

PAWS FOR KIDS Steering Committee Meeting

08/21/2018 ~Location: CAFAF~10am-12pm

Members in attendance: Jackie Ford (DCF), Steve Parker (HSUS), Diane Rosell (DCF), Kate Nicoll (Soul Friends, Inc.), Liz Burne (DCF), Deana Legere (DCF), Sarah Tkacs (ABH), Lauren Crowley (CHC, Tails of Joy), Caroline Gaetano (Tails of Joy), Michele Morris (Judicial Branch), Alexis Klark Pariano (Pet Partners/Tails of Joy), Ann Mcyintire-Lahner (DCF), and Brandy Petrone (DCF intern)

*Please refer to slides for specific information covered in the presentation

Welcome and Introductions

- Members introduced themselves, their links to this initiative and agencies
- Idea from member from Soul Friends for inclusion of a program to treat children who abuse animals, AniCare, to be incorporated into this work

PAWS for KIDS purpose and objectives

- Broadest overarching goal: To increase child and animal well-being through education, cross-reporting, marketing, and animal therapeutic services for children with trauma
- Today's objectives:
Share information, brainstorm ideas, begin to develop structures for implementation around the 5 core areas and exploring additional areas that may not be addressed.
- DCF has begun to work with AAI's, but there is much more to develop and expand.
- How can we better connect DCF with partner agencies?

DCF overview of work and mandates

- Review of DCF Overview-Mission & Mandates (see slides)
- About 4,000 children currently in foster care due to abuse/neglect, this remains a consistent number and an important target group for this work's initiative
- DCF staff shared the positive impact of the therapeutic value of having therapy dogs in the office, both on the children and staff.
- Discussion regarding how much children rely on their animals as a huge source of emotional support, at times the only support children may have.
- DCF's support of the value of therapeutic AAI could help sway schools and other venues to include these types of services for children.
- Important to integrate concerns about allergies, potential spread of diseases (human to animal, animal to human) and those who are afraid of animals must be considered in this work.
- Concerns about providers being paid versus unpaid, what implications does this have for insurance?
- Marketing is critical to share the positive benefits that AAI have had on a wide variety of vulnerable populations. (veterans, those incarcerated, elderly)
- Looking at challenges as obstacles that can be worked through, rather than barriers.

- Target Population: DCF kids, although marketing and communication will reach broader audience outside of this work for other children who are hard to reach and may benefit from AAI.

PAWS for Kids Areas of Work

DCF staff & Community provider education

- What education does DCF staff need Cross-reporting: currently there is worker safety training for staff at DCF, more room for continued education.

Program Development

- Review of credentialed services at DCF, provider agreements, creating a new credentialed service for AAI
- ABH's involvement in credentialing services
- Kelly's Kids, Ebony Horsewomen are the only AAI credentialed at DCF at this time, and are afterschool programs.
- Should we have 2 levels of service- volunteer versus paid.
- Concerns about those who are just "volunteers", not insured and following procedure, who could ruin this if not done properly.
- Handler and animal must pass individual tests to become registered therapy dogs or certified. This does not transfer to any animal, they must work as a team. Recertification every two years would be important to provide integrity for the work being done.
- Care of these therapy animals is very important as these animals will absorb trauma and need breaks. Implementing this into this work is important to include.

Marketing & Communication

- Developing a marketing and communication plan to reach target audience, DCF children in care who would benefit from AAI.
- Jackie Ford shared her role as the DCF Foster Care and Adoption coordinator, hosting a television show that will have an opportunity to share this PAWS FOR KIDS initiative on an episode, as well her role as the Heart Gallery coordinator for foster care and adoption.
- Branding is key
- Who do we want to know about this? DCF staff, providers, animal therapy agencies.
- Deliverable's, (brochures, flyers, informational sessions) sharing on social media, community development, workforce development from DCF, zoos, sanctuaries, veterinarians.
- Capitalize on the relationships of those who have a wider audience who are supporters of this initiative to spread the word.

Cross Reporting

- What's been done thus far and where should we expand?
- Education / survey
- Partnership with Department of Ag

Evaluation

- What is the outcome? (Overarching goal)
- What are the positive outcomes that we want to achieve, how do we know that we have succeeded? What does success look like?
- How do we measure this?
- To legitimize this work, we need to have data driven outcomes that show that the work is proving the benefits to these children. This is important to funding as well.

Recommendations from Interactive Exercise

AAI Program Development

- **What are some of the important components of AAI work we should consider?** Goal directed, measure outcomes, communication, paid vs unpaid.
- **What should the qualifications be for performing AAI?** Registered teams, standards for teams, renewal every 2 years, credentialing by major/acknowledged agency.
- **Potential Barriers?** Liability, zoonotic, allergies, fear of animals, rogue teams, integrating safeguards for impediments, disease transmission, potential for incidents between a child and animal.

DCF Staff & Community Provider Education

- **What should staff know about AAI?** Can increase hopefulness, benefits of AAT, some programs have outcome measures, qualifications for animal & trainer, beneficial for overworked frontline staff.
- **What should community & pet advocates know about DCF?** Legal training to understand DCF/legal aspects of children in care, confidentiality, mandated reporting, and barriers to being credentialed.
- **How should we share information about cross-reporting?** AAI trainings, mandated reporter training, education mandated for all.

Marketing/Communication:

- **What are your marketing ideas for promoting AAI work that we should consider?** How well it works, educating staff to use them in promotional information, social media and links on DCF website to support services.
- **What are some potential barriers to developing a marketing/communication plan?** Not having enough providers for services, misconceptions about DCF, funding.

Evaluation

- **Education:** Increased familiarity between DCF & Animal Therapy Orgs., information needs to be communicated to frontline DCF staff, differences between AAT & AAA., improved understanding of the link, laws and our policy

- **Program Development:** increase in hopefulness, decrease in trauma/anxiety, and sufficient support programs for all areas of need, utilization of existing services, kids' outcomes, and increased positive behavior from child and easy access to programs.
- **Marketing/Communication:** website
- **Cross Reporting:** increase reports, percentage of reports that lead to open cases or inform existing laws, increase in the cases of safety of animals.

- **Group formation/Discussion – TBD via email**
- **Next Steps/ Questions**

Doodle poll for meeting in October

Meeting minutes to be sent by Friday

Invite others to be a part of distribution group, keep others in the loop of the work we are doing.