



Clark County Department of Family Services
Child Welfare Workgroup
February 23, 2016

Present

Mark Fitzgerald, DFS Co-Lead
Neiufi longi, DFS P &P's
Brandi West, Eagle Quest
Veronica Fiscus, DFS Adoption Subsidy
Anita Stephens, foster parent
Katrín Easter, DFS Permanency
Shuuanndy Alvarez, DFS Permanency
Jennifer Erbes, Olive Crest

Agenda

- Information Sharing
 - Partnership Plan
 - 360 Reviews
 - Transitions for children
 - Post Adoption Support
-

Minutes

- Introduction of members

INFORMATION SHARING

- No updates available today

Next Steps:

1. Request Caleb/Denise/Brigid provide updates as to the incorporation of recommendations from the last meeting
2. Workgroup to review revised version of the Information Sharing pamphlet as to recommended changes
3. Upon review, Workgroup to refer the Information Sharing pamphlet back to DFS Executive Management Team for further review

Partnership Plan

- Neiufi indicated that progress is being made on completing the video and accompanying P &Ps

Next Steps:

1. Caleb/Denise to provide update as to status of the training video and accompanying P &Ps

360 Reviews

- No updates at this time

Transitions for Children

- Tabled for next meeting

Post Adoption Support

- Mark provided the 2013/2014/2015 statistics on referrals and disposition (substantiation or unsubstantiation) for adoptive families and pointed out some findings
- The Workgroup believes based on collective experience and the statistics received, that there is a need in Clark County, Nevada for Post Adoption Support
- Veronica reported out the calls she received in her position over Adoption Subsidies since the last meeting
- Veronica reported calls regarding services for a child who is disrupting out of kindergarten, the adoption subsidy not being paid and the adoptive parent having a 10 day eviction notice, an adoptive father in Oklahoma who receives a full subsidy needing to get his child into tutoring, a child struggling and the adoptive parents being unable to get him into an RTC as he is not eligible for Medicaid, and an adoptive mother facing financial crisis as the birth mother stole the adoption subsidy
- Veronica described these as the typical kinds of calls for post adoption assistance/support she receives and as falling into categories including adoptive

parents needing additional financial assistance, adoptive parents trying to get their children into treatment/RTCs and being unsuccessful, and adoptive families in crisis and not knowing what to do

- Veronica advised that in cases of adoptive parents experiencing a divorce, they are only able to give the subsidy to one parent so there must be agreement and/or Court Order directing where the subsidy goes.
- Veronica stated she talked with Tammy Posada, DFS Eligibility, who stated that it is their understanding that the Medicaid Fee for Services for “foster” children and for “adopted” children is not different as was previously reported to the Workgroup.
- Veronica reported that DFS received less money from adoption incentive funds this year than last and, for example, are now requiring adoptive parents to pay the adoption fees and then be reimbursed, rather than, as in years past, paying them.
- Veronica stated that the “Wait No More” event by Focus on the Family that DFS participated in had a huge response
- The Workgroup brainstormed some areas of “need” for inclusion in a Post Adoption Support Program:
 - (1) Staff to assist with referrals/advocacy/guidance
 - (2) Support group
 - (a) The Workgroup discussed being unaware of a currently active support group for foster/adoptive families in the community
 - (b) Mark discussed how powerful it can be for foster/adoptive families to be able to discuss and problem solve with peers
 - (c) Brandie stated that it might be helpful to have parents with biological children in the support group to help normalize some of the behaviors. Her experience has been that some adoptive parents, particularly as the children age, may be correlating behaviors with the child’s trauma experiences rather than what might be challenging but developmentally appropriate (e.g. with preteens refusing to bathe, teenagers, etc)
 - (d) Mark added that he would suggest DFS take a leadership role in supporting the development and/or building up of existing support groups and maintaining momentum/enthusiasm/participation
 - (e) Mark stated that the support groups need to feel welcoming, helpful, and nonjudgmental for adoptive parents who are struggling
 - (f) Mark suggested it be mandatory that pre-adoptive parents attend X number of support group meetings prior to adoption to provide some real world exposure for them.
 - (g) Shuuanndy stated that she found 8 local foster/parent adoptive parent support groups listed on a Google Search. Mark stated that Denise indicates there are 6. She and Katrin stated that they would call all existing support groups to see what they offer and report back to the Workgroup

Mark suggested they connect with Denise Parker to ensure they are contacting all known local foster/adoptive parent support groups.

- (3) The Workgroup agreed that DFS reaching out to adoptive parents, post adoption, is critical, so that they know they are not out there alone and there is support available. Discussed having adoptive parents sign a permission slip, agreeing to be reached out to post adoption, and that DFS should encourage pre-adoptive parents to sign it.
- (4) Veronica suggested a “small pot of money” for legitimate emergency situations. She cited that DCFS (Division of Child and Family Services) used to have some flexible funding for this purpose.
- (5) Crisis response team. Veronica stated that Life Quest and Eagle Quest provide this service and accept Medicaid and that they have utilized them previously.
- (6) Mark suggested that accessibility to meaningful respite be included in any post adoption support efforts. Veronica stated that Olive Crest has respite funds which she believes are available to adoptive parents as well based on Medicaid eligibility and an SED diagnosis. Jennifer stated this is not her area but she will research it and report back.

Next steps:

1. DFS representative(s) meet with agencies to identify what respite resources exist currently, and if gaps are identified, develop respite partners/create a respite program (Jennifer and Brandi suggested attending monthly meetings of the FFTA (Foster Family Based Treatment) and/or NYCP (Nevada Youth Care). (Mark will see if DFS already has a representative attending these programs)
2. Anita suggested a Survey Monkey be sent to all adoptive parents exploring their post adoption support needs
3. The Workgroup suggested that the new training program for foster parents incorporate post adoption concerns
4. Katrin suggested that a good first step would be the creation of an Internet Board, perhaps on the QPI website, where foster/adoptive parents can anonymously (if they so choose) post challenges and questions they are having with their children and other foster/adoptive parents and/or professionals can post responses and offer strategies, recommendations, and support and empathy
5. Shuuanndy and Katrin will contact all of the foster/adoptive parent support groups DFS is aware of, explore what they offer, and report back to the Workgroup
6. Mark will explore with Denise/Mari Parlade if there are currently any “Foster Friends” offering respite for foster/adoptive families

The next meeting of the QPI Child Welfare Services Workgroup will be on Tuesday March 22, 2016 from 10 – 1 p.m. in the Lincoln Room at DFS, 121 S. Martin Luther King Blvd.

