i.e. removals, placement changes) to begin having Family Partnership Meetings; current involvement of parents, youth, or extended family in decision-making; and selection of a training phase preference. Localities that did not complete an assessment were randomly assigned to the second or third training phase.

<p align="center">Phase 1 March</p>	<p>Alexandria; Arlington; Bristol, Charlottesville; Chesapeake; Danville; Dinwiddie; Fauquier; Floyd; Franklin County; Frederick County; Halifax; Hampton; Harrisonburg/Rockingham; Henrico; Hopewell; James City County; King William; Loudoun; Middlesex; Newport News; Norfolk; Northampton; Northumberland; Nottaway; Prince George; Prince William; Radford; Richmond City; Scott; Virginia Beach; Winchester</p>
<p align="center">Phase 2 (June)</p>	<p>Albemarle; Alleghany/Covington; Amelia; Amherst; Bath; Brunswick; Buckingham; Campbell; Carroll; Chesterfield; Clarke; Culpeper; Dickenson; Fairfax; Franklin City; Fredericksburg; Giles; Gloucester; Grayson; Greenville/Emporia; Hanover; Isle of Wight; King and Queen; Lancaster; Lee; Louisa; Lunenburg; Manassas Park; Montgomery; Norton; Pittsylvania; Portsmouth; Pulaski; Shenandoah; Shenandoah Valley; Stafford; Suffolk; Surry; Sussex; Westmoreland; Williamsburg; York</p>
<p align="center">Phase 3 (September)</p>	<p>Accomack; Appomattox; Bedford; Bland; Botetourt; Buchanan; Caroline; Charles City; Charlotte; Craig; Cumberland; Essex; Fluvanna; Galax; Goochland; Green; Henry-Martinsville; Highland; King George; Lynchburg; Madison; Manassas; Mathews; Mecklenburg; Nelson; New Kent; Orange; Page; Patrick; Petersburg; Powhatan; Prince Edward; Rappahannock; Richmond County; Roanoke City; Roanoke County; Rockbridge; Russell; Smyth; Southampton; Spotsylvania; Tazewell; Warren; Washington; Wise; Wythe</p>

The training and technical assistance that will be offered is intended to help prepare each locality to begin conducting Family Partnership Meetings. Training will be offered to specific localities at varying times throughout the year based on the training phase assignment.

The following is a description of the training that will be offered to each locality:

Course	Description	Suggested Participants
	This self-paced <u>online</u> course offers an overview of the importance of cultivating a multi-disciplinary	

<p>CWS 4010- Transformation; Promoting Change by Valuing and Engaging Families</p>	<p>approach to child welfare services in Virginia; explains the purpose of the Children’s Services Transformation and why Virginia is improving the way services are delivered to youth and families. In addition; it describes the Practice Model and highlights the significance of family engagement as part of the Transformation</p>	<p>All child welfare staff, child welfare supervisors and community partners</p>
<p>CWS 4020- Introduction to Virginia’s Family Engagement Model</p>	<p>This classroom style course will provide an understanding of key elements/values of family engagement including the purpose; goal; and meeting triggers; the roles of participants; and the benefits to adopting family engagement as part of standard child welfare practice. The course is scheduled for 1-day.</p>	<p>All child welfare staff and child welfare supervisors</p>
<p>CWS 4030- Family Engagement Facilitator Training</p>	<p>This classroom style course is specifically designed for the individual(s) that will facilitate meetings within their locality. The training will highlight how to prepare families and youth for the Family Partnership Meeting; to practice interviewing using a strength based approach; to understand the role of the meeting facilitator as the process expert before; during; and after the meeting; and to understand the role of the social worker and other participants before; during; and after the Family Partnership Meeting. The course is scheduled for 4 days.</p>	<p>Individuals within the locality that will be responsible for facilitating Family Partnership Meetings</p>

In order to schedule the appropriate number of training sessions, it is requested that your family engagement liaison provide an estimate of the number of training participants that will be attending the CWS 4020 or CWS 4030 course. **Please provide an estimated number of attendees to Moniko Coleman at moniko.coleman@dss.virginia.gov by February 1, 2010.** Your locality will be notified soon about training dates.

Technical Assistance

The Child Welfare Regional Specialists will be available to assist localities with problem-solving to address challenges related to the implementation of family engagement, including consultation with individual localities. They can assist with day-to-day implementation concerns and may be helpful in determining the decision point(s) at which to begin having Family Partnership Meetings or the most appropriate facilitator option for your locality.

To supplement individual consultation, the Regional Specialists will also conduct Family Engagement Roundtables within their regions. The roundtables will provide an opportunity for local agencies to share information through peer to peer collaboration, networking and ongoing support. The Family Engagement Roundtables will begin prior to the start of family engagement training for your locality.

Additionally, Paul McWhinney and Tamara Temoney will schedule a conference call with the local directors within each training phase to address questions related to the implementation of family engagement. You will receive more specific information related to the date and time of the call within the next few weeks from the family engagement liaison designated by your agency.

Finally, a note on the Transformation initiative itself. We often hear concerns that while “Transformation” is a good idea, resources are not available to accomplish it or it cannot be afforded. The reality is that Virginia cannot afford NOT to reform its child serving systems. It is not only prudent to implement family engagement to avoid federal penalties; it also has proven to save money. For the first time in memory, the Commonwealth spent less in Fiscal Year 2009 on Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) costs than we did the year before. We are also on track to spend less in the current year than last year, making two consecutive years in which CSA costs have been reduced. Reduced CSA costs are a savings to both state and local governments. The most important result, however, is that more of Virginia’s children in foster care are being discharged to permanency and achieving permanent, life-long family connections. That is the true goal of Transformation, and the goal we all share.

BROADCAST 6083

DATE: February 4, 2010

TO: Directors, Child Welfare Supervisors and Staff in Local Departments of Social Services, Family Engagement Liaisons

FROM: Paul D. McWhinney, Director, Division of Family Services

TIME: 4:52 p.m.

SUBJECT: **Family Engagement**

CONTACT: **Tamara Temoney, Family Engagement Manager** (804) 726-7538 or tamara.temoney@dss.virginia.gov

The Virginia Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services in collaboration with the Court Improvement Program (CIP), Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia is now accepting Requests for Funding Assistance (RFA) for a pilot project to offer family engagement training and facilitation services to five localities. All requests must be submitted by **March 5, 2010**. Information about the RFA can be found at

http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/dfs/family_engagement/files/requestforfundingassistance.pdf