

Rural Region Quality Parenting Initiative Committee (QPI)
Monthly Meeting Recap
October 18, 2023, 2023; 11:00 am to Noon (Meeting held via Teams)

In attendance:

Tim Baran	Terry Harrak	Kevin Quint
Brittany Best	Melanie Jones-Bluford	Shana Rogers
Tanya Calhoun	Lauren Karp	Kimberley Schmelling
Kyle Crutcher	Anita Kelly	Tawney Simpson
Jane Emery	Melanie McCormick	Ashley Smith
Ashley Hall	Kelly McKiddie	Rebecca Stoffel
Bristol Hantzsche	Sunshine Perry	

1. Welcome and Introductions
Kevin welcomed everyone. Terry Harrak from QPI was introduced. Terry is our QPI contact and will be attending and participating in our meetings. Terry spoke briefly about some of the events in the QPI newsletter, as well as opportunities to participate in webinars on various topics. She mentioned the webinar on transitions that is scheduled for October 19th and encouraged everyone to attend.
2. Recap of the September meeting
The September recap was made available in the meeting invitation. The primary topic of that meeting was on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers. Two people from rural Louisiana (Kayla and Patricia) spoke to the group about their work and success in developing and implementing Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers in their child welfare jurisdiction.
3. Announcements & quick stuff
 - a. Caregiver Courier: **The Caregiver Courier newsletter went out in the last week.**
 - b. Foster care licensing updates, new homes, and the October Pre-Service Training: **Several new homes have been licensed and more are in the queue. The October Pre-Service Training started on October 3rd. Thirteen families are involved. The next Pre-Service Training will be in January with others planned for the spring and summer of 2024.**
 - c. QPI Website: August is “*National Kinship Awareness Month*” – Resources are on the www.qpinevada.org website: **Kevin announced**
 - d. Update on Foster Home Retention Project: **Kevin briefly announced that Dorothy Pomin (she is retired from DCFS and now a contractor) is working with the Division to develop a pilot project to collect data to better understand why foster homes are closing and also to develop a “Foster Liaison” who will work with families and DCFS offices to help with foster home attrition.**
 - e. Update on First Placement Support Program: **Kevin talked about the First Placement Program which is an effort to provide support and training to newly licensed homes with their first placement. The goal is to build on the training**

that new families receive in Pre-Service training before licensure in order to build and improve skills in handling children who have experienced trauma and who may also exhibit certain behaviors. This will help with foster home retention as well as helping children to maintain placement.

4. QPI Themed Conversation and Sharing: The QPI philosophy is wrapped around the power of relationships in child welfare. With that thought in mind, *“What are essential ingredients in relationships with families, children, co-workers, or foster homes?”*

Kelly: Availability is pretty important as opposed to just doing or finishing tasks. Listen in a way that’s not just problem solving

Rebeca: Mutual respect. Lay out expectations so that things don’t build up.

Anita: Empathy and friendliness

Jane: Openness, honesty, and flat out bluntness. Be very open and honest. Treat everyone as part of the team. There are barriers to these ideas due to being busy. We have a lot to do. Many of us don’t like conflict and it’s easy to brush things under the rug. We don’t want to ruin the relationship or risk a placement so it’s easy to ignore what needs to be said.

5. Update on DCFS becoming a Champions site:
- a. We are now an official QPI Champions Site. What does that mean?
We are now an official QPI Champions site. This enables us to access expertise and ideas from other states on various topics and strategies that can be employed in our work. It also provides support and colleagues that we can call upon. We also have access to the annual Champions Conference and the ongoing Champions training “academy.” The ultimate value of being a QPI Champions is that it positions us to understand and practice the child, family, and relationship centered values that will help us “place the child in the center” of our work and decision making. We will be able to train a core group of people (workers, foster parents, birth parents, community partners) to be ambassadors for and examples of living QPI values in all that we do with children and families in order to provide excellent parenting.
 - b. Report out on the Champions Conference: **Rebeca and Kevin attended the QPI Champions Conference in San Diego in September. Rebeca shared about the training and the value of networking with other states on what they are doing in child welfare. She finds value in “borrowing” ideas from other states and groups. She said she’s very excited about QPI. She concluded by saying, “QPI is not something you add. It’s just the way you do it.”**
 - c. Upcoming training: **The Champions six month training started in October. Rebeca is going to attend. We have one other person that was going to attend but work commitments prevented her involvement. Kevin will reach out to others to see if anyone would like to fill that slot. Anyone participating in this six month training (about 4.5 hours a month) will be prepared to be internal advocates for**

QPI through their training in QPI values, theory, and techniques. We will eventually have a strong “core” team of advocates made up of staff, foster parents, birth parents, and youth to work together to disseminate QPI in the Division and the communities of rural Nevada.

6. Follow up on Comfort Calls and Ice Breakers
 - a. Look what one District Office is doing!: **Sunshine Perry, AFC Coach and stationed in the Pahrump District Office, has worked with leadership and staff in that office to start a Comfort Call project in which all removals will have a Comfort Call and later an Ice Breaker Call to help children, birth parents, and foster parents with the transition and also to begin the co-parenting process. More will be reported and shared as this creative and important project progresses. Thanks to Sunshine and the Pahrump District Office!**
 - b. Develop a workgroup: **Kevin asked who would like to join a workgroup to further the Comfort Call/Ice Breaker movement in the Division. Sunshine and Kelly McKiddie volunteered. Kevin will contact others who may want to be involved.**
7. Review and discussion on Rural Region QPI Committee brochure: **Shelby Riley has been working on a Rural Region QPI Committee Brochure. It is in final draft and has been seen by a number of people, which has resulted in some helpful feedback. Kevin will send out this final draft of the brochure for comment and feedback. After all of that is collected, the final version of the brochure will be published.**
8. Discussion and action on engaging birth parents-Melanie McCormick, CC CASA: **Melanie spoke about her thoughts and work on engaging birth parents. Melanie or “Emmy” has been a CASA in Carson City for about 11 years and has been the director of the Carson CASA organization for about six years. She has a heart and concern for birth parents. She went on to say that “We have formal supports for birth parents in the child welfare system but we need long term informal supports for birth parents.” This is a great concern for Emmy. She met with a group called Capitol City CIRCLES to see what kind of resources they can help with to meet this need. She would like to raise resources to help birth parents in our system to become more active participants in their case plan. Emmy plans to take the CIRCLES training which is an 18 week course that addresses some of these topics. She talked about how parents can be referred to CIRCLES for support during their case. “This can be a tool to add to the birth parent’s toolbox.”**

Kevin asked, “How would you like us to think or what would you like us to do?” Emmy responded, “Not sure. I want to navigate this and think about it. Parents don’t understand the system but they need help. I worry about this. We need a compassionate, warm, educational component for our birth parents along with the formal supports. This needs to go beyond the child welfare case time frame.” She would like to see informal supports for birth parents to be built. She would like the group’s ideas and thoughts. “I’m tired of seeing families upset,” Emmy concluded.

Terry Harrak added that, “We need to realize that much of what we deal with is generational.” This speaks to the long term value of working on engaging birth parents in a meaningful and helpful way.

9. Workgroup updates
 - a. QPI Facebook Page Subcommittee report: **Kevin reminded everyone that the FB page is up and running. Foster parents, staff, and community members are interacting on the page. Just put “Rural Nevada Facebook page” in your search engine and it should come right up. If not, let Shelby or Kevin know.**
 - b. Caregiver Corner Subcommittee report: **This foster parent support group meets monthly. There are usually 5 or 6 families involved.**
10. Transition Planning (*QPI Committee goal: “Decrease trauma and disruptions through improved transition planning”*) **Did not discuss. Kevin reminded everyone of the QPI webinar tomorrow on this topic.**
11. Set next meeting
The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday November 15th at 11:00 am. Kevin will send out the reminder for the meeting the week before.
12. Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at noon.

“Nothing you do is too small. Nothing happens overnight. We have to work at it every single day.”

QPI Champions Conference, San Diego 2023