



Clark County Department of Family Services

Name of Workgroup

June 24, 2014 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Present

Mark Fitzgerald, DFS Co-Lead
Ali Caliendo, Foster Parent Co-Lead
Denise Parker, DFS, QPI Coordinator
Mike Pochowski, Foster Parent
Dianne P. Brooks, Foster Parent
Cindy Degan, Eaglequest
Lani Aitken, DFS
Jane Green, DFS

Agenda

- Updates on “No Notices” and 10 Day Disruptions
- Updates on Child Transition Survey
- Updates on “Information Sharing with Caregivers” White Paper
- Updates on “Partnership Plan”
- Updates on 360 Reviews

Minutes

1>Welcome and introductions:

❖ The group welcomed Cindy Degan from Eagle Quest

2. “No Notices” and “10 Day” Disruptions

- ❖ Denise indicated that “agency” family disruptions are the current focus. The agencies and Licensing are immediately looking at repeat offenders and Licensing is looking at all “no notice” disruptions.
- ❖ The common denominator is a foster caregiver who becomes overwhelmed from the beginning, perhaps with newer licensed foster caregivers having too many children

- ❖ Lani indicated that Licensing is still recommending, in general, 2 foster children for newly licensed homes, however with the crisis on campus there are exceptions being made
- ❖ Lani suggested a “resource fair” be developed to provide information to foster caregivers about services available, etc.
- ❖ Denise indicated that between 1/2014 and 5/2014, there were 78 children for whom “no notice” was provided prior to their delivery to the Receiving Team. She indicated that 48/78 were “excusable,” 20 had no discernible reason (the majority having had the children in excess of 90 days), and 10 were unable to secure respite.
- ❖ The workgroup suggested re-education for caregivers as well as DFS professional staff around the consequences for children as a result of disruption. Mike tied this into an example emphasizing the need for transitions for children as well.
- ❖ The workgroup discussed the benefits for foster caregivers to meet with other families, suggesting their involvement in one of the local associations. Lani discussed her attempts to require caregivers in the beginning stages of Licensing to develop a support system for themselves and/or be required to attend Association/Support Group meetings. She stated she extols the benefits of same, however some of the families indicated that they experienced the meetings as “negative.”
- ❖ Denise indicated she is attempting to get all four of the local associations/support groups together to see how they can work together effectively to create a network of choices for caregivers.

Next steps:

1. Develop a plan for communicating out to DFS professional staff and foster caregivers about the adverse consequences for children as a result of 10 day notices and/or “no notice” disruptions and extolling the benefits of transitions for children
2. Ali will approach Lauren Wagner, Training, about making it a requirement that all newly licensed foster caregivers, and perhaps those going for relicensure, attend a minimum number of caregiver support/association meetings as part of the required training hours
3. Denise is going to plan a meeting of the four local associations/support groups to get them together.

3. Child Transition Survey

- ❖ Denise provided an update that the form has been presented to Executive Management and they have provided commentary which has been incorporated.

4. “Information Sharing with Caregivers” (White Paper)

- ❖ Denise provided an update that this is currently being reviewed by Executive Management who are awaiting legal opinion from Brigid Duffy, District Attorney

5. "Partnership Plan for Children in Out of Home Care"

- ❖ Denise provided an update that this has been presented to Executive Management who have provided input. **There is consideration for statewide adoption as well.**

Next steps:

1. The workgroup needs to explore implementation of the "Partnership Plan." Discussion around who would sign and when (which worker?) as well as how to get the message out to all of DFS and foster caregivers and how to do so in a powerful and meaningful way
2. The workgroup will read the recommendations made to "Partnership Plan" emanating from DFS Executive Management prior to the next meeting for discussion and finalization

6. 360 Reviews

- ❖ The workgroup reviewed the "Caregiver Review of Caseworker" and "Caseworker Review of Caregiver" including the portions highlighted by Ali in her review. Ali indicated the assessment areas mirrored the expectations in the "Partnership Plan."
- ❖ Discussion generated around inclusion of certain portions which would need to await approval as to "information sharing," e.g. "copies of the case plan," use of the word "safety plan" describing a caregiver's plan around a child in their home and substitution of the title "child resource record" for "medical passport."
- ❖ Discussion around where the "reviews" would end up. It was recommended initially that completed on the caregivers go to their licensing workers and those completed on the caseworker go to QA/QI. There was discussion around why they would go to different places, what the implications would be for "personnel" actions and what we were hoping to accomplish. The workgroup agreed that we were looking more for trends as to individual workers and caregivers.

Next steps: (1) Denise will discuss with Labor Management for Union and other considerations

(2) Mark will request input from Brigid Duffy, DA.

7. Respite

- ❖ The workgroup had considerable discussion around respite care. Placement is overwhelmed with respite care requests around Christmas, spring break, and now in the summer. DFS wants to move towards a position of encouraging the

development of peer to peer relationships to identify respite care providers. Continuing concern is expressed that respite care providers are not paid at nearly the same rate as regular foster care. Jane referred to situations where foster parents initially declined to accept a respite care placement, however once the child was “placed” at Child Haven (for lack of “respite”) and the “respite” placement became an actual “placement” and the reimbursement increased, they accepted the placement. being curious as to what is in policy, legislation, and/or is practice. Mike agreed to do some research around policy/legislation as it pertains to respite. The workgroup identified the following four thematic areas of discussion for change.

1. Foster parents should be required first to explore and attempt to identify their own respite care providers through “peer to peer” relationships. In this way, as Mike cited, it is less traumatic for the children as they are familiar with the respite care providers and they would also be more supportive of short notice requests for respite. Foster parents who don’t have a “peer to peer” network should be encouraged in their licensing process and/or relicensing process to explore opportunities for same, e.g. connecting with foster parents in close proximity to them, attending foster parent support groups, etc.
2. Foster parents should be discouraged from taking family vacations, etc. which exclude any or all of the foster children but involve other children in the home. This is contrary to the “Partnership Agreement” tenants, is discouraged in the “policy statement” of the “respite policy,” i.e. “respite is not intended to replace the duties or obligations originally agreed to by foster families, e.g. foster children should be included in family holiday events, activities, and family vacations when possible.” This is traumatic to the children, in particular, leaving them celebrating holidays with a “family” who is not theirs.
3. Foster families should not be required to “make up” missed visitation with birth parents during times they are on vacations in which the children are included. This seems more a practice than policy issue. We’ve heard of situations where the foster parents are denied a travel letter because the birth parents don’t want the children going on vacation, e.g. because the birth parent will miss a couple of visits. Requiring this when foster parents would be unable to accommodate would be tantamount to insisting that the children go into respite and be disrupted in placement solely to appease the birth parents. As a foster parent myself when this has come up, I have had such a relationship with the birth parents that we can reasonably discuss this and generally compromise about make up visits (before or after the vacation). Again though it is my understanding this practice has created a barrier to some foster parents such that the children had to enter respite.
4. Respite care providers should be paid the same rate as for regular foster parents which would increase the options for placement available. The workgroup has also been very firm that foster parents who do not have the children in their care

(e.g. during the period respite is being provided) should not be receiving payment for children they are not caring for.

Next steps: (1) The workgroup requested Denise Parker reach out to explore any policy and/or legislative barriers to enactment of changes in “respite care” to make it more child friendly

(2) The workgroup to discuss specific recommendations for Executive Management at the next meeting

Next meeting of the QPI Child Welfare Services Workgroup is Tuesday, 7/22/14, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Lincoln Room at DFS Central Office, 121 S. Martin Luther King Blvd.

