

CHILD WELFARE OVERSIGHT AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

October 12, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The Child Welfare Oversight and Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, October 12, 2022, at 10:00 AM, in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Julie Raque Adams, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Julie Raque Adams, Co-Chair; Senators Karen Berg and Whitney Westerfield; Representatives Kim Banta, Josie Raymond, and Nancy Tate.

Guests: Shannon Moody, Chief Officer of Strategic Initiatives and Terry Brooks, Executive Director, Kentucky Youth Advocates; Norma Hatfield, President, Kinship Families Coalition of Kentucky; and Michelle Sanborn, President, Children's Alliance.

LRC Staff: Samir Nasir, Logan Bush, Becky Lancaster, and Eric Rodenberg.

Kinship Care in Kentucky

Shannon Moody, Chief Officer of Strategic Initiatives, Kentucky Youth Advocates, discussed the three types of kinship care in Kentucky and the amount of children in the care of relatives. Norma Hatfield, President, Kinship Families Coalition of Kentucky, discussed progress made regarding kinship care from 2014 to 2021. Dr. Moody discussed the findings from five focus groups at the 2021 Kinship Summit, ongoing case advocacy, and prioritizing the guardianship assistance program. Ms. Hatfield discussed the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP) child support cooperation issue, and the need for increased and clear communication from the Department for Community Based Services. Dr. Moody recommended more respite care supports for relative and fictive kin caregivers and to continue the report related to kinship placements.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Adams, Dr. Moody stated there was a kinship placement report in 2020 but more consistent access to the report is important for the committee. The child support component of K-TAP is a federal level requirement but the hope is to not put the burden of pursuing the child support onto the relative caregivers but another entity.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2022, meeting was made by Senator Westerfield, seconded by Representative Banta, and approved by voice vote.

Presentation on the KIDS COUNT Data Book

Terry Brooks, Executive Director, Kentucky Youth Advocates, discussed the history of the KIDS COUNT data book, an overview of Kentucky's data profile progress, the ongoing county-based KIDS COUNT conversations, providing aide to communities to create specific, measurable, and attainable goals, and the need for a review of the Kentucky A6 school program structure. Shannon Moody, Chief Officer of Strategic Initiatives, Kentucky Youth Advocates, discussed recommendations to transfer the presentation of the permanency case from the county attorney's office to the office of legal services with allocated resources, have an external Ombudsman's Office for transparency, and agency abuse reports be reported to an outside agency rather than staying within the same agency accused of the abuse.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Adams, Mr. Brooks stated that the issue of disruptive juveniles in Jefferson County is a state problem. Treatment should be available and trauma-informed care provided for young people. There is a lack of transparency in governance and the program should and cannot be governed by parties of self-interest. He stated that Kentucky is close to having all children covered with health insurance.

Status of Child Welfare in Kentucky

Michelle Sanborn, President, Children's Alliance, discussed the decline of children in out-of-home and residential care, the need for more foster parents, and a national comparison of the top four reasons for exiting foster care in 2020. She discussed the implementation of the federal Family First Prevention and Services Act, the various levels in the child welfare continuum, the average cost per child in foster care, and a graph that shows the investment into prevention is lowering the out-of-home care costs. She talked about the increasing intensity of behaviors in youth with high acuity needs, and the workforce crisis and high turnover rates in residential care.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Adams, Ms. Sanborn stated that if children cannot be serviced by in-state psychiatric hospitals they would go to an out-of-state hospital or residential care facility.

Ms. Sanborn discussed the pay rate of residential direct care staff compared to various entry level retail positions and the need for residential facilities to have enough resources for staff to keep children safe. She discussed a workforce crisis in behavioral health care involving long waiting list times for behavioral health services, increasing therapist turnover rates, and low payment rates by Medicaid. She talked about the burden of increased administrative audits and staff required with multiple managed care organizations (MCOs) and gave a recommendation of a 25 percent increase in behavioral health rates. She gave an overview of three success stories of children in out-of-home care

receiving the behavior health resources needed and three recommendations for legislators to support alternative services.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Berg, Ms. Sanborn stated that the Children's Alliance has been working with various state boards on reciprocity for out-of-state degrees to be accepted in Kentucky.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:34 AM.