

**Connecticut Family First
Kinship and Foster Care Work Group Meeting
January 24, 2020
CHR - 9:00am-12:00pm**

Charter:

- Looking at completing finalization of charter that was reviewed last week. Group received a lot of good input and asked for suggestions before finalizing.
- Areas of recommendations included incorporating more language about CORE foster homes and kin, and having more clarity about language regarding caregiving.
- Charter will be the framework for the work that the group does.

211 Data:

- Data will flow from 211 and Probate Court. There are four large buckets of information.
- From data received from 211, there is a large amount regarding financial assistance for families that is not part of DCF system. In 2019, there were almost 100 cases.
- Legal was the next group to see an increase. E-library had an average of 4,000 page views per month, which is high.
- 211 is not always being accessed by phone. Number of 211 calls are not documented. Calls were referred to Probate, Court Administration, DCF Subsidized Guardianship Program, Connecticut Legal Services and Probate Court referrals.
- Support groups' issues include the need for financial assistance. 211 needs to be updated. 211 searches lacked resource information in certain areas of Connecticut. Two of the four 211 Referrals to Programs are to Probate Court which has no financial support. In 2019, there were not any web searches for kinship care.
- EMPS is an underutilized service for families. Families wait until there is a crisis to call 211. It can be a cumbersome process and may be the reason there are a large amount of web searches because families cannot wait on hold.
- 211 will only post non-profit agency information. Individual providers must update 211 information, not 211 staff.
- There is an overlap of duplication of services. Child may already be receiving services, but 211 does not ask if there are other providers, with new providers duplicating the same information.

Probate Court Data:

- Data was provided by Probate Court to DCF. Probate Court places children with kin. Probate Court collects data by fiscal year, not calendar year.
- FY17 - 735 petitions for removal of parents.
- FY18 - 722 petitions for removal of parents.
- FY19 - Similar to 2017 data.
- Probate Court also provides temporary guardian services but did not provide dates.
- Family Specialists - Have six Regional children courts with two Family Specialists each.
- Family Specialists work with the families to develop placement for child. Have small amount of funding for families.

- Family Specialists have 54 Probate Courts and six Regional children courts. 20% of cases involved DCF-involved petitions.
- Temporary Custody - during removal process, Judge can order supervised visitation.
- Temporary Guardianship - Voluntary petition by parent/guardian appointed by court to assist families for one year. There is no restriction on parents.
- Family Specialists is a neutral party who makes referrals to therapy and connect families with rehabilitation services. Family Specialists have a clinical background who puts the plan together.
- 6,700 open guardianship cases in 2018. Will obtain data for 2019.
- Filing fee is \$200. Temporary Custody is \$250 plus \$250/child totaling \$500 per child, but it has to be with the same father.
- 20% of probate case are already DCF-involved cases and a determination needs to be made, and family member needs to file to be caregiver.

Family Arrangement:

- 878 Family Arrangements were DCF-sanctioned from 2018-2019. These families touch our system. Sanctioning arrangement for mom is for 30 days during, i.e. a surgery/medical condition, to have care for children with a licensed caregiver:
 - 54% of cases have no court involvement
 - 37% of cases turn into a petition filed
 - 5% of cases referred to Probate involvement
 - Of Safety factors, 32% are substance use
 - 11% are active family arrangement
- DCF does not track homeless issue regarding children coming in from Mexico and Puerto Rico
- Tina will find out who the 3% Court Involved "Other" are

Caregiver Support Team:

- Caregiver Support Team does not go into Family Arrangement. There has to be a pending application.
- 88% are Kinship caregivers
- 11% are CORE caregivers
- 4% are Interstate
- There has been a 20% increase of referrals since 2017
 - 56% Complete Services (data comes from PIE). Why are 44% not completing services?
 - 18% Receive an Evaluation only
 - 13% Discontinue Services
 - 4% are Reunified
- Who provides Clinical Support?
 - Families need someone to walk them through the process. They also need a case manager. Families do not want someone to tell them what to do, but need more experienced peers and supports. They also need training to ease their way in. They need experienced clinicians to help with multi-generational trauma (after financial assistance).
- What do parents do to get custody of children?
 - Empower Successful kinship families to assist new kinship care families.

- Expand Caregiver Support Team so they can go back and check in with families via a phone call. Part of Caregiver Support Team role is to follow up after six months. Also need to check-in post permanency.

DCF Foster Care - Licensing & Closing

- From 2017-2019, 3,013 families were licensed
 - 68% received a Kinship Caregiver License
- From 2017-2019, 3,020 families caregiver licensed was closed
 - 70% of the Closing were Kinship Caregivers
 - 58% of the Closing Reason - Achieved Permanency

DCF Foster Care - Children Entering Care

- Entering Care - 40% live with a Relative
- Siblings:
 - 2017 - 184 Sibling Groups had 2-6 siblings
 - 2018 - 231 Sibling Groups had 2-7 siblings
 - 2019 - 190 sibling groups had 2-6 siblings
- Top 5 Kinship Caregiver towns were Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Haven, New Britain.

DCF Permanency Data for Entry Cohort

- Kinship Caregivers:
 - 19% went home
 - 17% Guardianship
 - 10% Adopted
- CORE Caregivers: (Largest amount of children adopted)
 - 24% Reunified
 - 7% Guardianship
 - 16% Adopted
- Congregate Care Setting:
 - 3% Reunified
 - 1% Guardianship
 - 2% Adopted

Re-Entry into Care in Connecticut

- DCF was slightly above the national average in 2016.
- For African American children, the average of Re-entry is off the chart.
- Do not have adoption disruption data. Group can definitely look at and capture this for the data going forward.
- Re-Entry looks better now than in 2016.
- Pathways data has not changed much over the last several years.
- There is still disparity for children of color.

DCF Placement Stability

- When kids are placed with kin, 100% stability is shown.
- Overall stability is 88% which is above the national standard.

DCF Ombudsman (renamed the Office of Community Relations)

- Ken oversaw office for five years. 24% of time, when the office received a call, it was from kin. 55% of the calls are from maternal kin, 33% of which are maternal grandmothers.
- There are also concerns with requests for confidential information.
- Five years ago, parents asked, "Why wasn't I considered? How do I go about proving to the department that I can care for my kid?"
- Kin state there is inconsistency in Practice.

Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families

- Inquiries to become a licensed caregiver were 975 in 2018 and 1,007 in 2019.
- Peer to Peer Mentoring:
 - 46 were Peer Mentors
 - 13% (6) were licensed relative caregivers
 - 890 families were assigned a peer mentor
- Support Groups: 39 groups are offered and posted statewide (Core Adoptive, Kinship & Grandparents)
- Post Licensing Training
 - 300 courses offered
 - 2,125 people registered (684 incompletes)
 - 1,441 people certified

Permanency

- Length of time to achieve permanency
- Is there an age for kids who receive permanency faster?
- With focus on kinship care, is there a shift toward permanency?
- For Permanent Transfer of Guardianship, families cannot come back, but guardian can.
- What sort of policy changes should we make to increase stability?
- How we market and brand ourselves when there is a service need.
- Need to prevent "weaponization" of department. Explain to families that we are not there to scare them.

UConn Adoption Assistance Program

- Program was put together in 2015 for grief counselling and direct services. Anyone can call for assistance.

- Went back further than three years with data and it increased incrementally. Primarily, adoptive families are calling. More emphasis is on placement with kin. The numbers of Guardianship families have not grown.
- They get approximately 500-600 calls per year and it has remained very low. They receive calls from people who are struggling.
- Why are guardians not calling us? The program can help with financial assistance such as security deposits (not rents or daycare). What financial support are families looking for? There are a lot of children aging out. Kids are sleeping at Denny's or a train station. What long-term plans are needed? How do we transfer subsidies when a relative dies? DCF can transfer subsidies with Guardianship, but not Adoption. Their College stipend follows them no matter where they live. What are the barriers for people to feel safe to reaching out for help? It is not just about kin, it is about connecting.

DCF Subsidy - Children with Active Subsidized Guardianship

- 11,000 families are receiving subsidies from DCF
- There are 2,802 Active subsidized Guardianships
 - 87% / 2,447 live in Connecticut
 - Top 5 towns are:
 - Waterbury - 8%
 - Hartford - 7%
 - Bridgeport - 7%
 - New Haven - 5%
 - East Hartford - 4%
 - 13% / 355 live in 32 states outside of Connecticut:
 - Florida - 22%
 - Georgia - 8%
 - New York - 8%
 - North Carolina - 7%
 - Massachusetts - 6%

Next meeting is February 14, 2020, Beacon Health Options, 9:00am - 12:00pm