

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

## In Attendance:

Kevin Quint – Lori Nichols – Melanie McCormick - Ashley Smith – Rebecca Burt – Tawney Simpson – Ashley Hall – Kelly McKiddie – Warren Melhorn – Shelly Roering – Kande Mortenson – Laurie Jackson – Lauren Karp – Brittany Best – Rebecca Stoffel – Melanie-Jones Bluford – Shelby Riley – Jessica Carstens – Meagan Tingle – Shana Rogers – Maria Jimenez-Garcia

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Recap of the February meeting – *Please see the minutes attached to the invite.*
3. Announcements & quick stuff
  - a. Caregiver Courier – *March is nutrition month so Shelby will be highlighting eating behaviors & trauma. There can be many issues such as food textures, what foods look like, seeing the foods prepared, and teaching foster parents about cultural competence. It's important for the case worker and foster parent to know if there's any therapeutic or medical need around nutrition and eating for the child. Jessica will connect Shelby with a school parent she knows that specializes in children with eating disorders, picky eaters, and nutrition. Please let Shelby know if you have other resources you'd like to see in the newsletter.*
  - b. Foster care licensing updates and the next Pre-Service Training – *The next training will begin on July 11 and will be every Tuesday & Thursday evening from 6PM to 9PM for 4 weeks. The last training finished on February 11<sup>th</sup>, and we already have 7 families making good progress and moving forward with licensing.*
  - c. Unlicensed homes – *No discussion.*
  - d. Legislature (budget hearing and Assembly Bill 136) – *No discussion.*
  - e. Three QPI National Discussion Groups - *The groups on Foster Parent Engagement, Transitions, and Relationships Between Foster Parents and Birth Parents have been put off until this fall. When we have a date, Kevin will ask who would like to attend.*
  - f. Update on the Champions Program – *Kevin would like 1-2 people to get involved in the QPI Champions Program. There is a cost, so he's been asked to wait until the legislative session is over.*
  - g. “QPI At-A-Glance Event Rundown” – *Kevin sent out a QPI Event Summary, and thought a couple Webinars that would be of interest are on 3/16/23 “QPI in Action: Breaking Barriers – The QPI Approach to Case Management that Supports Excellent Parenting” and on 4/20/23 “What's Right? What's Wrong? Moral Distress in Child Welfare”. The QPI National Conference will be held in May, please let Kevin know if you'd like to attend and he will check on the funding.*

4. Conversation and Sharing: What do foster homes need to know about a child before placement?
- Warren – Any special needs of children going to a home.*
- Rebecca Stoffel – Behaviors and sharing information about the child and any upcoming appointments.*
- Kelly – Sexual issues (workers don't always know); schools often have information if a child has had behaviors, do we solicit information from school prior to placement?*
- Shelby – When a child changes placement, both homes communicate about behaviors & day to day needs.*
- Kevin - How does this become QPI with the child in the center?*
- Shelby – The team doing due diligence to seek information about the child and provide to the foster parent; foster parent should expect a child to come in with some trauma; foster parent can help us learn needs of the child.*
- Kevin – The Pre-service Training gets the foster parents ready to step in. Licensing is also developing a post-licensing training and a first month family visit program with an AFC coach for new homes to discuss trauma, attachments, needs of children, etc.*
- Shelby – Eventually licensing is hoping to have a matching module in Binti where they will be able to enter some of the needs of the child.*
5. Discussion on engaging birth parents-Melanie McCormick, Carson City CASA Director
- Melanie - Kevin and Melanie had a discussion on 2/28/23 about establishing the foster parent's relationship with birth parents by communicating with the birth parents about transports, visitations, updates how child is doing, favorite foods, if the child had rough day in school, etc. When the foster parent is encouraging and supportive of the birth parent there is a much better chance of reunification. The birth parents often are scared, embarrassed, angry, and resentful and we sometimes unintentionally push hopelessness (recommending parenting classes may make them think they're a bad parent; recommending substance evaluations may make them feel they're an alcoholic or addict). Many of the birth parents come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and often don't understand the court process. When birth parents have little hope, the number of things we're asking of them becomes intense & a challenge. Melanie suggested an informal way to bridge the role with foster parents such as a mentor parent (similar to big brother, big sister model) to assist families navigate the system and learn new skills they may not know due to generational trauma. We need the stories to have better endings, we seem to have more adoptions than reunifications. Kevin & Melanie proposed reaching out to existing foster families who may be willing to be a support or confidant to the birth parent.*
- Shelby – When a potential placement hears a lot about a child or case, they may have concerns since they may not feel they have the experience to deal with the issues. How do we encourage foster parents to warm up to trusting birth parents when they may relapse, miss visits, etc.?*
- Laurie – We've discussed the co-parenting model previously that would include foster parents, the agency and birth parents. She suggested having something separate from the agency (off site) to provide support. Washoe County has Mentor Moms that are assigned by the court.*

*Kelly – Most foster parents stated they're open to talking with the birth parents but felt judged by the case worker if they vented about what they may have discussed.*

*Sometimes the foster parents just need support from the case worker and acknowledgment of the hard work they're doing, and that they're making a difference. If they're able to receive that, they'll be in a better position to support the birth parent.*  
*Ashley Hall – Suggested Ron Wood may be able to host an off-site support type group to keep it separate from DCFS.*

*Shelby – Mentioned that in other parts of country there are non-profits set up to support birth parents.*

*Maria – Case workers also feel judgment from foster parents about why they're allowing visits if there may be safety concerns.*

*Melanie M. – This would be a voluntary program for all parties, including experienced foster parents, former foster parents, birth parents, and parents who may or may not have reunified. This could offer support, education, and friendship without sharing confidential information about a case. They may match a parent with a one-on-one volunteer they can connect with to be a non-biased support. Ron Wood has a Parent Café for parents that have an active child welfare case that hasn't risen to the level of a 432B case. Melanie will talk with Lisa about the possibility of having some type of group at Ron Wood.*

*Ashley Hall – She knows people who have been through the system and have turned their lives around, some even now working for the state, that may be interested in mentoring.*

*Kevin – Licensing is stressing co-parenting more in Pre-service training than they ever have previously.*

6. Follow up on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers – *Kevin sent the group a form that Liz Stetson adapted that's similar to a document in Minnesota. Liz and Dana will continue talking with staff about Comfort Calls and doing follow-ups.*
  - a. Testimonials on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers (Do you have any you can share? Are they happening across the Rural Region?) – *Please let Kevin know if you have any testimonials, he's working on video and written testimonials.*
  - b. What else can we do to support this effort?
  
7. Workgroup updates
  - a. Funding Workgroup – *Angie Blare talked at our February meeting and would like to find funding through a separate entity that can help older kids with costs that DCFS won't pay for, such as getting a driver's license. Please let Kevin know if you'd like to volunteer for this committee.*
  - b. QPI Facebook Page Subcommittee report – *Shelby put together information and submitted to Karla for the QPI Facebook page. This account would be for foster parents, former foster parents, and staff. It will be centered on QPI values (not negativity). They'd like a diverse population of moderators. Please let Shelby know if you'd like to be a moderator (Shana volunteered at the meeting).*
  - c. Caregiver Corner Subcommittee report - *Kelly - had two groups in January and one in March. Five to six families showed up for the groups and they were focused on providing an opportunity for foster parents to connect, ask questions and learn*

*about resources. It was suggested looking into and possibly collaborating and connecting with IFS and Elko (who has their own foster parent support group) for the sake of simplicity so we're not duplicating.*

8. Transition Planning (*QPI Committee goal: "Decrease trauma and disruptions through improved transition planning"*) – **No update**
9. Set next meeting – ***The next QPI meeting will be on April 19, 2023.***