

# **Rural Region Quality Parenting Initiative Committee (QPI)**

## **Meeting Minutes - October 19, 2022, 11:00 am-Noon**

### **In Attendance:**

<b>Faye Cavender</b>	<b>Meagan Soracco</b>	<b>Warren Melhorn</b>
<b>Laurie Jackson</b>	<b>Lori Nichols</b>	<b>Kelly McKiddie</b>
<b>Kevin Quint</b>	<b>Bailey Malay</b>	<b>Rick Ewing</b>
<b>Shelly Roering</b>	<b>Tawney Simpson</b>	<b>Betsey Crumrine</b>
<b>Rena Avery</b>	<b>Rose McGuinness</b>	<b>Melanie McCormick</b>
<b>Veronica Hagen</b>	<b>Shelby Riley</b>	

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

2. **Recap of the August meeting** – Please see the minutes that were attached with your email.

### **3. Announcements & quick stuff**

a. Kevin announced a QPI Site Spotlight webinar that is being held tomorrow on Zoom. He also mentioned that the QPI Network News that is sent out each month via email. The latest newsletter was received on October 18<sup>th</sup>. When asked, everyone said that they receive these in their email. Kevin reminded everyone of the QPI Nevada website and encouraged them to access it.

b. Caregiver Courier - October's theme was Domestic Violence. The Courier went over how to talk to children about domestic violence, safe teen dating, child tax credit, Angel Tree, and TBRI trainings. Please send any suggestions and resources for upcoming letters to Shelby. Discussion was had if we should send a copy of the Caregiver Courier to providers one time by mail to make sure they're seeing it, as some may be going to junk email boxes.

c. Binti and foster care licensing updates – Binti has been very responsive when staff or providers use the chat feature to ask questions. We're seeing a huge climb in the number of applications we're receiving, since applicants are not having to wait for paperwork. Discussion was had about foster parents sending in monthly medical reports on-line, possibly through Binti. That is the direction we're moving toward with the placement component in Binti. Laurie has had a couple meetings with Binti and our Information Systems, and Binti is not currently connected to our child welfare database. Within the next year Binti and UNITY will be able to talk and share data back and forth, and everyone will be able to access information about the child's medical passport.

4. **How have you (or someone you know) “put the child in the center?” What are ways you/we can improve in this area?** (Part 2 will be discussed at the next meeting)

✓ Kelly McKiddie – Kelly's been working with the co-parent mindset with birth parents and foster parents. The foster parents could be a support to birth parents struggling with addiction and be an encouragement and support to the birth parents. It's in the child's best interest to be bonded with their parents.

- ✓ Veronica Hagen – “We’re not here to replace the parents, we’re here to encourage, support and co-parent”.
- ✓ Shelby Riley – Shelby had a case with an adoption plan that blew after two weeks. She had to find new placements for siblings, who had to be split up. The mom was still around so her supervisor suggested Shelby include the mom in the meetings with the new foster parents. Even though the plan was adoption, the mom was the child’s comfort person. This makes for a good transition for the child and a great relationship between the birth mom and foster mom.

*More food for thought: If every child deserves excellent parenting every day, how would our system (i.e. what we do), look different from the one we have now? Would we select, train, and support families in a different way? How would policies and practices that disrupt relationships change? (From the QPI website)*

- ✓ Shelby Riley – If we’re not doing our jobs with the best quality, and having poor communication and transitions, ultimately the child is losing out and suffers the most harm and damage.
- ✓ Bailie Malay – Bailie advocates for the kids in her care and she feels the kids need to be the focus, but lately she feels the kids are not the focus of our system.
- ✓ Rick Ewing – People in the rural areas don’t do enough fellowship and team building with foster parents and kids. It would be beneficial if they could go on outings and get-togethers as a group. Holding a picnic/recruitment event at a park could help educate the public and eliminate the bad stigma of foster parents and make them realize they are providing a loving, caring home for our children. Many of the local foster parents don’t know each other. A support group was getting started but fell through and didn’t happen. Everyone is busy in their lives but could try to find time to make something work.
- ✓ Laurie Jackson – Laurie has been meeting with and speaking to foster parents about their concerns. Kevin and Laurie have kept data on why foster parents leave and their complaints. There seems to be ten concrete reasons for leaving or complaints, communication being the biggest one. We had an active plan for foster parents, but a passive plan for case workers. We didn’t take into account all the new workers coming into the agency but are now going to include case workers in specific parts of pre-service and post-service trainings, creating an active plan to work with new and established workers.
- ✓ Bailey Malay – Bailey appreciated Laurie coming out to speak with her and knowing efforts are being made. Communication issues have been better; however, some areas still need more improvement.

## **5. Report from Shelby Riley and Rose McGuinness on the Champions Program**

Shelby and Rose were representatives for the conference held in Reno. The conference was focused on data we know and strategies to keep making QPI better. The main focus was on “we must act in a way that is always child centered and we must point out system thinking that enhances that child center approach”. Case workers can feel stuck in the middle on what is the best decision or what’s best practice because we historically have had things in our system that have overlooked the child centered approach.

They learned four ways to stay child centered in child welfare:

1. Tell the kids what is happening. There was a huge emphasis on timely transitions, and acknowledged that emergency transitions happen, but they challenged them that they don't need to happen as often as they do. Children at every age and every stage of development should be getting some kind of update about what's happening and should know what their permanency plan is.
2. Think about child development in every decision that we're making, especially with kids that have endured trauma, and consider how their development has been compromised. The ages of 8-30 months are the worst time to disrupt attachment for lifelong attachment skills. It must be prioritized that the child has their comfort person and that's not disrupted throughout this time. Infants that have been in care their whole lives and are now seeing their birth parents for the first time can be unfamiliar, so making sure their comfort person is there for those first visits can be very important and comforting for the child.
3. Appreciating resource parents - the biggest issues in child welfare nationwide is retention of foster parents. The reasons are the foster parents don't feel that they're part of the team, don't feel like there's timely communication, are not shared important child information, poor access to childcare and transportation, and finances are not enough. Solutions for more efforts to appreciate resource parents are to have frequent enrichment activities, to be acknowledged with awards, have access to free tickets for baseball and football games or arcades to make sure it's not a burden for foster parents. We need to show them they are appreciated and extremely valued.
4. Prioritize coparenting – Child welfare cases work the best when we are all working toward the same goal and are all on the same team. That can only happen if we're coparenting, the foster parents making the children available to their family and acting in a way where the birth parents can be parents while they're working on getting their lives together. The data shows when everyone is on the same team and when coparenting is prioritized in relationships, we see more success and reunification. There should be a focus on making the visits therapeutic and should be approached as an opportunity to rebuild relationships.

After Shelby's and Rose's presentation, Kevin talked about the fact that we'd like to become part of the QPI Champions Program, which is something that the Division can join. A handout on Champions was provided. The idea of the programs is "to transform foster care agencies into relationship-based systems whose primary goal is to ensure that each child develops and maintains strong, positive relationships and has effective parenting while in care." The commitment involves having several people who commit to going through a six month training on QPI values, theory, and techniques. Then the QPI "Champions" are prepared to work together and with others to organize and develop QPI, educate others about QPI, and implement specific QPI strategies in the Rural Region. Kevin will contact QPI to find out how to become involved in the Champions Program and will bring information to the next meeting in November.

If you'd like to invite anyone to our QPI meeting, including birth parents, staff, foster parents, and community members, please let Kevin know. Meeting ended at 12:00 pm. Our next QPI meeting will be 11/16/2022 at 11:00 am