

CWAC minutes May 21, 2010

Members present: Deborah Eves, Janine Tondrowski, Denise Dickerson, Charlotte McNulty, Vernon Simmons, Kevin Filbey, BJ Zarris, Matt Wade, Dorothy Hollahan, Martha Kurgans, Virginia Powell, Melanie Galloway, Denise Gallop, Rita Katzman, Suzanne Fountain, John Freeman, Cheryl Williams, Clark Earl, Christie Marra, Mary Dunne Stewart, Lori Battin, Jo Ann Wilson-Harfst, Melissa O'Neill, Pam Cooper, Marion Kelly, Trudy Brisendine

Betty Jo Zarris called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. The group provided individual introductions. Ms. Zarris brought the group up to date on Annie E. Casey's Child Welfare Strategic Consulting Group's engagement with Virginia. CWSG is committed to supporting Virginia through December of 2010 to improve permanency outcomes by embedding its family engagement practice model and promoting the family engagement philosophy around the state. While the focus of the engagement is on permanency through family engagement, other areas of work within the division of family services will be supported. The decision was made to focus on family engagement because it is believed that engaging families will keep children safer and achieve permanency sooner. Regional teams are being developed to include permanency, CPS, and resource family consultants along with the regional independent living specialists, CRAFFT coordinators, and a CSA TA person. These teams are meeting monthly now and in July will have a two day on site training around family engagement. Each region is currently conducting regional roundtables. Beginning in September or October, these teams will expand those round tables and include training and technical assistance on permanency issues.

There are four areas of focus within Family Engagement: 1) Family Partnership Meetings, 2) Family Search, 3) Family Support, and 4) Kinship Care. The first area, Family Partnership Meetings, have already received a lot of attention and progress has been made. The first phase of family engagement implementation has occurred. There are a total of three training phases for Family Partnership Meetings with the last phase taking place in the last quarter of the calendar year. There was a general question from the group about facilitators for Family Partnership Meetings. Facilitators can be contracted by the local department, be a local employee solely dedicated to facilitation within a department, or be a social worker who carries a case load but is not directly involved with the case that needs facilitation. Some local departments are utilizing CSA funds to pay for facilitation if the meetings are used as a service for a particular child.

In June, there will be five one day trainings on family search and engagement for local departments. This training is based on the training Kevin Campbell offers. Along with family search, CWSG is committed to working with local departments around family support. The logistics of family support have not yet been determined.

The fourth area of focus is around kinship care and prevention. There is a team of Casey and VDSS staff that are working together to create a plan of action around kinship care and prevention. That team includes Mary Bissell, Karen Angelici, Lisa Payne-Wells, Lyndell Lewis, Therese Wolf, Susan Taylor, and Gary Cullen. One of the first activities will be a listening tour with local departments that are currently working on diversion from foster care to learn more about successes and barriers.

Several requests and concerns were discussed by the group. The comment was made that Virginia has chosen to start by training on and requiring Family Partnership meetings instead of focusing on another area like family finding or support. Because of that, there are some people who do not see the connection between Family Partnership meetings and Family Engagement. There was a request from a locality that is in Phase 3 of the Family Partnership training to have barriers and best practices shared with them from localities in earlier implementation of the training. A concern was raised about those localities that are in Phase 3 of the Family Partnership training and their ability to be compliant with the PIP. The PIP states that localities should hold Family Partnership meetings at at least one decision point by December 31, 2010. Finally, Rita Katzman, CPS program manager, asked CWAC to help her determine if she should present a proposal to CWSG that requests a focus on Differential Response as our state's original family engagement effort. The committee determined it would be a logical step to ask for support on Differential Response.

Matt Wade presented an entry cohort analysis on children entering care in 2003. The presentation focused on the importance of timeliness for children in care. Just over 3,200 entered foster care in Virginia in 2003. Approximately 50% are male and 50% are female. Thirty five percent of the children who entered in 2003 were between the ages of 11 and 15 years. After one year in care, 90% of the exits from foster care were to permanency (reunification, adoption, or custody transfer to relative). Fifty-five percent of the exits to permanency are reunifications and only about 8% of those children "aged out", or were emancipated from foster care. In year two, exits to permanency dropped to about 76% and exits to emancipation jumped up to 19%. In year three, exits to permanency drop to 70% and exits to emancipation jump to 25%. Year three shows a noted increase in adoptions which have jumped up to 38% of the exits to permanency. In year four, exits to permanency are at 56%, with only 5% of those exits to reunification. Adoption number peak in year four at 48% and emancipations rise to 40% of all exits from care. In year five, emancipations have risen to 52% and exits to permanency have dropped to 46%. In year six and seven, 56-57% of exits are to emancipation and 34% of exits are to adoptions. The % of children who reunify drops between the sixth and seventh year from 5% to 2%. Currently, there are 438 children still in care that entered in 2003, which is 13.5% of the original cohort.

There are several trends that can be noted from this analysis. In year one or two after entering foster care, there is a higher likelihood of reunifying with parents or custody being transferred to a relative. By year three, the likelihood of either happening drops significantly. The likelihood of being adopted out of foster care is highest between year four and five. The likelihood a child will emancipate from foster care increases with each year. After four and a half years, a child is most likely to age out of foster care. This support the practice of concurrent planning where more than one goal is being considered and actions are being made towards both goals at the same time. Family Engagement is another strategy that can be key in helping to keep children out of foster care for long periods of time. The question was raised that if there was an analysis on the 2006 or 2007 cohort entering foster care, would there be a difference in outcomes. Mr. Wade has not done that analysis but hypothesized that if there was any difference it may be around higher reunification numbers.

Mr. Wade provided an OASIS edit update to the group. OASIS release 3.7 is scheduled for August 2010 and will include the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and CPS change track. The 3.8 release was originally scheduled to include safety and risk assessment updates, however, subsidized custody will now be in that release. The safety and risk assessments will be included in a spring 2011 release. The Outcomes Based Reporting and Analysis unit (OBRA) will shift the data clean up focus from foster care to CPS cases. There will be a push to have that information entered correctly and/or corrected as needed. If anyone is interested in the power point presentation on the 2003 entry cohort analysis, please email Mr. Wade at matthew.wade@dss.virginia.gov.

Kevin Filbey and Vernon Simmons, co-chairs of the Virginia Child Welfare Training Program (VCWTP) Steering Committee made a presentation to the group on training. The statewide training system will offer comprehensive, competency based training built on Virginia's practice model and accessible across Virginia. The second round of the Child and Family Services Review highlighted issues and challenges associated with child welfare training. Some of those issues include: trainings are not timely, there is an absence of standardized trainings, there is a need for a training assessment, and transfer of learning needs more emphasis. Virginia plans to "reengineer" training: creating a competency based curriculum, instituting a training needs assessment, encouraging the Area Training Centers (ATC) to make decisions, creation of the child welfare training steering committee, and creating intentional partnerships between local department and Virginia DSS.

A competency is a statement of knowledge and skill required for workers to do their jobs effectively. The competencies that are being created will support the practice model. Supervisor competencies will be tackled first. The steering committee will first examine what is currently available and in use to determine if changes need to be made or if more should be added. There was a question from the group: "By using competencies, does that mean a worker will be competent to complete their job tasks by the end of the training?" The answer is yes, that these competencies will be inclusive of the essential and fundamental skills workers will need. The follow up question was "How will this change the supervisor's role and expectations?" The answer is that as the system develops, the foundational pieces are being put into place to support and enable supervisors to do their jobs.

Mr. Simmons stated that the steering committee is not an advisory committee but a management committee. It is representative of state and local departments and is in consultation with local departments of social services. The steering committee is charged with program oversight, strategic planning and evaluation, decision making, problem solving, and advocacy. The steering committee's deliverables include: set priorities for training, establish competencies, establish a process and standards for specialized workshops based on departmental need, establish comprehensive individual training needs assessments for staff, and ensure delivery of pre-service and in-service training for resource families. There are currently three subcommittees: communications, knowledge center, and policy.

Mr. Simmons and Mr. Filbey are looking for more participants for the steering committee. In particular there is a need for representatives from small and rural local departments of social

services. Contact Vernon Simmons at Vernon.simmons@dss.virginia.gov for more information about the training steering committee.

Betty Jo Zarris closed out the meeting by introducing the Family Partnership DVD. She also mentioned the Family Partnership training that took place on May 6th. This training was sponsored by CIP and includes five local departments who applied for a grant to help fund 20 Family Partnership meetings in each locality. The localities at the training were Henrico County, Chesterfield County, Chesapeake, Hampton, and Franklin County. CIP is considering offering a second round of grant funding, possibly to target smaller agencies. For more information on Family Partnership meetings or to request a copy of the DVD, contact Tamara Temoney at tamara.temoney@dss.virginia.gov.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm. The June meeting has been cancelled due to VDSS's participation in a federal AFCARS review. The July meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 16th from 10:00 – 1:00 pm.