Permanency Enhancement Project

*Minutes 8/6/14*

1. **Welcome & Introductions**
2. **Regional Administrator Cathy Smith updates**:
   1. Cathy states that Betty Hope will be temporarily assigned as Area Administrator for Peoria/Pekin. She is still working on a plan for coverage for Area Administrator Springfield, so everyone has the support & oversight required.
   2. Cathy states COA is completed for our region.
   3. Cathy met with Director Gregg, Deputy Directors Ruppe & Blackwell, as well as others, yesterday. Members from the Governor’s office also present. Data has been pulled, & Central Region is underperforming in the area of African American children being placed in African American homes. Are our African American homes underutilized? Do we need recruitment focus in the area? If children placed in Home of Relative, are we providing the support necessary to prevent moves? She states one statistic was that in 4 years, no African American homes became licensed for foster care. This is also an issue in POS, but their statistics are better than DCFS’s. Both are underperforming in comparison with other regions. Discussion re: whether IEPA procedures identify homes of color. Also, foster care licensing has been very short staffed for a number of years. This unit is now staffed, which should help with getting caught up on the backlog of inquiries. Director Gregg states she would like to bring licensing to the table to discuss this issue & come up with resolutions. Discussion also that our staff (Investigators, Caseworkers) need clarity/training regarding what to look at when we are placing children. Cathy states this may be the topic for the “Let’s Talk” conference call in September, & we can discuss any barriers/confusion in the field. Champaign Foster Care Licensing vacancy has been offered. Urbana has a backlog of inquiries.
3. **Transformation Team** – Cynthia Richter-Jackson reports she is stepping down as co-leader of this group after 3 ½ years. Julianna Harms will co-lead, with another to be decided. It was reported that Wanda Holloway has retired from the agency. Cynthia Richter-Jackson and Jeff Haley are gathering data reports & making power-points for Action Teams. Recently they have been able to acquire data on poverty & race, which has been extremely beneficial, & will be getting this data out to the teams. Some statistics that were mentioned were that statewide, 1/3 of all indicated reports are families of color, and ½ of the children in foster care are of color. Discussion that in Vermillion County, QI staff did a wonderful presentation. Cynthia has statistics including all Illinois Counties & their poverty rates, such as Vermillion County has a very high poverty rate, whereas McLean County has a very low poverty rate.

**Action Team Updates:**

**CHAMPAIGN** Sub-region 3B

* 1. *Bloomington* – Karen Blum informed that Kathy is coming Monday for a presentation. Court system is interested in poverty rates, timely adoptions, home studies, & getting adoptions completed within 6 months. A proposal is to have Adoption Roundtables rather than extra hearings to update the courts, & bringing Adoption Staff to these Roundtables. Cathy states that the Permanency Achievement Database may be helpful in identifying barriers. Karen states the court wants to know specifics, such as when were adoption documents completed, submitted, etc. Jackie states that all DCFS cases are reviewed at the Permanency Reviews, but POS has the option of inviting PAS/Adoption staff to conduct these reviews.
  2. *Charleston* – Susan Taylor states they met last Monday. Doris Houston has provided some ideas so their team has ideas/clarity/direction. They have taken on a series of smaller projects. They cover 7 counties & it is hard to bring everyone together. They have been concentrating on Coles & Edgar Counties, who both have high poverty rates. They recently had a brown bag lunch meeting in each community that had a good turn-out. They are having an open house at the school; the Regional Superintendent is involved & interested in bringing agencies together. Moe is going to join as a Recruitment Project. Susan states that Eastern Illinois University is in their area & a lot of students are parenting. There have been referrals from the school to the local Autism Program. Moe is going to EIU 9/19/14. The Action Team & the Recruitment Team are working together. The next meeting is in November.
  3. *Danville* – Beth Seggebruch presents their team met 7/1/14. The statistical presentation at the Vermillion meeting surprised some members. Poverty is 30% in this county; children in foster care average of 33 months. There is an overrepresentation of African American children entering foster care. They held an ad hoc meeting yesterday with their substance abuse providers to come up with a proposal for Judge Anderson. There have been concerns/problems with the Judge not allowing visitation if parents have a dirty drop (even if THC levels are going down) or if parents have not gotten into treatment (waiting for a spot). The team would like to present to the Judge a plan for therapeutic visitation to promote recovery, maybe a “recovery coach” to engage the parents. The team is advocating for a Family Advocacy Center in this county to empower the parents & help them through the legal system. Parent orientation/support is lacking & the area has struggled finding an administrative body to lead & maintain a parent group. Next meeting 8/19/14 with the full team, and there will be discussion on how to deal with several specific families who are not getting visits due to drug drop issues, getting into treatment, etc. Team is waiting on grant money for a program developed using the “Celebrating Families Model” (parents/children have a meal together, then break out into separate classes). The community is dealing with a lot of African American families who were displaced from Chicago. Some want to return. The team is partnering with Homeless/Transitional Services from Chicago to support the high-need families & possibly assist with getting some of them back to Chicago where they want to be. The schools struggle with the needs of some of the families coming from Chicago, finding services, etc. There is also no trauma training providers in their community.
  4. *Decatur* – no report
  5. *Urbana* – Angela Hassell states their next meeting is 8/20/14; they did not meet in June/July. They are planning an event October 30 with a speaker “How to Widen Your Cultural Lens”. This event will provide information on how to document cultural aspects & needs of a case. They are continuing with their Parent Orientation Group, which informs parents how to navigate the DCFS system, understanding Service Plans, Court System, Child & Family Team Meetings, ACRs, etc. These groups educate the parents who are involved with the department & the various roles of all those involved in their case. These parent groups are held at the local Family Advocacy Center, invitations are sent to parents who have become involved with the department; it is a 4-week training.

**PEORIA** Sub-region 1B

* 1. *Macomb & Galesburg* – Jean Marlow sent her report to Jackie. Jackie states they met last 7/17/14; upcoming meeting 8/28/14. The team met with Judge Walton in MacDonough County. Judge Walton is concerned about court testimony, AOIC outcomes (from their on-site visit), & file reviews. Judge Walton is asking that caseworkers be present at Shelter Care. She also has concerns about gathering documentation timely (ie birth certificates, etc). Knox County did a training 8/3/14 for court testimony for workers. Andrew Killian is working on getting something set up for Rock Island, Mercer, & Henry Counties.
  2. *Ottawa/LaSalle* – Denise Flores presents that CASA has been helping with putting together a training for children of Incarcerated parents. Judge & attorneys have brought this up as a need in their area. 7/7/14 the team met to gather a list of names of children who fell into this category, ages 5th – 8th grades. However, there were no DCFS wards that fit the category; there may be some in POS agencies. Therefore, the program (scheduled for end of August) was postponed. They are going to broaden their scope & run some more lists (looking at all children who have parents in DOC), not just DCFS wards. There is a Judge’s meeting in September.
  3. *Peoria* – Pam Perrilles reports they meet this Friday. They are getting some new people to the table that can really make a difference (State’s Attorneys, etc). They currently have a project of re-doing court orders & have come up with a form they would like to use, which is more of a “check box” form than narrative. Sometimes the orders need clarification & sometimes do not reflect everything that went on in court. The team is looking into “Adoption Day”, which they believe Cook County has done in the past, for National Adoption Day. Judges & court staff volunteer for the day (November), & adoptions are finalized. They have questions re: media, confidentiality, etc. Mike Burns is going to check with his Cook County contacts to find out more information. It is likely too late to get an Adoption Day scheduled for this year, but maybe next November. They now have an Adoption Attorney on their team. The team is also developing a handbook for parents, pertinent to Peoria, re: navigating the DCFS & court systems. They have presented draft to Peoria Bar Association, & are awaiting approval. A handbook from the Illinois Bar Association was used as a guideline, then it was tailored for Peoria area. Pam states they were hoping Mary Bullock could attend their upcoming meeting & provide feedback from the AOIC project, but the feedback will not be available, so hopefully can be presented at their November meeting. Cathy states that a two & ½ day Crossroads Anti-Racism training is being held at end of August, Betty will attend, not sure who the training is open to.
  4. *Rock Island* – Missy was not present. Susan states the team is meeting regularly. The team is working on a training for caseworkers (including POS) re: court report writing and court testimony. They are working with Andrew Killian to get a training put together.

**SPRINGFIELD** Sub-region 3A

* 1. *Carlinville* – Jill Lautemann states Macoupin/Montgomery team had a “pre CAT meeting” to put together a list of people we would want to participate. The pre-team working with the local CAC advocate to get ideas. The first meeting is scheduled for 10/23/14. Jeff Haley is invited to present to county statistics. Jill have put together a notebook for the team & will assist with the agendas & getting the team up & running.
  2. *Jacksonville* – Jill Lautemann states the team met in July; they are meeting quarterly. Next meeting scheduled for 10/21/14. The team is currently working on 9/26/14 Trauma Training; an AOIC grant was approved & Dr. Gene Griffin is coming to speak, along with two lunch speakers. The team has sent out invitations/registrations via e-mail & mail; DCFS training credit, CEUs, & foster parent training hours are all approved. The training will be held at MacMurray College & Judge Hardwick is sponsor. Cass County Board is the fiscal agent. The team is also working on a Court Report Cover Sheet similar to the one the Springfield CAT team developed. It was altered due to requests from local attorneys & the form will be piloted with the two caseworkers in the Jacksonville office.

*(Jackie announces that there is coffee in the break room)*

* 1. *Jerseyville* – Mary Crawford on vacation. Jill Lautemann states the team is meeting. Jeff Haley states the next meeting, which he has been invited to, is scheduled for September 9.
  2. *Lincoln* – Cince Bowns states she has recruited a worker to assist her with co-leader their team (Christina Schreck). They have several small offshoots of the main team. One offshoot is working on “Healthy Families”; another is working on a woman’s group, but she is not sure if the focus is on single parenting, surviving domestic violence, or another women’s issue.
  3. *Springfield* – Jill Lautemann presents the SCAT is meeting monthly. They are working on an AOIC grant for a training 9/12/14. Focus of training is to educate Educators (it is scheduled on a teacher institute day) and court personnel. There will be two sessions, one morning & one afternoon, with Dr. Gene Griffin speaking over lunch on the effects of childhood trauma. The training will inform participants of the Hotline, Investigations, Casework, Permanency (return home, guardianship, adoption, and independence). It is scheduled to be held at the Hilton. The SCAT is also working on the database already developed to track the goals that the team set (investigations that are court involved to the SA office in 45 days; Subsidy submitted within 60 days of termination; court reports submitted 14 days in advance). The team has struggled getting the database up & running & working for POS agencies. Now the struggle is getting the data all entered by the supervisors so Deanna Large can track how they are doing on their goals.

**Resource & Recruitment Statewide Updates** - Sari is not able to be in attendance today.

**University Updates** - Dr. Doris Houston unable to attend today.

**Statewide Updates -** Michael Burns: We are working toward getting the Website updated. QA is working with Joan Nelson Phillips and university partners to get more & better data to the Action Teams. The goal is for the Action teams to have the ability to pull up data on their own (i.e. racial disparity, etc). They have had extensive conversations about how to better document activities & strategies for Action Teams on the goals of reducing the amount of time children spend in foster care, reducing the number of children coming in to foster care, etc. Dr. Houston/ISU will present FY ’14 data at one of the upcoming RA/AA meetings. Michael will work on scheduling with the RA. ISU is working on “Permanency Enhancement Illinois” website that can be found under “resources” on the D-Net.

Announcements/Other Business – none

**Next Meetings** – the last meeting for this year is **November 5**, Babyfold. Jackie asks if team members want to stay with the first Wednesday of each month; members agree to stay with this schedule.

2015 dates will be **Feb. 4th ; May 6th ; Aug 5th ;** and **Nov 4th .**

The Meeting time will remain 10am until Noon and we will continue to meet at the BabyFold.