

**Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board**  
**Minutes**  
**September 9, 2014**  
**10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**Members in Attendance:** Karen Anderson, Suzie Forbis, Linda Hosman, Janet Richardson, Kelly Floyd, Eric Pilson, Dean Aye, Lori Ross, Kim Pate, Derek Williams, Michelle Martin, Nickie Steinhoff

**Children’s Division Support Staff:** Tim Decker, Julie Lester, Elizabeth Tattershall, Carmy Colvin, Alexa Pearson

**Absent:** Kelly Schultz,

**Guests:** Emily Furrh and Dana Lopez both foster parents

**Introductions/Roll Call:**

At 10:11 a.m. the meeting began with introductions. Eleven members were present. And two guests.

**Overview of New Initiatives:**

Tim Decker, Director gave an update on the following:

- Summary of the Strategic Plan June 30, 2014 each member was given a copy.
- Title IV-E reports submitted in June 2014. This plan is a work in progress. Some things will need to be updated every year and new things will be added. He encouraged feedback from the board.
- Three Strategic Plan goals outlined in the handout were read for discussion. Tim Decker reports that the foster youth population in Missouri is at an all time high of LS1 children over 12,800, highest ever documented.

**Goal #1 Family Engagement**

Mr. Decker spoke about the hotline call track system between assessment and investigation. The system is to be parallel to one another; however, this process has been coming closer together over time. He asked for the board’s opinion of why so many families were declining our services.

Summary of responses during the discussion include:

- No one wants to be in court or tangled up with the authorities and they are afraid if they accept help that is what will happen.
- Fear of more investigation.
- Presence of law enforcement creates animosity and suspicion.
- A huge benefit to providing “front loaded” services. Too bogged down in “the process” and especially with the courts. People feel they have lost control and that external parties are setting the decisions with less opportunity for them to make their own choices. The “process” is lengthy and people lose their motivation. Family engagement is critical and needs to be done sooner rather than later. Lori Ross reports MFCAA is providing a program which has so far allowed most the kids to go back home before the 60 day hearing without returning into care.
- Need varying degrees of options for families, not just the choice of remove or not remove the children.

- This is a huge judgment call especially when safety is involved.
- Training needed to enhance skill level of the investigative staff.

Director Decker reported that CD is looking into putting in place local children’s collaborative partnerships in communities to help establish durable support (beyond the monetary), and be able to engage with other’s to help. He asked what the board thinks about increasing family involvement and youth voice (such as youth advisory boards) to really build our family support teams?

Summary of responses during the discussion include:

- Concerns about accountability. Director Decker responded there is a full plan of measures in place that may be shared at the next quarterly meeting.
- Poor communication. Not all the parties involved are getting the whole story and the judge gets a partial and sometimes one sided version.
- If they don’t go home at the first FST, then it will be 3-6 months before the next Hearing and progress stops.
- It seems like no one cares about the case until the court date comes up .
- Shortage of attorneys.
- Need to educate the Court System.
- Need better GALs.
- Need more resources to train resource applicants.
- Need to look at relatives and kinship.
- Need to individualize services to the resource families and ask resource families what it would take to keep a child who is “tough” in their home. There is a need to be more creative with support services for resource families.
- People are dropping out of system because the process to get started is lengthy and no one keeps them in loop as to what is happening, so they just give up.
- Family Support Team meetings happen a couple times a year instead of every 4 weeks; it should be standardized, to happen more often.
- When everyone is in agreement there is not a sense of urgency to resolve.

## **Goal #2 Decrease time to permanency**

Director Decker asked, “If you had a magic wand what would you do to decrease time to permanency?”

- Have the team, including the court, working together to get the foster youth back home.
- More focus on Family Centered Services and not removal of the children.
- Problem with tendency to see adoption as a success and that is not always the be all and end all.
- Need more staff. Director Decker responded at any one time CD is 95% staffed. Julie Lester reports most counties are stable. However there can be extremes. Across the board most of the counties are staffed at 95%. There are the some counties are experiencing more extreme turnover.
- Support to staff to deal with the difficult situations they deal with everyday.
- Need team building exercises in place on how to communicate with each other. Some of the burnout would seriously decrease if the employees had a voice. Julie Lester reports there is development of secondary traumatic stress activities for staff. Children’s Division also has the

Employee Assistant Program (EAP) in place. There will be Trauma Specialist in each CD region to look at specific areas of need and activities.

**Goal #3 Increase health and well-being of children and youth:**

Director Decker reports the goal is to ensure effective transitions of young people to safe & prosperous adulthood without them crossing over into delinquency or incarceration. Prepare young people to be work force ready if they are not college bound. There is a need for residential treatment to be a fixed amount of time for treatment purposes and not a lifestyle. Mr. Decker then opened it up to the board to discuss:

Summary of response during the discussion include:

- Julie Lester reports that DSS, CD is working with DED Division of Workforce Development for youth who are not college bound. There are about 12-15 kids in Springfield and in St. Louis, each, who will be starting this new program as a pilot. They must be 17-21 years old, drug free, in care or who have exited care and not on a secondary career path. A team works a 10 week program with the youth. The focus is on customer service jobs in places where they can be promoted. The funding for this pilot is through TANF.
- Need this program to be offered to youth in residential care.
- Look at foster youth who have been in the system to offer them a job to work for Social Services
- Look into the Jobs Program.
- Concern that foster youth placed initially in residential are forgotten and less restrictive options not sought.
- Residential does poor job of relating with the families, whether biological, adopted or foster.
- Pour more money into individualized treatment for children to stay in the home and get better help. Support to the whole family. Think differently and divert monies to other programs.
- Sometimes all the youth or the families need is a break, but not permanent separation.
- Find out what is needed to help the situation before jumping into residential care.
- Resource Parents struggle to get name on the call list at a residential facility. It is equally as hard for the child to have contact with their family. This causes the child to have even more losses.
- Need to know what treatments are being used and offered.
- Residential care is not good. Foster youth are already experiencing separation so this just makes sick kids sicker.
- Concern that workers are waiting until a “better offer” comes along.
- Need better feedback, regarding profile. Has it been received, considered or denied.
- Need a preferred provider list for Medicaid. If paid at a higher rate there would be better therapists.
- Need to have more schools like the LOGO’s program in St. Louis or start using a better model.

Tim Decker reports that CD is looking into the health care home model such as the state of Wisconsin is doing. CD is on the path to becoming trauma informed. Training trainers over the next 3 days to train the trauma classes with the rest of the staff trained in the next year.

**Adoption Staffing Policy Revision:**

Elizabeth Tattershall presented draft for adoption staffing policy Sarah Bashore is working on. The information is from a workgroup originally facilitated by Emily Montgomery (previous PDS), the

Adoption Resources, Training and Supports (ARTS) group and Sarah attending adoption staffings in local offices. A few of the changes shared include the Consensus Decision Making process which is: A group comes together to discuss the issue in question. Then a consensus decision will be made and it will represent a reasonable decision that all members of the group can accept and is in the best interest of the child being staffed. Elizabeth requested that the Board submit ideas and suggestions to partner with this policy development.

Response from Board is concern about the consensus process. Director Decker provided an example of consensus can be something as simple as, “we would like to take a break”, or “does anyone object”? Or a stronger form such as “what would it take for us to all be on the same page?” Julie Lester added, that it is “can you live with it?” and if not, another meeting is held. The board requests to have plenty of time to review the policy when it is complete. Julie offered to provide a few pre-draft sections so they can provide thoughts and ideas before they receive the final draft.

Alexa Pearson joined the meeting and Dean Aye requested she introduced herself. Alexa is the new legal counsel for CD and is based in the Central Office. She will help CD with rules, contracts and legislation. She started her career in the Family Support Division and worked in family reunification. Alexa then went to law school. She has been working for the senate for the past couple of years.

#### **Policy Updates:**

Elizabeth reminded the board how to get to all the [memorandums](#) and gave an overview on the following memos that have been published since the June Board meeting:

CD 14-40 Resource home license renewal reminder letter

CD 14-44 Increasing opportunities for post-secondary success

CD 14-50 Legislative update and related policy revisions

CD 14-51 Automobile insurance for 16 year old foster youth

CD 14-52 Re-entry procedures clarifications and FAQ’s

CD 14-56 School Violence Hotline for youth to report bullying

#### **Relicensing Policy Issues:**

Eric Pilson reports that at the recent Southwest Regional Foster Care Advisory Board meeting several items were discussed including how recent policy changes regarding renewals are implemented. The issue is when resource families complete all renewal requirements and agencies do not complete their tasks before expiration of license. This then requires CD to remove the foster youth from the unlicensed home. This can be very harmful to the children. Elizabeth Tattershall responded there are steps in the memo introducing the new reminder letter that the Board helped draft, providing a six month transition period for the policy to become fully implemented. This transition phase is protect from the sudden removal of children.

Julie Lester added that CD is very concerned about timely renewal of resource homes. The workgroups all agreed to this, however, there are exceptions on a case by case basis that can be reviewed. She encouraged the Board to talk to their resource parents to discover where the renewal is being used as a

threat as Eric reports, and let her know about it. She will let the regional directors know we have had this conversation.

**ACRB:**

Eric reported a case he says was not handled per ACRB policy. Julie states this case has been heard by the ACRB and a decision has been made.

Dean Aye states that ACRB rule prohibits use for a decision made by adoption staffing which presents concerns. Need to address a new rule, or develop a new policy to create a mechanism for staffing members to be able to request a review if they don't agree with the decision.

Julie Lester states that CD doesn't have the authority to overrule the recommendation of the team. Her recommendation is to put a discussion group together with Board members, CD and legal staff.

The Board came to consensus that a smaller group would be able to discuss further with the following volunteers: Linda Hosman, Michelle Martin, Dean Aye, Lori Ross, Julie Lester, Elizabeth Tattershall and Alexa Pearson. October 24, 2014 will be their first meeting at the CD Central Office in Jefferson City, MO.

**FOSTER GROUP HOMES:**

Karen Anderson queried the CD's position regarding group homes and what should she tell people who are interested in being approved as a group home. Dean Aye stated that CD has a hold on any new licensures for group homes at this time. Eric Pilson stated that it's not possible to meet the group home licensing standards that currently are used. It is very expensive to relicense

Elizabeth Tattershall responded that CD has looked at other models and plans to develop a Missouri model for Large Foster Family homes. A focus group including all currently approved group home resource providers met August 8, 2014. A small work group is meeting September 26, 2014 to draft new policy.

**ANNUAL REPORT:**

Lori Ross reports the picture has been chosen for the front cover of the annual report. She passed the draft around with a piece of paper inside for any comments. The data will be updated with information from Children's Division. The group posed for a new picture for the report with Mr. Decker. Dean Aye reminded the board that the booklet is their opportunity to directly communicate to the legislators regarding what the board does and why.

**OPEN FORUM:**

Dean reminded the group that Open Forum is for specific issues that highlight the problems with foster care in general, high level global opportunities to discuss, not personal issues:

Opportunity for each member around the table was provided:

Lori Ross: pass

Eric Pilson:

He discussed with Sheri Freeman, Older Youth Specialist, life skills education for the kids. He reports that CHAFEE services offered are poor. In most areas they are a total waste of time. Great Circle has seen the lack of success and they have brought in people to fill in this gap. The board members had consensus that it is a waste of time, the tool is not referred to as a resource and it is not educating the youth. The workers are not helping the youth. Julie Lester responded that CD is in the process of updating the CHAFEE contract. She asked the board if they would like to look at it. Agreed to ask Sally Gains, Older Youth Coordinator, to attend next Board meeting.

Emily Furrh: pass

Dana Lopez: Pass

Derek Williams:

NW now has training going on for resource families. However, there is still a problem getting home studies done. Overall, things are much better.

Nickie: had questions about the revised relative kinship study outline policy that the Board reviewed. She feels that the requirement located on page 2 bullet "h" sounds like the writer must personally have observed the interaction between the foster youth and the parent. Elizabeth Tattershall responded that when writing a home assessment it is important to look at the big picture. The new outline emphasizes to only address the items that are specific to the child being placed in that home. Nickie Steinhoff does not see any of the flexibility. Elizabeth Tattershall restated that only address what will ensure the safety and well being for the foster youth placed in the home. Lori Ross agreed with Elizabeth that the goal of the RH/KH home assessment is to make this less cumbersome. This should be quick and brief covering the assurance of safety.

Karen Anderson:

A St. Louis County person was told that MO was moving to only have 5 children instead of 6 is this true? Is this for COA standards? Julie Lester responded CD policy is a limit of 6 and we are discussing it. We are not planning on changing it at this time.

Karen also asked about the expansion of the Resource Recruitment and Retention pilot program in the NW region. Julie Lester explained there is currently a two year pilot in the NW. The first year is just now finishing. Decisions will be made with CD partners on what to do as CD moves forward.

Karen Anderson asked about case management contracts. Julie Lester responded that CD just expanded the Foster Care Case Management contract by 450 cases, and there has been movement within staff. The foster youth population has grown by 5-7%. The 450 case were based on allocations from 2013.

Suzie Forbis:

Whose responsibility is it to let the foster parent know when the case manager has left and who the new case manager will be? Julie Lester responded it is the worker's supervisor who should let you know. Suzie had an experience in which he had no idea because the voicemail was still intact and she had no idea the person had left. Is there some kind of protocol? Julie Lester says it is encouraged and is being reviewed.

Linda Hosman:

Availability across the state for level A and B training, the global access across our state is unequal for foster parents. We have set up several trainings only to have them cancelled due to lack of participants. Julie responded that training is coordinated by region. Elizabeth Tattershall reminded the board that the FCARSTC contract provides for training across circuits and regions.

Janet Richardson: pass

Michelle Martin:

Is there a better way to electronically or centrally notify us of training before the time limits have passed or are too close to sign up for? Elizabeth Tattershall reminded the board that there is a training calendar posted on the Internet located on the [Foster Parent Information page](#).

Dean Aye: Are there any more questions? Comments? Then the next meeting is December 9, 2014. The new small group for ACRB will meet October 24, 2014. If there is nothing further, then this meeting is adjourned.

**Meeting closed at 2:56 p.m.**