

## Rural Region Quality Parenting Initiative Committee (QPI) Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2023

### In Attendance:

Kevin Quint – Carol Shauffer – Dana Gray – Liz Stetson – Lori Nichols – Angelina Blare – Lauren Karp – Bobbette Jamison-Smith – Melanie McCormick – Faye Cavender – Meagan Soracco – Veronica Hagen – Jessica Carstens - Rebecca Stoffel – Brittany Best – Maria Jimenez-Garcia - Ashley Smith – Rebecca Burt – Tawney Simpson – Ashley Hall – Melanie Jones-Bluford – Shelby Riley – Cynthia Stephenson – Kelly McKiddie – Warren Melhorn – Kyle Crutcher – Shelly Roering

1. Welcome and Introductions – ***Kevin welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all for taking the time to attend. He let us know we won't be getting through much of the agenda since we have Carol Shauffer from the Youth Law Center of San Francisco joining us as well as having presentations from our QA unit.***  
***The first Caregiver Corner meeting starts tonight. The purpose is to connect foster parents and help them feel a sense of community. We hope to empower foster parents from each community to put on get togethers in their area. The first two meetings will be finding out from foster families how often they'd like to meet, who they want included, what they want to get out of the meetings, if they would like to chair in their area, what panels or education they may want, even allow them to vent. These meetings are for all foster parents, including general, relative, and fictive kin.***  
***Veronica shared that there will now be a monthly support group for adoptive families that can also include pre-adoptive foster homes as well.***
2. Recap of the December meeting – ***no discussion***
3. Announcements & quick stuff – ***no discussion***
  - a. Caregiver Courier
  - b. Binti and foster care licensing updates
  - c. Foster Parent Handbook
  - d. Training opportunities: The Ripple Effect in February 2023
4. Discussion: What do foster homes need most in order to provide excellent parenting? – ***no discussion***
5. Carole Shauffer, QPI Senior Director – ***Carole was in our area about seven years ago and hears we're doing amazing things with QPI. She would like to create Champions in each area and wants us to participate in national work. She will continue monthly webcasts that are designed for everyone participating in QPI. They will have three different threads 1) Getting people engaged in QPI, 2) Improving relationships with birth parents, foster parents, and other partners 3) Transitions in child welfare. Carole asked that every QPI site deal with each of***

*the three issues and bring information back to a quarterly meeting. Newsletters will come out quarterly and we'll be sent notices for specific events also. Their website is being redesigned around these three areas and will have improved material and research, which will help us do QPI and link us to others. Kevin will follow up with her about the three ideas. Carole suggested having one person attend each group, which will create strong relationships across the country.*

6. Presentation on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers (Liz Stetson and Dana Gray) – *Dana and Liz are part of the QA and training unit.*

### *Comfort Calls*

- ✓ *Calls should happen with birth parents shortly after removal, preferably within 12 hours of removal, or as soon as possible to establish a positive co-parent relationship, share vital information and allow the children and parents the chance to speak with each other.*
- ✓ *The purpose of the call is to minimize the trauma of separation, reinforce that the birth parents are the expert, create smoother transitions, and provide a positive working relationship.*
- ✓ *During the call reiterate to the birth parent that they are the expert, gather information about the child's trauma, education, medical, routine and their supports.*
- ✓ *The guidelines for the call are it can be done from the worker's cell phone, on a 3-way call from the worker's office, from the caregiver's phone, or virtually. The call must remain child focused, not about the removal, and the caseworker must remain on the call to collect information and intervene if necessary.*
- ✓ *Unique circumstances sometime happen when the parent may be incarcerated, is in the hospital, or location is unknown. There may be safety concerns that preclude the initial call, so the caseworker will discuss with their supervisor options to make the call happen as soon as possible.*

### *Ice Breakers*

- ✓ *Meetings should be child focused and give the birth parents the opportunity to meet the caregivers, establish communication and build ongoing working relationships. The meeting is held when a child is placed out of the home with a foster family, including relative or kinship. The meeting should also occur when making a placement change and have communication between the old and new foster providers.*
- ✓ *The benefits if Ice Breakers foster open communication, create more stable placements, improve reunification or permanency outcomes, preserve bonds, encourage birth parents to engage in services, create*

*smoother transitions, reduce the parent's anxiety, reinforce the parent's role as the "parent", use a team approach working to reunify in a safe environment, and reassure kids by them seeing everyone working together.*

- ✓ *The logistics of the meeting is to have it "the earlier the better," within 7 days and is usually around 30 minutes long in a neutral location. The required participants are birth parents, caregiver, caseworker, and the child if appropriate and if they're comfortable meeting with their parents and separating from them. It works well to have a scheduled visit after the Ice Breaker meeting. The child should be informed of the meeting even if they're not attending. The meeting should include information about the child and their needs. The parent must have the ability to stay positive and child focused during the meeting.*
  - ✓ *The caseworker's role and responsibility prior to the meeting are to schedule the meeting, educate participants why the meeting is being held and what will be discussed, provide the Child Health/Social History form to the birth parent, provide the caregiver with the Meet Our Family form, provide the caregiver the All About Me form that the kids can fill out with the caregiver.*
  - ✓ *The caregiver's roles and responsibilities prior to the meeting are to complete the Meet Our Family form, assist the children in completing the All About Me form, ask questions, be open, be in contact with the worker about their schedule, and discuss availability for visitation.*
  - ✓ *The caseworker roles and responsibilities during and after the meeting are to facilitate, keep focused on the child's needs, help everyone feel safe and comfortable, document information, and provide copies of documentation.*
  - ✓ *The caregiver's roles and responsibilities during and after the meeting are to focus on the child, provide ongoing contact, remain neutral, provide updates, share information about the family and household, and ask questions.*
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- *The QPI pilot on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers launched in 2018 with the QPI Initiative, which included post meeting surveys and evaluations for birth parents and caregivers. They're no longer doing the surveys and evaluations, but the QA unit will be doing random reviews to make sure the Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers are happening and provide support on an ongoing basis.*
  - *All the QPI information is in the Rural Region Drive as well as on the QPI website.*
  - *Kevin asked Dana and Liz what our committee can do to help this be sustainable. They would like us to remind caseworkers about the importance of Ice Breakers and Comfort Calls and the benefits.*

*There may be more work on the front end, but it eliminates work on the back end since foster parents and birth parents can coordinate visits, appointments, support placement stability and get children to permanency more quickly. Case workers can be a support in meetings or making calls if they're in a position to do so. They would like foster parents and case workers to share positive experiences so we can keep this going. QPI would also like to hear about negative experiences so they can address any issues.*

- *Kevin will ask for stories and testimonials at our next meeting.*
- *Lauren wrote in the chat "Keep in forefront of minds – there's a big Round 4 push for cultural relevance – are communications and services culturally appropriate and monitored/adjusted to ensure cultural appropriateness. Something to consider for Comfort Calls".*

7. *Funding Opportunity: Angelina was a foster child for many years and aged out. She's also Ms. Curvy Nevada and is using that for a platform for foster care. She has a funding source that's interested in helping foster parents and foster kids in our community. This could be done by a fundraiser, or possibly creating a fund for kids who want to do extracurricular activities. Kevin will send an email to this committee to see who may want to volunteer and become part of community projects.*
  - a. *Melanie McCormick informed us that CASA can provide help with some activities for foster kids, and there's also sponsorships and scholarships for youth.*
  - b. *Shelby said there's a need for teens in group homes that recently aged out to do activities such as going to a Thanksgiving dinner or going to a Christmas event on their own.*
8. *QPI Facebook Page Subcommittee report – no discussion*
9. *Foster Parent Connection Subcommittee report – no discussion*
10. *Update on the Champions Program and moving forward – no discussion*
11. *Transition Planning (QPI Committee goal: "Decrease trauma and disruptions through improved transition planning") – no discussion*
12. *Set next meeting – The next QPI meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 15, 2023.*
13. *Adjourn*