

CWAC minutes May 15, 2015

Members present: Rick Verilla, Alex Kamberis, Bragail Williams Brown, Emily Womble, Christie Marra, Deborah Eves, Tania White, Rita Katzman, Carol Wilson, Garry Cofield, Abigail Schreiner, Carl Ayers, Melissa O'Neill, Pat Lewis, Jo-Ann Wilson-Harfst, Laurie Crawford, Jim Forrester, Ronnie Gehring, Robin Ely, Lisa Tully, Patricia Popp, Laura Polk, Nannette Bowler, John Dougherty, Adrienne Fegans, Ashley Harrell, Denise Dickerson, Ann Knefel, Pam Kestner, Lisa Pearson, and Kimberly Murphy

Carl Ayers, Family Services Division Director, called the meeting to order and the group provided introductions. Special welcome was provided to members of the Three Branch Committee and to our federal partners from the Region III office; Lisa Pearson and Kimberly Murphy.

### **CWAC Structure and Three Branch**

During the March 20<sup>th</sup> CWAC meeting, it was suggested that the work of the Three Branch Committee be incorporated into CWAC as a way to continue progress towards the goals associated with the grant. The CWAC charter was drafted to include adding four sub committees: safety, permanency, well-being, and quality assurance. Carl Ayers presented information on the work the Three Branch Committee accomplished. Virginia applied for Three Branch to achieve cross-agency work that had been difficult to move forward in the past and in the end was able to engage top leaders, align outcomes and work, and establish common priorities and oversight. The over-arching goal of Three Branch is to improve the well-being of children in foster care by addressing their trauma, health, behavioral health and educational needs. The well-being outcomes that were established are:

Children are physically healthy

- All children receive primary health care services.
- All children receive dental services.

Children are emotionally & behaviorally healthy

- All children are screened/assessed for behavioral health needs.
- All children have access to & receive appropriate behavioral health services.
- Children demonstrate fewer behavioral & emotional needs.
- All children receive psychotropic medications when appropriate.

Children are successful in school

- All school-aged children attend school.
- All children remain in their same school, unless contrary to their best interests.
- All children succeed in school.

Several major accomplishments include:

- Well-being activities have been incorporated into foster care guidance and into the Child Welfare 5 Year plan.
- Well-being outcomes are being incorporated into VDSS automated data system.
- Foster children are in Medicaid managed care (87% as of June 2014)
- Medicaid agency also has contracted with a behavioral health administrator manage community behavioral health services.

- CANS assessment has been strengthened.
- Initial analysis has begun on prescription rates.

After the presentation, the group discussed the appropriateness of the recommendation made to add the subcommittees mentioned above. A major concern was limiting the committee focus to just safety, permanency or well-being when these issues cut across the spectrum of child welfare. A different suggestion was made to have subcommittees that are based on point of contact with the child welfare system. There would be a subcommittee for prevention, for CPS, and for foster care and adoption. Each of these committees would then be tasked with exploring issues of safety, permanency, and well-being related to that area of child welfare. Jo-Ann Harfst suggested the information/recommendations from these committees should be shared with the League in a timely manner to help influence legislation and the budget. Em Parente encouraged the group to explore flexible meeting days and times, allowing for representation from families and youth that might not be able to attend a workday meeting. Alex Kamberis explained the quality assurance subcommittee could take the place of an existing QA Network.

This information will be emailed to CWAC members with a request for two things. First, members are to vote if they approve or disapprove of the recommendation to create four subcommittees: prevention, CPS, foster care and adoption, and quality assurance. Second, if they approve members should indicate which committee they would be willing to work with.

### **Interagency Partnership to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness**

Pamela Kestner Special Advisor on Families, Children and Poverty presented to the group about the interagency partnership to prevent and end youth homelessness (IPPEYH) which has come out of the Children's Cabinet. There are five priority areas for the Children's Cabinet. They include:

1. **Beyond the barriers.**
  - a. Schools in high-poverty communities face numerous systemic societal barriers
2. **Raising the foundation.**
  - a. High quality early child care, increased access to pre-K, and educational programs
3. **Access to basics.**
  - a. Access to healthcare, housing, and proper nutrition
4. **Triumph over transitions.**
  - a. Services for youth who are transitioning out of Virginia's juvenile justice, mental health, and foster care systems
5. **Working parents, building families.**
  - a. Policies and services that encourage workforce development efforts for parents through education, credential training, career development, and employment

Governor McAuliffe issued Executive Order 32 which created a housing policy agenda. The purpose of the agenda is to identify & implement actions to enable quality, affordable housing which will strengthen families and communities and foster economic growth. IPPEYH's mission is to leverage state resources more effectively; maximize the effectiveness of state services and resources for youth experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness; and realize efficiencies through enhanced

coordination and shared resources among state agencies. The group has developed a strategic plan. The target population includes low income young people, ages 14-24, who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. This target population includes those youth involved in foster care or juvenile justice systems and may also include youth who are not enrolled in or at risk of dropping out of an educational institution. There are four goals this group is working towards:

- Goal 1: Increase stable housing for youth who are or at risk of experiencing homelessness;
- Goal 2: Build and enhance permanent connections for the target population;
- Goal 3: Increase access to and success in education and employment for the target population; and
- Goal 4: Increase social and emotional functioning of the target population.

IPPEYH will be working over the next few years to implement action steps to reach these goals through work groups. They have also planned focus groups with youth in the target population to seek ideas and information.

### **Regional office presentation**

Kimberly Murphy works for the Children's Bureau (CB) in the Region III office based in Philadelphia, PA. Ms. Murphy is assigned to provide support on child welfare issues to Virginia. She provided the group with information about the Children's Bureau.

The CB is one of two bureaus within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). CB has primary responsibility for administering Federal child welfare programs. The CB works with state and local agencies to develop and provide support for programs that focus on strengthening families and preventing the abuse of children, protecting children when abuse or neglect has occurred, and finding permanent placements and connections for those who cannot safely return to their homes. The regional offices provide guidance to states, coordinate submission of federal reports, and provide technical assistance. Virginia is in federal region III which includes the District of Columbia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

The regional office works with states around key federal programs. They are listed below and include the funding source for each program.

- Foster Care (title IV-E)
- Adoption Assistance (title IV-E)
- Adoption Incentives Payments (title IV-E)
- Guardianship Assistance (title IV-E)
- Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (title IV-E Sec 477)
  - Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV)
- Child Welfare Service (title IV-B subpart 1)
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families (title IV-B subpart 2)
- Court Improvement Program (title IV-B subpart 2)

- CAPTA (P.L. 111-320)
  - Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)

States are responsible for submitting state plans and funding applications for the key program. The majority of the programs are reported in the five year Child and Family Services Plan, with follow up in the annual reports, and the Title IV-E state plan. Virginia also submits a Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) plan and a funding application for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grants yearly. The regional office also oversees the CIP application and reports and Advanced Planning Documents (for information systems).

In addition to plans and funding applications, the regional offices coordinate on-site reviews including:

- Title IV-E Review Foster Care Eligibility Reviews
- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR)
- Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Reviews
- Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) Reviews

Virginia has not participated in a SACWIS review because our case management system is not SACWIS compliant. Program Improvement Plans (PIP) come from these on-site reviews. Virginia has a current PIP for Title IV-E and AFCARS.

Ms. Murphy also talked to the group about the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) which is the Federal Law that governs the removal and out-of-home placement of American Indian children. Congress enacted ICWA in 1978 after the Federal government recognized that American Indian children were being removed from their homes and communities at a much higher rate than non-Native American children. There are four components that states must address in determining compliance and in consultation with tribes, including but not limited to:

- Notification of Indian parents and tribes of state proceedings involving Indian children and their right to intervene;
- Placement preferences of Indian children in foster care, pre-adoptive, and adoptive homes;
- Active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family when parties seek to place a child in foster care or for adoption; and
- Tribal right to intervene in state proceedings, or transfer proceedings to the jurisdiction of the tribe.

Ms. Murphy shared with the group an address that can be used only if identity/location of the tribe and/or parent or Indian custodian cannot be determined.

Eastern Area Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs,  
3701 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 260,  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

### **Capacity Building Center for States**

Ann Knefel presented to the group about the Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative. Ms. Knefel is the state liaison for Virginia. Recently, the contract with the national resource centers was not renewed. The CB created the Capacity Building Center for States, the Capacity Building Center for Tribes, and the Capacity Building Center for Courts to help building capacity to make organizational and systemic changes, improving child welfare practice and systems, and achieve improved outcomes for children and families. These centers will centralize and consolidate the capacity building service structure to standardize and improve service delivery that reflects a commitment to teaming and partnership. Ms. Knefel defines capacity building as on-going, evidence –informed process intended to develop a child welfare systems’ potential to be productive and effective.

The Center offers three categories of services. The first is universal and covers a nationwide audience. Typically universal services include marketing and awareness campaigns. The second category of service is constituency services. These services link professional cohorts and help share knowledge. The third category of service is tailored service. Tailored services are specific to a state and are determined after assessment. These services can be intensive projects; projects that are more than one year in duration, or short term; projects that last six months or less. The assessment draws from information about the state’s current performance on goals and outcomes. The center reviews current issues, strengths, initiatives, and innovations occurring as well. The goal of the assessment is to co-identify capacities and to understand system functioning, areas of strength and improvement, outcomes to achieve, and readiness to receive services.

Ms. Knefel has met with program managers in the division of family services and has begun the process of creating the assessment. A follow up meeting will be scheduled during the summer to review the assessment results and prioritize service needs.

### **Vision 21**

Laurie Crawford, project lead for Vision 21, presented to the group. Virginia is one of two states in the country selected by the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime to serve as a demonstration site to identify and link systems of care for children and youth who have been victimized by a broad spectrum of crimes and other traumatic events. VDSS is the project’s lead agency in partnership with the Departments of Criminal Justice Services, Juvenile Justice, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and Education. There is representation from the Office of the Governor Children’s Cabinet, the Department of Health, and the Department of Health Professionals. This initiative aims to ensure that every child entering any of the relevant systems is assessed for victimization, that children and their families are provided comprehensive and coordinated services to fully address their needs, and that practices and policies are established to sustain a long term approach. The project is in the 15-month planning period which began on January 1, 2015. The implementation phase begins April 1, 2016. For more information contact Laurie Crawford at [laurie.crawford@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:laurie.crawford@dss.virginia.gov).

There was one question from the group before the meeting concluded. The question was whether there is an official FAQ or other means of communication that can be shared concerning youth aging out of foster care and youth over 18 receiving independent living services. The response is that VDSS and OCS are jointly gathering questions and should have an FAQ posted soon. Additionally, Broadcast 9088 dated April 15, 2015 can be shared. This broadcast provides clarification regarding the provision of services to youth who turn 18 while in foster care. It further clarifies that LDSS have three authorities under which they serve youth between the ages of 18 and 21.

**1. Section 406(a) of the Social Security Act**

An exception to the age limit for Title IV-E foster care eligibility under section 472 is permitted for those children who are over 18 and under the age of 19 and who are full time students expected to complete their secondary schooling or equivalent training before reaching age 19. In Virginia, youth in foster care who turn 18 and are expected to complete their schooling prior to their 19th birthday continue to be eligible for foster care services until they complete school or it becomes clear that they will not complete school prior to their 19th birthday.

**2. Section 63.2-908 of the Code of Virginia**

This Code section provides LDSS the authority to provide foster care services to a youth *in a permanent foster care placement where the child shall remain until attaining majority or thereafter, until the age of twenty-one years, if such placement is requisite to providing funds for the care of such child, so long as the child is a participant in an educational, treatment, or training program approved pursuant to regulations of the Board.*

**3. Section 63.2-905.1 of the Code of Virginia**

This Code section requires that LDSS provide independent living services to all youth turning 18 while in foster care who are not eligible for foster care services through one of the two authorities above.

For those situations where a youth who is currently being served and cannot be served under one of the authorities above, the agency should notify Carl Ayers at [carl.e.ayers@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:carl.e.ayers@dss.virginia.gov). Additional information about independent living arrangements and services can be found in the Achieving Permanency for Older Youth section of the Foster Care chapter of the Child and Family Services Manual. (<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/index.cgi> select Guidance Manuals then Foster Care)

The meeting ended at 1:00. The next meeting will be held July 17, 2015.