

Missouri State Foster Care & Adoption Board
Governor's Office Building # 460
200 Madison Street
Jefferson City, MO 65103
June 7, 2016

Members in Attendance: Karen Anderson, Michelle Martin, Kim Pate, Derek Williams, Nicki Steinhoff, Kate Watson (Office of Child Advocate), Karen Anderson

Children's Division Support Staff: Amy Martin, Elizabeth Tattershall, Julie Lester, Tim Decker and Sarah Bashore

Absent: Kelly Floyd, Kelly Schultz, Lori Ross

Guests: Dana Lopez, Andy Flynn, Crissy Mayberry, Dawn Caruso, Tate Williams, Amanda Williams, William Kraemer

Introductions:

Meeting was called to order at 10:02 by Chairperson, Michelle Martin. She thanked everyone for their time and contribution to the board. All present introduced themselves and their role.

Reasonable and Prudent Parenting/ Normalcy, MO HB1877

Deputy Director Julie Lester provided copies of the summary HB1877 posted on the Missouri General Assembly Internet page. She introduced Amanda Williams from the Capacity Center for States to share further about the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting portion of HB 1877. The bill is awaiting the signature of Governor Nixon and, if signed, will become law August 28, 2016.

Amanda Williams provided a brief history of the amendment to federal law PL 113-183 dated September 2014 referred to as Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (H.R. 4980). She reports that Florida, the state where she resides, had a similar law in 2012.

Amanda shared examples of what reasonable and prudent parenting looks like. Some of the examples she cited were about having cell phones or going on dates and negotiating those situations with a teen. As a foster/adoptive parent, she utilizes a Time Table of Trust. This document shows the foster teen when and how different situations such as going on a date or having a cell phone will be available. Amanda added that she is always open to negotiation with the teen, but has some house "deal breakers" that they must comply with. She communicates the information to the foster youth when they are placed in her home and demonstrates flexibility and reasonableness with the teen. She stated that there is no such thing as "no liability" for decisions made.

Discussion with the board included questions:

What is the definition of reasonable and prudent? There are concerns the term is subjective.

Do courts know about the federal and now state law and if not how will they get this information?

What have been the foster youths' parents' responses to the law?

Amanda explained that it takes 5 to 15 years to gather data to support measurable outcomes. She said that she is engaged with the foster youth's parent on a daily basis to co-parent the youth.

Amy Martin, program unit manager for Children's Division, reported that Children's Division is working with Amanda on a document to provide information about myths and legends regarding what decisions resource parents can and cannot make. The document will include a blurb about policy, what the resource

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parents need to know, what the worker needs to know, and tips about prudent parenting skills. The current Federal Tip sheet is 9 pages long. The Missouri Tip sheet will be specific to Missouri issues. The Children's Division is also developing a training PowerPoint to assist resource parents with understanding the law and policy regarding reasonable and prudent parenting and making decisions so foster youth feel normal per their standards. Making a list of the decisions that resource parents are approved to make is very limiting. Making reasonable and prudent parenting decisions to provide foster youth with a normal life is a case by case issue including but not limited to the age of the child, the reasons for coming into care, the specific situation the decision is regarding, how the decision relates to development goals of the foster youth, and the biological parent involvement with their child and the case. Nickie Steinhoff and Karen Anderson pointed out that instruction about developmental stages is currently included in the STARS Pre-service Training to become licensed as a resource home.

The impetus of the law is to provide empowerment for the foster youth to be involved in their case. Also, the law provides support to allow foster youth to learn to make decisions and deal with the results of their decisions. It also allows for the resource parent to make decisions without having to seek permission or approval from the child's worker or court. It supports the practice of the resource parent co-parenting the foster youth with the foster youth's parent(s) and the case manager. The law supports the Children's Division's policy and practice of a team working together to raise the child- the Family Support Team.

Amanda passed around a Developmental Guide Sheet showing what to expect at various ages and how and when to say no. She will be emailing several resources to the board. She reports that there is a Virtual Conference on Normalcy specifically as it relates to the Federal Law PL118-185, July 12- 13. There will be six 50 minute sessions. She will email the information about the conference to the board.

Tim Decker, Division Director stated the action steps for implementing the new law include, informing staff, parents and stake holders about the changes. This includes identifying what practices stop and what practices need to start and providing training/education. Some changes are going to be immediate, but compliance with this law will require progressive implementation over time. The change will include training, tools, and support. There is a need to develop a process for what happens when decisions have negative outcomes. He suggested discussing the Tip Sheet at every Family Support Team Meeting, (FST). Repetition will help educate.

Amanda asked about items the board believes should be included on the Tip Sheet. Responses included:

- Vacations
- Travel
- Social media (FACE Book, Instagram, etc.)
- What decisions should be shared with the Juvenile Officer/Judge
- Developmental Guidelines
- Keep in mind history and age
- Create one page tip sheets by category so they can be selected by topic instead of trying to read an entire document

Amanda responded that the Missouri Tip sheet will include but not limited to the following:

- No background checks for prudent parent decision experiences
- Vacations notification
- Driving – within state law

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- Riding in cars with other youth
- Social Media

Tim Decker stated this new law creates a shift in authority and will provide a clearer definition to roles which are currently blurred; a shift from “permission” to “inform”. Tim also reminded that decisions made need to keep in mind sustainability after the foster youth returns home. He also pointed out how the new law supports the Five Domains of Wellbeing model the division has adopted.

Tim asked what should be included in a communication about the changes. The board responded:

- Explain “why” the changes, reference the law
- Include immediate do’s and don’ts as well as coming changes
- Ensure the division will provide support to the resource parents
- Culture shift, not just temporary changes
- Decision making shift to the resource parent

Tim asked what the board is most worried about with these changes. The board responded:

- Worker will undermine the authority of the resource parent
- Not enough dialogue between parent and teen and parent and worker or other team members
- How will CD assure contracted agencies comply with the law

Guest Tate Williams asked “what term is going to be used; Reasonable and Prudent Parenting or Normalcy?” The response is that still needs to be determined.

Preference

In response to questions from the board about Adoption preference policy, practice, and regulations, Sarah Bashore provided copies of RSMo 210.566, RSMo 453.070.1 and Child Welfare policy Section 4 Chapter 27 Subsection 4 Sub-subsection 1 to facilitate discussion during the working lunch. Conclusion of the issue is that the current placement provider of the foster youth(s) receives preference for adoption consideration; however, it is not a guarantee that the family will be selected.

Five Domains of Wellbeing

Julie Lester requested feedback from the board regarding the Five Domains of Wellbeing training they received at the March meeting. First question was what they thought about it or learned from it. Responses included:

- All Domains are equal – no hierarchy
- Makes sense, but not sure how it applies to resource parents

The discussion included explaining that the model supports engagement with birth families by resource families. Working with all families to understand “trade-offs” when making decisions for services, permanency plans, or co-parenting decisions.

The second question asked for ideas on how the Five Domains of Wellbeing model should be introduced to resource parents. The response was to incorporate the language with STARS pre-service training for new applicants and provide in-service training for existing resource parents.

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Care Portal

Tate Williams, State Director for Missouri's Care Portal, provided a brief history of the Global Orphan Project which started 14 years ago as an internationally focused organization that develops partnerships with churches and children's needs. In 2011, the vision expanded to helping those vulnerable children in the United States with faith-based partners. The Care Portal connects resources (churches) to needs using the Internet with geo-radius matching. It is a living Rolodex of resources based on zip codes. Their belief is that everyone can do something and every church can do a little. They began in the United States in 2014 with a pilot in Texas. In March 2015, they launched in Jackson County, Missouri with 15 churches. As of June 1, 2016 there are 75 churches and 21 churches in the process of being added to the system. Currently they have church partners in Circuits 6, 7, 15, 16, 19 and 22. They are currently expanding in the 5th, 13th, 17th, and 21st circuits. Tate provided his agency's pamphlet and answered questions from the group.

Board Vacancies Recruitment Ideas

There are currently vacancies on the board including 2 in the SW Region, 2 in St. Louis City, 1 in Kansas City, 1 in the NW Region, and 1 in the SE Region. Dana Lopez and Andy Flynn submitted their applications to the Governor's Office two years ago. Crissy Mayberry reports that she and Dawn Caruso from the Southeast submitted their applicants a year ago. Michelle Martin encouraged the members to develop political relationships in their areas to help educate about the purpose and work of the board. She reports that she engages in speaking events to share information and encouraged members to find opportunities to share with the public about the board.

Open Forum

Southwest Region:

Dana Lopez reported several questions from the Southwest Region's Foster Care Advisory Board.

- When a closed resource home reappplies do they have to re-take STARS? Answer is no and she was referred to policy Section 6 Chapter 3 Subsection 6.
- Sometimes resource parents have to drive over 100 miles to get fingerprints. She was asked to send that information to Elizabeth Tattershall to report to the MSHP.
- Can a child under the age of 2 sleep in the resource parent bed room. The answer is yes, just not in the same bed with the resource parent. She was referred to licensing regulation 13 CSR 35-60.040.2 (E) and (F).
- Can a child under the age of 5 ever be living in a Large Family Resource Home. The answer is yes, if to accommodate a sibling group, but no additional children may be placed until the home is in compliance. She was referred to 13 CSR 35-60.020 (4).
- What is the status of the Caregiver Court Report revision? Julie responded that she will check. The original version is still posted on Children's Division E-forms which may be used.

Northeast Region:

Karen Anderson reported that contractors are not providing the court reports to resource parents stating that they are not a party to the case. She read from memo CD12-88 which states that resource parents are

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to be provided with court reports. Elizabeth Tattershall concurred reporting that policy also states the resource parent is to be provided a copy of the court report.

Northwest Region:

Derek Williams reports that resource parents are not being provided results of Urine Analysis testing. Response is if the information is Family Support Team meeting information, the resource parent should not be excluded.

Southeast Region:

Crissy Mayberry reported concerns about workers changing visit schedules via email without FST discussion. Julie encouraged that if resource parent is being left off the email communication to report to the Supervisor or Circuit Manager.

Transgender Youth

Julie asked for ideas about how to approach issues regarding transgender youth. Ideas included:

- Ask resource parents during the STARS training to make a list of “deal breakers” of what they will not accept as placements in their homes or behaviors in their homes.
- Train/educate resource parents about LBGTQ
- Discuss during the home assessment (this is policy 6.3.A and 6.3.C)
- Assess competencies/attitudes

Meeting Adjourned at 3:00

Next Meeting September 6, 2016
10:00 am to 3:00 pm
Children's Division Conference Room B
Central Office
205 Jefferson St., 10th floor