



**Washington State Supreme Court
Commission on Children in Foster Care
September 16, 2019
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Ms. Jody Becker, DCYF, Commission Co-Chair
Justice Barbara Madsen, Washington State Supreme Court, Incoming Commission Co-Chair
Ms. Raven Arroway-Healing, NW Intertribal Council
Ms. Jolie Bwiza, Tacoma Chapter Leader, Mockingbird Youth Network
Mr. Mike Canfield, Foster Parents Association of Washington State
Ms. Peggy Carlson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Senator Jeannie Darneille, Washington State Senate
Ms. Jeannie Kee, Foster Youth Alumni Representative
Ms. Joanne Moore, Washington State Office of Public Defense
Mr. Martin Mueller, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (designee for Chris Reykdal)
Ms. Carrie Wayno, Attorney General's Office (designee for Bob Ferguson)

Members Not Present

Mr. Jim Bamberger, Office of Civil Legal Aid
Ms. Beth Canfield, Foster Parents Association of Washington State
Judge Kitty-Ann van Doorninck, Superior Court Judges' Association
Ms. Jill Malat, Office of Civil Legal Aid
Ms. Tonia McClanahan, Parent Advocate Representative
Mr. Ryan Murrey, Washington State CASA

Guests

Ms. iLeana Areiza, Mockingbird Society
Ms. Annie Blackledge, Mockingbird Society
Ms. Gina Cumbo, Center for Children & Youth Justice
Ms. Lauren Frederick, Mockingbird Society
Ms. Laurie Lippold, Partners for our Children
Ms. Rachel Sottile, Center for Children & Youth Justice
Ms. Lorrie Thompson, Administrative Office of the Courts

Staff Present

Ms. Cindy Bricker, Administrative Office of the Courts
Ms. Sehej Singh, CCFC Staff Intern, Center for Children & Youth Justice

Call to Order

Justice Madsen called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm., acknowledged Ms. Sehej Singh's first meeting as the CCFC staff intern, and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes:

Justice Madsen invited a motion to approve the March 2019 and May 2019 meeting minutes. Ms. Joanne Moore stated that in the March 2019 minutes, Office of Public Defense (OPD) asked the legislature for \$500,000 rather than \$7 million to fund a pilot program to better pay parents' attorneys. Judge Madsen confirmed that the minutes would be reflected to correct the actual amount. The motion to approve the March 2019 and May 2019 minutes passed.

DCYF Updates:

Organizational Change and Transitional Efforts

Ms. Jody Becker announced that the Office of Juvenile Justice, Juvenile Rehabilitation, and the Child Care Subsidy Program officially came under the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) as of July 1, 2019. With this, DCYF will continue its goal of cultural integration and to serve an expansive age range of children and young adults from pre-natal children to 25-year olds.

Ms. Becker also discussed DCYF's new hires for key leadership positions. These include Rachel Mercer, Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Administrator and Jess Lewis for the Division of Adolescent Services (new position). DCYF hopes to grow this division over time.

Child and Family Services Review

DCYF is still in negotiations with the federal government regarding the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) submitted at the end of May. DCYF also received feedback on a five-year plan. The Federal government is pushing for more alignment across programs within the state, and has been focused on root cause analysis strategies that will align with other departments.

Additionally, with the Indian Child Welfare case review, DCYF will work closely with tribal partners to analyze this report and will incorporate these recommendations and strategies into the DCYF plans.

Other Updates

DCYF is also continuing to work with federal partners and technical assistant providers for a permanency grant. The permanency grant will align with both the two and five year plan as well as with the court's plan—another way DCYF is continuing its coordinated efforts.

Ms. Becker asked the commission to provide information and updates that would be useful for the commission in the future.

Justice Madsen asked about DCYF sending a representative to the Juvenile Court Administrator's Annual Conference. Ms. Becker stated that there was a representative who went and presented high-level information on family first and the intersection with the courts. The conference was a great way to build the relationship between DCYF and Juvenile Court Administrators.

A question was posed regarding a training on Family First and what this means for judges. Justice Madsen hopes for this training to be at the Spring Judicial Conference and a webinar will be finalized next week regarding the new qualified residential treatment program standards (QRTP).

Justice Madsen asked Ms. Becker about SB 5290, eliminating the use of the valid court order exception to place youth in detention for noncriminal behavior. Implementation has already begun by the DCYF and the first meeting will be with the courts, and the second meeting with critical stakeholders. Dependent youth, truancy, and ARY advocates will be present in the next few months to figure out how to support implementation. Key stakeholders will also bring up recommendations, including the service provider community.

Family Reunification Day Follow-Up:

Ms. Joanne Moore of the Office of Public Defense (OPD) summarized Family Reunification Day events that celebrate families who have reunified through the dependency system. This year's events were more successful with the CIP grant and attendance by Justice Madsen at several of the events, as this meant a lot symbolically.

Ms. Lorrie Thompson stated that multiple counties across Washington participated, demonstrating how counties in the state want to celebrate court staff and parents supporting family reunification successes. Ms. Thompson also stated how critical it is to continue to educate the public and news media about dependency and how to refer to parents in a much more positive light. Family Reunification Day provides hope and positivity for multiple actors of the dependency system as this event supports foster parents, biological parents, law enforcement involved with Child Protective Services, and the children themselves.

Justice Madsen stated the significance of how these reunification events were so parent-child centric and how critical it is for these events and other programs, such as Pierce County's Baby Court, to be parent-child centric and how the court system and families are partners, not adversaries.

Commission members discussed growing the connection between DCYF and family reunification events. Ms. Jody Becker added working on communications and conveying support for family reunification is an action item for DCYF.

Inside Olympia Interview

Justice Madsen stated the Inside Olympia interview with Justice Bridge and herself, will cover the Commission, its origins, and accomplishments of the Commission that the public should know about, and how the Commission is working together as a system. Justice Madsen gave the Commission members an opportunity to provide suggestions for what should be highlighted in the interview, such as Family First.

Ms. Joanne Moore suggested that the interview should include a discussion of the Youth Leadership Summit, the Commission's historical role with the Summit, and how the Commission supports it.

Mr. Mike Canfield suggested a discussion on the relationship between foster care and parents.

Ms. Jody Becker mentioned that Secretary Hunter was also on Inside Olympia and suggested that Commission members watch the interview. The interview focused on permanency and how to help kids and families move through the social services system.

Senator. Jeannie Darneille mentioned her notes from the Forum on Foster Care that include ideas from youth, parents, and providers on different panels. Justice Madsen requested the notes from the forum.

Ms. Carrie Wayno mentioned that the interview can also focus on critical past work such as standards for attorneys, as the Commission set best practices for child attorneys. This also includes legislation, best practices, and the normalcy work group (normalizing the experience of youth who have to be in foster care).

Ms. Joanne Moore mentioned that the interview should talk about relative care, as half of out of home placements are with relative care and this has increased in Washington—this also helps to relieve the foster care crisis to some degree.

Ms. Lauren Frederick stated that the Commission exists to listen and empower the youth and has made this a regular part of doing business.

Normalcy Workgroup Update

Ms. Jeannie Kee provided the Normalcy Workgroup updates.

Sexual Education Updates

Senator Claire Wilson and legislators requested that the state order a health impact review for Senate Bill 5395 (concerning comprehensive sexual health education), with foster youth voice being included in this review. Ms. Kee guided Commission members to look at page 20 of the document she shared, which will be sent to the Commission.

The Office of Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI) is tasked with maintaining a Sexual Education workgroup including OSPI staff and parents from different parts of Washington; the recommendation for the workgroup came out of the health impact review. This workgroup is currently doing a public online survey and would like all Commission members to complete. Up to this point, most of the comments from the survey have been negative Ms. Kee will share the results with the Commission in the December meeting.

Ms. Peggy Carlson then elaborated on a sexual education curriculum opportunity designed specifically for youth in out-of-home care called "Train the Trainer." However, Ms. Kee noted that this could be concerning as it pulls these youth out and places them in a group of just foster youth. Ms. Kee discussed the possibility of collaborating with DCYF if they want to include the "Train the Trainer" program in the Independent Living program curriculum.

Justice Madsen asked about the negative comments on the survey. Ms. Carlson stated that pushback in southwest Washington on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in a proposed curriculum for that region is a possibility for such negative comments, though she had not seen the survey. Justice Madsen reiterated that the ask for the Commission is to have more people respond to the survey and to get as many people to weigh in as possible—answering why comprehensive sexual health education is important for all children going forward. Mr. Martin Mueller stated that all the data collection and surveying they are doing for school districts will all go into a report for the legislature due December 1st.

Membership

Justice Madsen asked the Commission whether there are any missing voices at the current table such as those in the healthcare field and youth voices. Ms. Jody Becker stated that it is apparent that there is a lack of expertise and representation in terms of health issues. She also stated how there are differing health services (such as behavioral and physical health) and posed the question of which aspect of health should be represented.

Mr. Mike Canfield suggested a representative from Coordinated Care, as they have facilitators who are linked with DCYF. Julie Lowery, the Manager of Operations at Apple Health Core Connection, was proposed as a representative. Senator Darneille also proposed the Committee of Legislation on Children's Behavioral Health Task Force as an idea as there are clear linkages between this task force and the Commission.

Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ) Membership Proposal

The Commission discussed Justice Bridge's departure and the idea of CCYJ being a member of the Commission. Ms. Carrie Wayno asked how the Commission would characterize the role of CCYJ in the Commission—would CCYJ take a CCYJ-specific spot or an advocacy spot? Commission members suggested a few ideas for CCYJ's role: a CCYJ seat, Community Activist Seat, Advocacy Seat, or as part of a rotation seat. Justice Madsen stated that she is leaning towards a permanent seat.

Ms. Gina Cumbo from CCYJ stated that the role for CCYJ as an activist and advocacy seat is not fitting, given CCYJ's partnership with the Supreme Court and its roles in implementation and management. Justice Madsen then stated that this is something the Commission can review in the future. She stated that CCYJ is a nationally recognized organization around the work of child welfare and one that is not constrained by legal barriers (as government agencies are), hence it is critical to ask CCYJ to join. Ms. Rachel Sottile suggested that CCYJ can have a role as an independent voice and can conform to what is needed for the Commission. Justice Madsen stated that the Commission will ask CCYJ to join as a member and the Commission will think of a name for the role of CCYJ on the Commission.

Other Membership Proposals

Commission members then discussed the possibility of Laurie Lippold from Partners for Our Children to have a seat on the Commission (as a specific seat for Partners for Our Children)—this is because Ms. Lippold has been consistently reporting out to the Commission regarding child welfare legislation

Justice Madsen proposed creating a rotating seat for providers in which many providers would have to the chance to be members of the Commission. Jill May from The Washington Association for Children and Families (WACAF) was also proposed as a possible representative for the provider seat—Commission members appreciated this idea.

Ms. Lauren Frederick also asked the Commission to consider adding another youth voice in order to be sure that as many voices of those with lived experience are brought to the Commission as possible. The Commission discussed ideas for how to select a new youth representative and implications with continuity and school. Ms. Cindy Bricker suggested having the voice of a reunified youth on the Commission. Other ideas for youth voice include youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth—both youth groups are disproportionately represented in foster care. Justice Madsen asked for ideas on how to find such a representative for the Commission, such as name or an organization. She then proposed to discuss this further in the next meeting.

Youth Leadership Summit Follow-up

Justice Madsen introduced Ms. Julie Bwiza and Ms. Lauren Frederick from The Mockingbird Society (TMS) to lead the Youth Leadership Summit follow up discussion. Ms. Bwiza and Ms. Frederick proceeded to give a brief description of TMS and brief summaries of each topic from the respective TMS.

Follow-Up Discussion and Action Items

Justice Madsen noted that most of the topics have a common theme of educating and training adults and posed the question of who should take on this task for the Commission. Ms. Jody Becker brought up the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, which partners with the DCYF through the UW School of Social Work to provide all training for DCYF social workers and foster parents. Ms. Christina Coad from the Alliance can provide a good initial understanding of training that is currently provided.

Ms. Annie Blackledge gave context for Yakima Chapter's LGBTQ+ training recommendation for staff and foster care parents. Children and youth have been asking for years about culturally appropriate LGBTQ+ placements. Ms. Blackledge stated how there are very few CPAs that will accept LGBTQ+ foster parents. This is a much deeper issue than just training, as racial disparities and culturally relevant placements is a critical issue too. Additionally, many smaller, culturally relevant organizations do not have the support to stand up their own CPAs. Diverse recruitment and retention of foster parents that reflects the community of foster children we serve is critical.

Ms. Peggy Carlson then described a recruitment project they are working on in southwest Washington. This project is in collaboration with WSU Vancouver in which their senior-level marketing class is to come up with a recruitment campaign to recruit new foster homes in Clark County. If successful, Ms. Carlson stated that they could replicate this in other parts of the

state and with other universities—possibly to expand to specific demographics such as homes of color and LGBTQ+ homes. However, Mr. Mike Canfield stated that in the last 35 years, he has noted that recruitment campaigns never work; according to Mr. Canfield happy foster parents is the key to recruitment.

Justice Madsen asked Senator Darneille if there is anyone currently working on legislation related to the issue of training and recruitment of potential foster parents or someone the Commission can connect regarding this. Senator Darneille brought up citizen legislature, which meets part time during the year, as a possible connection and stated that this is a critical issue among the Democratic legislators.

Ms. Jody Becker then stated how this is an issue that is front and center in DCYF as well. As of this year, foster care recruitment no longer sits within child welfare programs, but now sits in the licensing division.

Justice Madsen also described the court's efforts in regards to the training recommendation—since 2012, the courts have a summit on the challenges of the criminal justice system in terms of race with several panels made up of formerly incarcerated youth. Justice Madsen stated that hearing from the youth is very powerful and humanizing and perhaps this can be incorporated in a proposed training process for foster parents. Ms. Jeannie Kee then mentioned how Passion to Action has panels at core training sessions with youth representation.

Senator Darneille then reiterated again how Washington is the only state that abdicates responsibility of recruitment to contracted agencies regarding foster care—this then turned into a discussion on whether Washington can replicate systems from other states in terms of foster parent recruitment.

Ms. Carrie Wayno asked Ms. Becker about the Alliance and what the Alliance does in terms of recruitment, retention, and training. DCYF is in the midst of planning for the Indian Child Welfare Summit for next fall and Ms. Becker stated that she can connect with TMS on how youth can get involved in this summit.

Senator Darneille brought up a question regarding placement complaints and licensing and whether DCYF has data on complaints and respective home placements. Ms. Becker said she would need to follow up with the licensing department in terms of how they work those relationships with the CPAs when such concerns and complaints are raised.

Ms. iLeana Areiza from the TMS Olympia Chapter stated that having monthly evaluations regarding placements and having an agency to collect this feedback to hold the agencies and organizations accountable regarding foster parents and shelter staff is critical. The overall recommendation is to make feedback constant either monthly or quarterly from youth to see whether they are being treated properly. Ms. Areiza also reiterated how LGBTQ+ training should be mandatory in foster parent trainings.

Justice Madsen ended this discussion by stating that we will need to revisit this topic at the next Commission meeting.

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

Ms. Rachel Mercer provided a summary of the FFPSA for the Commission.

The FFPSA was signed into law on February 9th of 2018. At the core, this is focused on how to prevent children from entering foster care and improvements for children who are already in the system.

Ms. Mercer then guided members to look at slide three of the packet she provided. Elements of FFPSA include prevention, out of home care, and residential changes. Ms. Mercer also stated that there is much information on the website to learn more regarding FFPSA.

There was no time for action items or questions regarding the FFPSA.

National Judicial Summit on Child Welfare

Justice Madsen briefly discussed the purpose of this summit.

Justice Madsen brought up the possibility of feedback regarding the questions the summit asks on the state's actions and any on how we perform as a state. Justice Madsen states that the Washington team will bring back great information from the conference, which they will share with the Commission during the next meeting.

Adjourned 4:09 pm by Justice Madsen.
