

Rural Region Quality Parenting Initiative Committee (QPI) Meeting Minutes – February 15, 2023

In Attendance:

Kevin Quint – Lori Nichols – Angelina Blare – Bobbette Jamison-Smith – Melanie McCormick – Ashley Smith – Rebecca Burt – Tawney Simpson – Ashley Hall – Kelly McKiddie – Warren Melhorn – Kyle Crutcher – Shelly Roering – Kandee Mortenson – Brandy Holbrook – Laurie Jackson – Betsey Crumrine

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Recap of the January meeting – *Minutes were attached to the agenda.*
3. Announcements & quick stuff
 - a. Caregiver Courier – *Please let Shelby know if you have anything you'd like to include in the newsletter.*
 - b. Binti and foster care licensing updates – *Binti has a new representative named Dominique. We're looking at re-formulating some windows to make relicensing and renewals two separate tabs. Lori will be a panel member at the ICWA conference in April. They'll be discussing technology to advance our program to enable us to get families licensed timelier.*
 - c. Foster Parent Handbook – *We have both hard copies and electronic copies. Please feel free to give to new foster parents.*
4. Discussion: What do you think of the term “foster child” and “foster parent?” If you'd like to see a change, what would it be?
Betsey likes “caregiver” but that could mean licensed, unlicensed, or relative. Brandy stated that in the NIA and some policies the birth parents are referred to as caregivers, we could possibly use “placement resources”. Lori has heard foster parents referred to as “professional parents”.
5. Follow up on Carole Shauffer's remarks from the January meeting – *Kevin met with Carole on 1/26/23 and talked about the three QPI priorities 1) Infusing QPI into the system (our system), 2) Improving relationships between workers and foster parents, and 3) Transitions. QPI will be holding three discussion groups on these topics nationally and Kevin would like three different people from this group to attend one topic. Kelly volunteered for #1, Shana may be interested in #2, Lori is interested in #2 or #3, and Ashley H. is interested in #3. Kevin will find out the details and dates.*
6. Follow up on January presentation on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers
 - a. Testimonials on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers – *Liz and Dana presented on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers at our meeting last month. Kevin would like to send an email blast to foster parents, in collaboration with Liz and Dana. The Pre-Service Training that just ended had a lot more focus on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers than ever before in hopes foster parents will be ready for it when it happens.*

Brandy feels there is a gap between getting the Comfort Call and Ice Breaker training to making it a practice, and part of that gap is due to stakeholders. Once placement happens some stakeholders may not agree and have their own ideas about visits, etc.

Melanie (CASA) stated they are invited to foster parent trainings and try to engage the new foster parents and stress they are there as a resource and build on relationships. They have a strong relationship with foster parents and DCFS and make an effort to be present. They have a couple foster parents that have been around for a while and are well known that may be great at bridging foster parent, birth parent and child relationships, which would be instrumental in reunification. Melanie will email Kevin their names so we can reach out to them.

Kelly stated that keeping the child in the center would go well if we re-implemented CFT's. Some kids have them, some don't. If all kids had CFT's, all the stakeholders could communicate before there's an issue.

Brandy suggested having stakeholders at the QPI table.

Melanie stated our DA, Kelly Brandon, does monthly trainings with social workers, attorneys, and CASA's. They discuss role and responsibilities of each stakeholder.

7. Funding opportunity – *Angelina, who is a former foster child, has a general idea to develop an effort through this group to find donors in the community to provide funds for activities that will benefit foster children and foster homes. She's proposing to collect items for foster children through her pageant connections from May – August. She would like to obtain a sponsor, without putting strain on people.*

Betsey suggested using funds for soothing items for babies and children. We could have items here to drop off with a placement if they have a drug addicted or colicky baby and loan them the items as they need it. She also suggested a sleep training program and has reached out for a curriculum.

Kevin and Angelina discussed writing grants to specific foundations to get funding.

Kelly would like to see sensory items for kids such as Moon Pals stuffed animals or weighted blankets. She also suggested paying for driving programs for youth and the option to rent a car from the driving school for the driver's test.

Ashley H. suggested funds such as gift cards or coupons for caregiver to use for self-care.

Kevin and Angelina are the only ones currently in this workgroup and he'd like other volunteers. Lori and Kelly volunteered to help with the group. Betsey also said she would help revise a grant once it's drafted.

8. QPI Facebook Page Subcommittee report – *We're working on getting permission from the Division, then we'll be working with Karla on the page.*
9. Caregiver Corner Subcommittee report – *The first set of meetings had 6 foster parents show up. There will be another one scheduled in a couple weeks. We're trying to build a community and let foster parents connect with each other and help foster parents with resources and information.*

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 is scheduled for March 15, 2023.**
13. Adjourn