

Region 3 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday May 3, 2012

In Attendance: Tim Bowles, Kym Banton, Janice Bendall, Dianne Breton, Rick Calvert, Emily Clarke, Aziza Clayton, Samantha Forbes, Corey Gartner, Nancy Gentes, Donna Grant, Lorna Grivois, Heather Hintz, Jon Jacaruso, Alana Jones, Allon Kalisher, Tim Kearney, Eileen Lader, Joann Maben, Bill Martin, Cindy McPherson, Jennifer Nadeau, Lisa Sedlock-Reider, Laureen Sheehan, Ann Slater, John Suchocki, Bonnie Tompkins, Vinnie Ward, Mary Lou Woynar and Ronni Zoback

Welcome and Introductions Co-Chairs (Tim Bowles and Alana Jones)

Review of Minutes Co-Chairs (Tim Bowles and Alana Jones)

03/01/12 meeting minutes approved without change.

RAC Membership Co-Chairs (Tim Bowles and Alana Jones)

- The RAC membership roster was discussed and designees were identified.

DCF Update Allon Kalisher and DCF Leads
(Allon)

- The state continues on a downward trend with kids in out-of-home placements. Region 3 is following that trend, especially in Norwich. There is a small incline in Willimantic and Middletown.
- A positive trend is the increased reliance on foster care. There has also been an increase in kin and relative care.
- The Willimantic office has fewer children placed with kin. We are studying however family arrangements that are not reflected in the data.
- DCF is no longer using congregate care for kids under 6.
- Have seen a decline in out-of state placements
- Through ACR every kid in placement has a review every 6 months, and data is collected on our ability to meet the standards for the Exit Plan requirements for case planning. The data shows that region 3 performance is relatively good.
- Region 3 is aggressively looking at case planning and how it is used for referrals, how to streamline work for efficiency.
- Coaching for supervisors is in place. The contract is through June but it will probably be extended.
- DRS is now in place, CHR has been working with DCF. The intake managers in each of the 3 offices oversee DRS. Each region has now sent a case to CHR. We are working to address the fact that intake staff used to have a mixture of cases and now they have a concentration of high risk cases.

(Jon Jacaruso, Systems Development Director)

- Numerous activities are occurring for foster care month: there is a banquet in Norwich, a trip to Lake Compounce, a Rock Cats game and more.
- There is a CAFAP conference next Friday and Saturday. The DCF Deputy Commissioner will be doing a training and the Commissioner will do a town meeting and then breakout sessions in the morning.

- Pam Kelley (Foster Care manager) will be talking about getting the right match of foster parents to kids. She is trying to get seasoned foster parents to become therapeutic foster parents once they have the appropriate training.
- DCF has been working with therapeutic foster care providers to increase referrals of foster care parents.
- There is an RFP for Family and Community Ties (professional foster care), CHR was awarded and we are not at the stage of contract negotiation. This program would be a diversion for kids that would normally go to a congregate care setting.
- As of July 1 there will be a sizeable reduction of safe home beds. Currently we have approximately 140 but they will go down to 72. Waterford Country School serves our region. We have 2 safe homes in Waterford and one in North Windham. The North Windham site will close. Our region currently has the most beds in the state. but the expectation is that each region will have 12 beds.

(Dianne Breton, Willimantic Office Director)

- In Willimantic they have developed a "Best Practice" group which has representation from every unit. Three workgroups have been developed. There is a workgroup looking at how to optimize case transfers and how to involve the families. Another workgroup is addressing transfer of learning, and another workgroup is focused on building a Willimantic SharePoint site.
- Willimantic has organized a provider training in East Hampton. Dianne will update RAC members after the training to inform the group of the training outcome.
- Willimantic is facilitating a lot of out-posting. The function of out-posted workers is to educate schools, hospitals etc. on available services and to improve relationships with one another. Our social workers are now in the community, especially schools. Staff is currently out-posted in Day Kimball Pediatric Clinic, two sites. It was mentioned that CHDI does work with pediatric clinics as well. There is also an out-posted worker at Head Start in Dayville and in Windham schools. Arrangements will be made to out-post with Killingly and Ashford soon.
- It was asked why there is not someone posted at the elementary schools and middle schools. Diane said that a worker is out-posted at the Windham Middle School but it is unlikely that we will be able to out-post in every elementary and middle school.
- DRS is going well. Willimantic appears to have the correct staffing.
- Dianne commented on the value of encouraging the family voice. When appropriate and to every degree possible families should be involved. Dianne's vision and hope is that someday we will all speak the same social work language and have one case plan for a family that crosses all agencies with whom the family is involved.

(Lisa Sedlock-Reider, Middletown Office Director)

- The Area Advisory Council is growing.
- Middletown does not have as much out-posting as they would like due to staffing issues. Clinton and Old Saybrook schools have been contacted. It is important that DCF staff stay in communication with the school administration on what is happening with a child after DCF becomes involved. A lot of work needs to be done around confidentiality, they will be working with legal to see exactly what information can be shared.
- DRS has had a big impact on staff.
- Middletown has a goal of reaching out to more medical professionals in the community and would like to partner with Children's Home of Cromwell and Middlesex Hospital.
- A form letter that is customarily sent to the school only says that the case was closed and does not offer any other information, we can do a lot better job of partnering with the schools.
- Workgroups in the office are focusing on supervised visitation.
- Working on case transfer practice.

- The supervisory staff is going through significant changes, they have lost a few supervisors and workers are at full case loads.
- Trying to maintain one worker to stay with families and minimize how many times the worker is changed.
- The Middletown office was commended on supporting communication between the schools and the department.
- A form letter that is customarily sent to the school only says that the case was closed and does not offer any other information, we can do a lot better job of partnering with the schools.

(Laureen Sheehan, Clinical Consultation and Support Director)

- This will be the first time in 5 years that region 3 will have a complete group of regional resource specialists, hopefully staff will be in place by July. Middletown now has a full time nurse, Willimantic now has a full time substance abuse specialist, Middletown will get a experienced psychiatric social worker that is transferring from Willimantic. This is dependent on re-filling this position first in Willimantic. There is also now two education consultants in the region.
- Education and good health care support in each office is vital to foster and adoptive parents.
- TDM is now undergoing a major transformation, there will be a new name. They are conferencing with families and adolescents to determine who they want to be at their family conferencing. Also considering changing the name "case conference".

(Allon)

- A group of ten attorneys will work pro bono on education issues with DCF kids. They are receiving training on education law and will become advocates on behalf of our kids.
- There is community outreach following the child fatality from the Willimantic office. There are a number of ways to build relationships in the community from this.
- There is a state-wide focus on how emergency departments respond to children. DCF is interested in improving hospitals ability to detect abuse.

(Tim Bowles)

- A couple of months ago CBHAC presented their annual report to the DCF Commissioner at the Capitol and with the help of Bert Plant and Tim Marshall they asked for three million dollars for infrastructure support for the collaboratives. The Commissioner spoke with the Governor and rescinded money was restored for this purpose. An allocation of approximately two million dollars will be tied to the care coordination budget statewide. Each region will get one position of a family engagement services coordinator. This position will support the collaboratives and also lend assistance to the RAC and the AAC to tie together the advisory council and the collaboratives. It was asked that Jon Jacaruso and Samantha Forbes work with the staff that fills these new positions.
- Tim met with a special education director and received very positive feedback on out-posting. Some schools that were not familiar with out-posting and found out about it are now asking how they can get a DCF liaison at their school.

Strengthening Families Practice Model Implementation Workgroups Co-Chairs (Tim Bowles and Alana Jones)

- After the last RAC meeting, the Practice Model subcommittee met and established recommendations for workgroups. Recommendations are summarized in an attached document.
- There will be strong effort on recruiting foster parents, relatives and kin for placements.
- Goal is to link DCF and community priorities through the workgroups, using RBA to answer key questions: What are our major goals and who needs to be at the table to address them effectively?
- Phill Basso from APHSA is still a resource that could help with the workgroups around chartering and organization.
- Each region 3 office has a QI infrastructure with a practice focus. Each office director is taking on the charge of thinking about where and when it makes sense to include community and family partners in internal working groups. And each office director will identify staff to be invited to participate in RAC workgroups.
- Need other state agency representation on workgroups.
- There should be DSS representation in the early childhood workgroup. DSS has money in their budget and will bring Triple P into the state. They will pilot in the Northeast and Hartford with a focus on getting to parents of young children.
- Child first is embedded across region 3.
- Workgroup sign-up to begin immediately after this RAC meeting.

SAC Grant Co-Chairs (Tim Bowles and Alana Jones)

- Liz Schulman came up with the idea of requesting grant money from the SAC to allow for the purchase of gas cards to provide to parents to attend RAC, AAC or one of the regions five collaborative meetings. The request was approved and endorsed by the SAC.
- To receive a gas card the parent must attend a minimum of 3 meetings within a cycle. A cycle is 6 months.
- A form must be completed by the parent and attendance must be acknowledged by a co-chair of each meeting attended. The card is given to the parent after confirmed attendance at 3 meetings.
- Tim suggested purchasing 40 \$30.00 gas cards for the region. Vinnie suggested buying fewer (30) to be able to purchase them in the amount of \$40.00 each. It was agreed by all that \$40.00 cards would be more beneficial to parents to attend 3 separate meetings than \$30.00.
- Only one other region applied for this same grant so there may be availability of additional dollars.
- Today's meeting will be the first official meeting to begin this first cycle.
- Lorna Grivois will serve as fiduciary.
- Shell gas cards is what has been selected, they can also be used at Stop and Shop gas stations.
- Four parent representatives have been identified at today's meeting that would be eligible for a gas card.
- It was decided that no matter who the "parent" is representing at this table, this would not preclude them from eligibility.

Future Business/ Misc.

- Lorna Grivois provided a calendar handout that the SEMHSOC Family and Youth Advisories created.
- "Recommendations" will be a standing item on future RAC agendas. Recommendations should come from region 3 collaborative's and AAC to be directly presented to the Commissioner at SAC meetings.

- Any future RAC agenda ideas can be sent to Allon through Robin. Allon, Tim and Alana will meet prior to every meeting for agenda building.
- Next RAC meeting is Thursday July 12, 2012 from 9:00-11:00.
- In July plan to convene all workgroup members and dedicate time for breakouts. In September plan for workshop.