



# Clark County Department of Family Services

## QPI Child Welfare Services Workgroup

February 18, 2014

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### Present

Name of participant (agency or affiliation)

Mark Fitzgerald, DFS co-lead  
Denise Parker, DFS, QPI Coordinator  
Alison Caliendo, Foster Parent  
Lani Aitken, DFS  
Brigid Duffy, District Attorney  
Brenda Herbstman, DFS  
Cheryl Shuberda, DFS  
Dianne P. Brooks, Foster Parent  
Heather Heuke, DFS

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### Agenda

- Discussion around the “Foster Parent Exit Survey”
- Discussion around the inclusion of caregiver participation at CFTs in Permanency Policies and Procedures
- Discussion and decision-making around which Partnership Plan to use as a guide to develop Clark County’s Partnership Plan

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### Minutes

#### CAREGIVER EXIT SURVEY

- Introductions were made. Alison Caliendo, Foster Parent and Director of Foster Kinship, and Lani Aitken, DFS, were first time attendees. Alison agreed to assume the Foster Parent Co-lead role for the Workgroup.
- The group reviewed the “Caregiver (substituted for Foster Parent) Exit Survey.” Cheryl suggested using this format as a requirement for submitting a 10 day notice. Brenda and Dianne added that it would give caregivers the opportunity to think about the child(ren) in their care, the significance of the issue they are having prompting the 10 day notice, and perhaps to make a different decision after taking stock of the situation. Dianne reiterated that in Colorado where she was previously a foster parent, there were not as many 10 day notices and, if

one were submitted, the caregiver was sent to “training” to address the identified issue.

- The group further discussed the utility of the document for other purposes. Dianne suggested that foster parents complete the form in anticipation of their visit with the caseworker to initiate dialogue around the children. Other members suggested that they may not actually complete it, but would use it to guide the conversation. Denise stated that in other states there are “visit logs” where the case worker and caregiver both sign off as documentation that the visit occurred and what was discussed. Heather offered that DFS has multiple versions of “child contact “ templates which guide their discussion with the caregivers around issues such as the child(ren)’s health, mental health, development, placement, visitation, injuries, permanency.
- Brenda suggested adding checkboxes describing the specific purpose for the completion of a particular “exit survey,” e.g. transition to adoption, 10 day notice, etc. Alison suggested that the name and contact information for the caregiver completing the form be included such that the receiving caregiver can contact them if there are additional questions. The workgroup agreed that best practice is a face to face conversation between the two caregivers but identified situations wherein that doesn’t occur, e.g. a caregiver delivered the child(ren) to Child Haven unexpectedly.
- Brenda agreed to incorporate the “child contact” template format provided by Heather into the Caregiver Exit Survey and send out to the Workgroup prior to the next meeting in order to explore accommodating all of the purposes discussed.
- Mark suggested the several strategies for familiarizing DFS and caregivers with the new form and its utility. Lani added that she could take the opportunity to review the Caregiver Exit Survey, along with several other documents, during final consultation visits with prospective foster parents, in particular, preceding their licensure.

## **CAREGIVER PARTICIPATION IN CFTs AS REFLECTED IN PERMANENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- Discussion around Mark’s review of Permanency Policies and Procedures as it relates to the inclusion of caregivers in CFTs. There was discussion generated around circumstances in which caregivers would need to know progress towards the permanency plan so they can participate in supporting same and, particularly in cases in which the caregivers are working directly with the birth parents in the community, the results of mental health and drug assessments which might pose a threat to safety, for example. Per prior consultation with DA Brigid Duffy, she stated that caregivers could be provided information around the permanency plan as it directly impacts the care of the children.
- With group input, recommendations were made that Mark will convey to DFS Manager Christina Vela in DFS Permanency Policies and Procedures which

emphasize the critical importance of inclusion of the childrens' caregivers in CFTs. It is recommended that P & Ps reflect that caregivers should be viewed as a source of support for the children and birth parents and that the role of DFS would be in helping guide the birth parents and caregivers in bridging any gap between the two and in helping them to develop and nurture a parenting partnership in the best interest of the children. The Workgroup agreed that ultimately it remains the birth parents' decision about how they view the caregivers and whether they want them present at the CFT. Heather stated that she bifurcates her CFT, beginning the dialogue around how the children are functioning and their needs, and then excuses the caregivers, as guided by the birth parents' preference, when issues specific to the parents are discussed.

### **PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

- Mark opened discussion around the two Partnership Plans, one out of Florida and one out of Washoe County. (These were previously provided via e-mail to group members and in hard copy to those not previously members of the workgroup)
- Denise suggested that the DFS "vision" statements be incorporated as guiding principles in Clark County's plan similar to the Florida version formatting. Lani stated that she liked the Washoe County version as it was more easily digested. Cheryl added that she liked the bullet points in the Washoe Plan, e.g. #1 under "Nurturing Children and Youth." Dianne offered that the Washoe plan is very detailed. Denise expressed some concern about more than one reference in the Washoe County Plan stating that the agency "will not retaliate against" foster parents. Mark and Cheryl offered that some caregivers feel that they receive disparate treatment and/or "retaliation" after they disagree with or challenge DFS. The workgroup agreed that for caregivers experiencing and/or perceiving this "retaliation," it should be included as a qualifier.
- The workgroup decided upon the Washoe County Partnership Plan as a jumping off point for the Clark County Partnership Plan. Denise indicated this would support work towards a statewide Partnership Plan. She indicated there are currently statewide QPI teleconferences wherein this could be one topic of conversation.
- The workgroup discussed some logistical considerations including who would sign the Partnership Plan and when in the placement process, e.g. Licensing, CPS or Permanency staff and/or emergency vs longer term placements. Lani suggested that the Partnership Plan be more child(ren) specific and include the child(ren)'s names.
- Denise agreed to send out the Washoe County Partnership Plan and accept feedback, suggestions, and recommendations from Workgroup membership to bring to the next meeting.

### **360 Degree Accountability to the QPI Brand**

- Denise reviewed the importance of 360 degree accountability for both caregivers and case workers. There was discussion around providing opportunities to look at how the QPI model is functioning. Evaluations could be provided to the caregivers to provide information around how the caseworkers are doing in living “the Brand” and for the caseworkers to provide information around how the caregivers are doing in living “the Brand
- Mark provided Denise with Florida versions of both caregiver and case worker evaluations and one previously developed by foster parent Jeff Petro to evaluate case workers. Denise will accept these and other versions and send them out to the workgroup for input as this might constitute a portion of the proposed training program resulting from the work of this group.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF A TRAINING CURRICULUM**

- Mark discussed that there was a lot of consideration given to different strategies to disseminate the work of this group to DFS and caregivers. The current plan is the development of a mandatory training curriculum for DFS staff which would emphasize the critical importance of a partnership with caregivers (QPI Brand statement), defining the expectations in that partnership (Partnership Plan), how to support that partnership (Partnership Plan), work on improving the flow of information to caregivers in support of placement and enhancing UNITY to support “matching” the skills, knowledge, and abilities of caregivers with children in need of placement).
- Discussed the importance of incorporating DFS representatives and caregivers as trainers.

### **FOSTER CARE AWARENESS/APPRECIATION MONTH**

- The work group engaged in discussion around May being Foster Care Awareness/Appreciation Month. Discussed what that has looked like in previous years and suggestions for creating opportunities for encouraging partnership and teamwork between DFS staff and caregivers, e.g. seeing if foster caregivers can participate with DFS in the Corporate Challenge, a Foster Care Month activity available to all caregivers, opportunities for “meet and greet” between DFS staff and caregivers, etc. Cheryl will contact Mari Parlade and Andre Wade regarding suggestions in this regard.

Next meeting content:

- Brenda will incorporate all suggestions into the Caregiver Exit Survey for final consideration at the next meeting
- Mark provided feedback to Manager Christina Velas regarding recommended changes to evolving Permanency Policies and Procedures

emphasizing to staff the critical importance of caregivers being included in CFTs and DFS role in helping to support same

- Mark to inquire regarding unpaid relative/fictive kin placements being entitled to DFS respite care
- Denise to send out a version of the Washoe County Partnership Plan and accept and incorporate suggestions from the group and other stakeholders to create a Clark County Partnership Plan
- Denise will collect and distribute multiple examples of 360 degree reviews of both caregivers and case workers for consideration for this workgroup to address this
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Next Meeting: The workgroup agreed on the fourth Tuesday of the month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The next meeting is March 25, 2014 from 10 – 1p.m. in the Lincoln Room at DFS, 121 S. Martin Luther King Blvd.