

# Rural Region Quality Parenting Initiative Committee (QPI) Meeting Minutes – April 19, 2023

## In Attendance:

Kevin Quint, Warren Melhorn, Kandee Mortenson, Leilani Salter-Arms, Sunshine Perry, Jessica Carstens, Shelly Roering, Rick Ewing, Ashley Smith, Brittany Best, Tawney Simpson, Kyle Crutcher, Kelly McKiddie, Shelby Riley, Rebecca Stoffel, Jhoanna Presswood, Laurie Jackson, Melanie Jones-Bluford,

1. Welcome and Introductions – *Leilani Salter-Arms introduced herself (with her baby). She has completed a DCFS case, and just turned 30 years old.*
2. Recap of the March meeting – *Please see the minutes attached to the meeting invite.*
3. Review the Rural QPI Committee’s Goals
  - Goal #1: Decrease trauma and disruptions through improved transitional planning
  - Goal #2: Improve relationships between birth parents and foster parents through co-parenting
4. Announcements & quick stuff
  - a. Caregiver Courier – *Shelby sent out the Caregiver Courier for both March and April. We’ll be hosting the 1<sup>st</sup> Awareness Fun Run/Walk for National Child Abuse Prevention Month, along with a free resource fair, which will raise money for CASA of Carson City. This will be Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at Riverview Park in Carson City. The runners will start at 10AM and walkers at 10:30AM. Please wear your favorite superhero costume/cape and “be a hero.” Let Shelby know if you’d like to add any resources, trainings, or videos to the May newsletter.*
  - b. Foster care licensing updates and the next Pre-Service Training – *The next training starts in July, and there are six families signed up so far.*
  - c. “QPI At-A-Glance Event Rundown” – *See the email attachment with the meeting invite for the QPI Webinar on April 20<sup>th</sup>, “What’s Right? What’s Wrong? Moral Distress in Child Welfare”*
  - d. QPI National Conference – *The QPI National Conference is in May and DCFS has 16 spots funded. So far, we have 10 signed up, let Kevin know if you’d like to attend. The theme is “Keeping Children Connected to Culture, Kin, and Community.” There are new films and trainings added to the QPI website frequently, including self-care in child welfare agencies.*
5. QPI Themed Conversation and Sharing: How do we (how do you) model teamwork to foster and birth parents?

*Rebecca Stoffel – Facilitating comfort calls helps start the conversation and collaboration between foster parents and birth parents. As a permanency worker the kids are already in placement, and this would usually have been done up front by an assessment worker. There could be a benefit doing comfort calls with fictive kin and relatives when the relationship isn’t on the best of terms or contentious due to the*

*parent's actions and behaviors. Relatives and fictive kin can also be taken advantage of by the birth parents. And with the comfort call, we can lay out expectations and guidelines, and remind the birth parents the placement is doing a service for the division by being a provider and they have a job requirement to follow our safety plan. Rebecca shared a couple transition stories. The first case came from assessment, the child was in the hospital for a month, then placed with the foster parent. They had a comfort call with the birth parent and reassured her that someone was caring for her child and what experiences took place in the hospital. This call started a good relationship between the birth parent and foster parent. In another case the child had multiple moves, Rebecca didn't do a comfort call but did talk to both foster parent and birth parent and shared email addresses, cell numbers, facilitated exchange of information and updates on the child.*

*Kelly McKiddie – Being able to answer a text or call after hours from a foster family is a form of teamwork. Just being able to respond with a quick text to acknowledge their call or text and let them know you'll get back to them the next makes them feel supported and part of the team.*

*Brittany Best – Moved a child to a fictive kin placement on mom's side but did a comfort call with both mom and dad. That allowed both sides to have the same expectations and be on the same page, and placement knew we were telling all parties the same thing.*

6. Transition Planning (*QPI Committee goal: "Decrease trauma and disruptions through improved transition planning"*)
  - a. How are transitions going with our children and homes? What goes well? What needs some help?

*Rebecca Stoffel – When transitioning from foster home to adoption we're rock stars, especially for out of state. There's so much time for planning, visits, and calls. However, emergency placements can be less than 10 days and don't go well. There's no time, we don't know where they're going to be placed, they sometimes go from one place to the next, and there's no time to transition. Out of home placement to in home placement sometimes take too long. They may have already been having overnight visits, but it's taking the Division too long to finalize. When the birth parents and foster parents have a relationship, it makes for a much better transition. Sometimes foster parents don't have much of a relationship with birth parents because foster parents aren't able to facilitate transportation or phone/video visits. When the case worker facilitates a lot of it there's not an opportunity for them to get to know each other, since the case worker becomes the go-between. Rebecca did a placement across the state and facilitated a comfort call via zoom with the previous placement, made introductions, was able to see child's room, and reduced some stress.*

*Kelly McKiddie – Asked Rebecca if she had to give some protocol on transitions, what would work best?*

*Rebecca Stoffel – She’s had foster parents type up a weekly paragraph to give to birth parents, little things like “baby didn’t like pop tarts today.” Even if brief it builds a relationship with the parents and eases communication. A big thing is foster parents just being kind and giving information when they have the opportunity.*

*Sunshine Perry – She had a high-profile case where the parents were on the news. The foster parents were scared of them and didn’t want any contact. She did a CFT with them, which was an ice breaker, and the foster parents could see the parents weren’t bad and “crazy” people that didn’t love their kids, that they made a bad judgement. After that, the foster parents would write notes to the birth mom about diaper rash cream being in the diaper bag, how to apply, why the rash was there (birth mom had some issues with foster parent not taking proper care of baby). Now they’re on the same page.*

*Shelby Riley – She wants to give a shout out to the foster parents that don’t judge a book by its cover and manage a co-parent relationship. She had a case where the birth mom would be a team player one day. Then the next interaction she would leave screaming voicemails about the clothes the child was wearing and was very unpredictable. The foster parent managed with empathy and grace, even though it was stressful walking on eggshells.*

b. Let’s share some stories about successful transitions

*Rebecca Stoffel – Increase visitation, one night, then two nights. This can be harder with infants and toddlers with sleep and routines. They don’t have to have the same routines but need to go over it to make the transition easier. More responsibility should be placed on birth parents such as making doctor appointments and talking at IEP meetings. Some kids like to maintain connections with kids at the foster home and want to visit. If the relationship is good, they could spend the night or have a phone call, not just be cut off right away. This does eventually fizzle out but it’s nice to ease out with the parents knowing it’s not distracting from their reunification.*

c. What can we do to make healthy, positive transitions? – *See the “Transition Planning for Child & Caregivers Wellbeing” attachment with your invite.*

*Kevin talked about an AFC home with a single woman in her 50’s who took in a boy who had disrupted many times. AFC took time, did a lot of work, and determined he needed to be a single child in the home due to behaviors and being a bully. It was a hard decision since he has a brother. They do get to see each other but can’t live together. He’s had success because they chose carefully, they had time to set parameters and got to know his case. Many things were done to prepare him and the AFC home such as meetings online, therapy sessions, visits, planning about school. Now he’s functioning at a pretty high level and participating in basketball.*

*Kevin will bring up the Transition paper to the next RMT meeting and see if supervisors want to send it to their workers. Our job as a committee is to keep the ball rolling.*

7. Update on discussion on engaging birth parents-Melanie McCormick, Carson City CASA Director – ***Melanie will hopefully be able to join us next month to share some creative ideas on building bridges between foster parents and birth parents.***
8. Follow up on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers – ***Discussed above***
  - a. Testimonials on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers: How is it going?
  - b. What else can we do to support this effort?
  - c. Liz and Dana from QA will have an update on their work at our May meeting – ***Kevin offered our committee to give any support we can to Liz and Dana to keep this going.***
9. Workgroup updates
  - a. Funding Workgroup – ***This will be tabled until Angelina is able to join us.***
  - b. QPI Facebook Page Subcommittee report – ***We received permission for the Facebook page. It will be open to case workers, non-profits, and anyone under the QPI umbrella. Shelby and Rebecca will be moderators and could use one more moderator. Please email Shelby if you're interested in volunteering. They will be putting the newsletter, training information, and resources on the page. There will also be a QPI prompted discussion with an open-ended question monthly to increase engagement. Please comment and like content to keep morale and attraction high. This will not be a place for complaints, it's to promote QPI principals and relationships, working together to serve children and families.***
  - c. Caregiver Corner Subcommittee report – ***There have been three meetings held so far. There have been small groups showing up, but they're going to keep trying. They came up with an 8PM time based on the survey sent out. They will also try another weekend. They want to keep it going to be a resource for families and a place to connect. It gives foster parents an opportunity to get to know each other and ask questions.***
10. Set next meeting – ***The next QPI meeting will be held May 24, 2023.***