

# State Advisory Council Meeting

January 28, 2022 – Hybrid Meeting (Zoom and In-person)

In-person location: 111 No. Jackson, (Arcade Building) - Fifth Floor Conference Room

**Members Present:** Edith Clark, Dana Toole, Lesa Evers, Brenda Schye, Randall Spaulding, Kim of CASA, Julie Fleck, Megan Bailey, Marci Buckles, April Sommers, Rochelle Beley, Shannon Tanner, Kaci Gaub-Bruno, Julie Burk, Carrie Krepps, Ken Holmlund

**CFSD Representatives Present:** Nikki Grossberg, Lynne Johnston, Effie Benoit, Theresa Becker, Sahrita Jones-Jessee, Laura McCullough, Courtney Callaghan, Eric Barnosky, Jennifer Blodgett

**Absent:** Greg Daly, Jennifer Hoerauf, Wayne Phillips, Valerie Winfield, Trudi Schmidt, Tracy Perez, Randy Schwickert, Sue O'Connell, Mick Leary, Laura Kopf, Mercedes Oxford Kemp, Melissa Lavinder, Loretta Rex, Christy Hendricks

**Guest:** Matt Furlong, Laura Sebulsky of Charlie Health

## **8:30 – 8:50am**      **Welcome, Introductions and Approve Minutes**

Nikki opened the meeting at 8:30am. Nikki made note that Laura Sebulsky is not in attendance. Megan Bailey will give her a call to check on her attendance. Edith asked everyone to introduce themselves. Dana Toole made the motion to accept the minutes. All approved. No one objected to this meeting being recorded. Nikki will continue with the meeting since Edith cannot be heard very well.

## **8:50 – 9:00am**      **Overview for the Meeting – Nikki Grossberg**

Nikki said the current State Advisory Council bylaws were renewed in 2017 under a previous leader. Nikki emailed the bylaws to all members and staff prior to this meeting. The objective for this workgroup is to review the bylaws to decide what needs to be improved. The State Advisory Council (SAC) comes from CAPTA, and we are responsible to have an advisory board which is referred to as a citizen's review panel. This has also been combined with our responsibility to have a State Task Force called the Children Justice Act (CJA) Grant. The majority of this meeting is about the intent of this group to update the bylaws and to use this group as an advisory group to make any necessary changes in child welfare and to improve on any strengths that are happening across the agencies. Nikki emailed the Regional Advisory Council's list through our work under the Program Improvement Plan. Nikki reviewed the objectives of the Program Improvement Plan where we can create more opportunities for engagement with our community partners. Nikki wants everyone to answer the questions that were sent out in her email on everyone's interests and ability to fall into the component of CAPTA and CJ. While looking into the bylaws, we need to focus on the length and membership types of this advisory board. We only have a little more than half of what we need for the position types. Children's Justice Act has many strict requirements on different members we need on this committee. We are missing position types. Laura McCullough was going to reach out to see what she could come up with. Need to share information on what makes the most sense to improve the child welfare system. Need input from all members of this group.

**9:00-9:20am**

**Charlie Health – Laura Sebulsky**

Megan gave her personal opinion of Charlie Health. She is very impressed with the Charlie Health. Megan will give anyone who wants it a direct contact for Charlie Health.

**Good points:**

- Kids 12 and up with high risk is their specialty
- Kids with substance issues
- Expert psychiatric consult within 5 days
- Dually licensed
- Kids will have care in less than 72 hours
- Telehealth Model – tracking data with incredible outcomes
- Intensive mental health
- If child has outpatient health therapist in the community, they can still work with Charlie Health
- Groups catered to issues children are having such as LGBT youth groups, anger management, co-occurring substance use problems
- Incredible high attendance
- Northern Cheyenne kids are using Charlie Health
- Can integrate family counseling
- Great documentation for medical records
- Credentialed in Montana, Wyoming, North & South Dakota, Oregon and Washington
- Medicaid is available
- Trainings for regional offices
- Available for parents under 30 for assessments
- Website available – [Charliehealth.com](http://Charliehealth.com)

Laura Sebulsky joined the meeting and explained some of Charlie Health's programs and services

- Set up to be an easy provider and can handle full caseloads
- Built new form for each state. Laura will send link
- Very diligent about providing medical documentation as requested
- Studying outcomes – pre, during and post
- Can cater to each company's needs
- Exceptional discharge program
- Work with tribal nations and kids who live in non-tribal homes
- 60% of staff are working with tribal staff. Have worked with every tribal nation in Montana
- Sexual offender program
- Psychological assessments
- Peer support advisors
- Discharge plan
- Dually licensed
- Special curriculums
- Work with children who have had sexual abuse problems
- Physical therapists
- Programs are 8-10 weeks
- 40 groups running at the same time
- Support groups for LGBTQ, caregiver, survivor, teen mom, suicide and provider support
- Scholarships in place for women and those who have a high deductible
- CPS Training
- Medicaid provider. Works with every insurance company in the state

- Will provide laptops to kids who are in need. Kids are showing marked improvement with the Charlie Health programs. Charlie Health would like people to call them if they are in need of anything
- Highly motivated on helping kids who need it

Charlie Health has worked with CPS and will support them at any time. All regional administrators are invited to reach out to Charlie Health. Laura Sebulsky will reach out to Megan Bailey.

**9:20-9:40am**

**Budget – Effie Benoit**

**CHILD COUNTS**

- There are 3,209 Children in Care as of 9/30/21 and 3,092 as of 12/31/2021. Variance of 117 children. Percent of change is at 3.65% since September 2021.
- The Foster Care program funding is at \$29.2 million this year which is 1.9 million more since last October which is due to the Title IV-E projection for this year.
- Adoption - \$27.5 million in appropriations and expected to spend \$22.1 million. This projection has decreased by \$100,000
- Guardianship – Appropriated \$6 million and projecting to spend \$7.4 million which is an increase of \$840,000 primarily in general funds.
- These funds can be used to cover the deficit in any of the three programs.

**VACANCY REPORT**

- There is a total of 57 vacancies which includes 34 CPS workers, 2 CPS Supervisors, and 5 centralized intake workers.

**EXPENDITURES:**

- CFSD as a whole is appropriated \$116 million and projected to spend 110 million.
- State funds are at 57% and Federal funds are about 42%
- COVID –Spent almost all monies and that went to domestic violence shelters. Money not spent after reimbursements is sent back to federal government.
- Consolidated Appropriations Act – Half of the funds are spent on the Chafee program. We have until next September to spend the funds
- CRRSAA – none
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – We have received 3 allotments for a total of 2.5 million dollars for domestic violence. We have until 2025 to spend these funds. CAPTA award has forensic interview training going from 2 weeks to three weeks for the next couple of years for law enforcement and providers.

Lisa Evers is interested in the number of Native American children in care broke down by region. Do we ever see good or bad results reported? Understanding the numbers is important for Native numbers and State numbers. She would like to see the work in progress. This is one big topic that Nikki would like to talk to this group about and what is happening in the child welfare system. Nikki asked everyone to send any information they had to understand how to improve this process. We need to know the ones who are in tribal care and those in state care. If there are other data points of interest that this group should look at, please let Nikki know.

April Sommers had questions on the reduction of kids in care. She would like to know the why's on the numbers. The program directors have been asking about the dramatic decrease in caseloads. We have worked hard on this process for the past 3-4 years to implement family support teams and service families sooner which has helped prevent removals. Nikki pointed out the following:

- When we are out on an investigation, we are looking out for danger assessments and our protection plan to prevent removal
- Under Child Welfare 101 training we talk about some of the data
- Kids are not being removed on the weekends because schools aren't calling in reports
- Calls have not gone down at Centralized intake due to better screening
- There is a decrease on reports being called out for investigation
- There are emergency protective service hearings with all judges
- Serving kids in home and removing the right kids for the right amount of time
- Removals were down 200 from previous year
- Kids are put into adoption and guardianship as soon as possible and guardianship has helped more
- We are wanting to streamline adoption procedures
- There are a reduced number of kids in foster care

Eric Barnosky talked about his review on progress that has been made.

- Making solid plans to reunite kids safely with their families
- Updated policy around permanency planning
- Actively working in implementing the new policy
- Developing specific plans for building out concurrent plan and meeting every three months
- Review plans and looking at the progress that has been made has resulted in quicker reunifications
- Big benefit in eastern region is the new ISU worker who has had a very challenging caseload for kids with high needs

April Sommers would like to know why the numbers are going down. There are mixed reason such as keeping kids at home if possible. Some are reporting 50% less caseloads compared to last year. Program Directors are encouraged to contact Regional Directors to help provide information. The main concern is that the kids are safe. There is also a staffing shortage. They can also reach out to Nikki with any concerns. Families First's main objective is to keep kids at home if possible.

Dana Toole wanted to talk about the 2021 Legislative Audit. She is interested in the finding that the hotline in Montana gets more reports than other child abuse systems. We are screening in more reports. We changed from a 3 to 5 supervisor support. We encourage community reports and looking at them thoroughly. This means Montana cares about their kids.

#### **9:40-10:10am      Review of Bylaws, CAPTA and CJA – Nikki Grossberg**

- Nikki would like to know everyone's thoughts. Do the By-laws need to be edited? What is this group responsible for? Copies of the By-laws were handed out to those in physical attendance.
- Rochelle mentioned that when the by-laws were reviewed in 2017, there was discussion on membership and terms. They were kept at staggered levels. Some members (such as herself) have been on the council for 20 years.
- Dana Toole asked if we could get council members, such as prosecutors, law enforcement, medical - pediatric, different associations such as nursing association, county attorney association, sheriff's

office, chief of police, MSPOA, police protective association. Dana would like to find out if they are able to send a member to the state advisory council from their association. We are missing a member from these associations who are critical to the council.

- Nikki said we need to decide about quorum requirements of bylaws. Do we need voting and quorums in the by-laws. We are good at getting information out to the council, but not getting information in from others. In regards to CAPTA and CJ, is there anything to vote on? Do we need quorums and voting in the bylaws?
- Dana Toole said that the CJ Task Force which is encompassed in this group has to vote on the CJ Budget once every 3 years. That is the only one that is required that she knows of.
- Nikki said the SAC meets, take notes and then approve the minutes. Nikki wanted to know what else we vote on.
- Brenda Schye discussed who should be on the council. The SAC email notification goes out to people who have not attended a meeting in years. She feels we tend to ignore the bylaws after new ones are added or deleted.
- Nikki said we could stagger on who steps down and those who step up. Nikki discussed the Regional Advisory Council for 2022 and what days and times they could be available for regional meetings. We need to get calendars out there so everyone is aware of the whole year's schedule. Following through and communication is a big thing for the SAC meetings. Does this work for our regions and what is their response for a meaningful role?
- Nikki asked everyone to think about attending 2 meetings a year. People are not going to keep coming to a meeting if there is no reason to attend. Restructuring is essential for this group.
- Lisa asked if these bylaws are new or revised ones. Do we have a list of members in the bylaws. What is the current list and how many Native Americans are on the committee. It is critical with the number of kids in care. We need to have a current list. Do we need to have this list included in the bylaws?
- Nikki made note that the bylaws were created 30 years ago and revised in 2017. This is important to keep up to date.
- Lisa said it is important to have more input and views for the SAC. Nikki feels the structure of the council should change and that the state staff should be more of a bystander and a resource. The council should have more members from associations or organizations. Lisa Evers would like to see more native involvement. The Bylaws says no more than 15 members and there are term limits. The Bylaws that was revised in 2017 was changed but it was never implemented. It is more important to have the right people as members.
- Carrie Krepps mentioned we should have term limits for members and then find another one from their organization to take over as their community member.
- The state council at that time was comprised of the chair of each regional council, someone of the foster parent association, legislators who were actually appointed by legislative leadership so it changed periodically, and people were appointed by the governor. The Department decided to do away with this and said it doesn't have to be statute. The table used to be only members of the council and the staff sat in the back being used as a resource. It has totally changed and flipped its role.
- Nikki had discussed with Marti Vining before she left and Edith that this council should be the "The Council" and have a chairperson who is facilitating it. The State division administrator is just for information sharing and preparing reports. Over the years, the state has taken over and this needs to change.
- April Sommers talked about how they can support the work.

- Dana Toole said we should look at what was deleted and that Native Americans need to be more involved in the council.
- In talking about the makeup of the committee and term limits, some of us are personally representing certain things and some are representing agencies. It is important to consider not just term limits for actual people but also who takes over within the organization or program after someone steps down.
- Rochelle Beley – Private practice people should be involved with the council. The Department should have hands on experience interacting with people.
- Lisa Evers asked if this advisory council was ever governor appointed or director appointed. Nikki was not aware of the council ever being governor appointed. Currently, it is not governor appointed. Lisa would like Nikki to talk about the regional advisory council and how they affect this community.

#### Regional Advisory Council Background

- Nikki discussed that there were regional councils across the state. When Nikki started, there was one in Region 5, we had one in Missoula and one in Kalispell which met quarterly and invited providers, CASA, and county attorneys to join, and to report out things that were going on with CFSD and also get input from community members. The regional administrator would report out and go around the table for information sharing.
- Eric Barnosky of Region 1 reported on what he could remember of the regional advisory council from the past 21 years. They had three advisory councils and went through phases over the years. They had state or regional advisory councils in the Highline, Glendive/Sidney and Miles City areas. A great deal of time was spent on prevention plans. Roles fluctuated over the years. In-home service providers were a crucial part of their advisory councils annually. There was some legislative involvement from the community as well as service providers, a foster parent, legal and county attorney. If things were done differently, they would talk through that and give information. Brenda Schye, who was also in Region 1, discussed that there was a big debate because each region was to only have one council, but Region 1 was so big they needed three. It was decided that each region could do whatever they wanted to make things work. There were school administrators, legislators, and police departments in each region who could have their input. It was a great way to increase public awareness.
- Rochelle Beley came to the meetings over the years as chair for the Great Falls area.
- Lisa Evers discussed travel costs associated with Regional Advisory Council. How do they include their ICWA Specialist since they need more than just one person to attend.
- Dana Toole said you don't have to have this council to handle CAPTA or CJ and they can be separate councils. Is there a better way to get the assessments of CJ or CAPTA? Should they be a separate function? This is something that could be voted on.
- Nikki would like to know what the next steps should be. What needs to be addressed at this time? Should they be addressed now or just stop for now?
- Dana feels a different structure should be addressed. She feels we could look at the old code as a guideline. We could talk with Edith and Brenda about what happened 30 years ago. We need more legislative involvement especially in the local councils. Dana had no immediate change suggestions. We need more information. All these comments from everyone has given Nikki better guidance.
- Brenda, Edith, Rochelle and Nikki could meet to figure out what changes should be made.
- Edith asked if it would be helpful to have a smaller committee meet between now and the next meeting to look at what should be done. Then Nikki could report back on her suggestions for changing the bylaws. Nikki will set up a meeting to figure out the next steps should be. If anyone has ideas or changes, please email Nikki and let her know.

- Dana Toole suggested that law enforcement should be added to the State Advisory Council. Nikki asked what regional councils have law enforcement on them. Region 5 and 6 did not recruit for law enforcement. Great Falls and Helena recruits law enforcement.
- Ken Holmlund said he would reach out to find someone to replace himself who would not mind going to the meetings.
- Lisa Evers mentioned officer terms and that they should be two or three years. Should it be State fiscal year or a calendar year? She asked Eric Barnosky to find a copy of the legislation that supports this. Brenda said it was in the 1980s.
- Nikki will get bylaw changes in order and present them at the next State Advisory Council. Reach out to the regional administrator in your area if someone wants to be on a regional council. Most of the regional meetings are virtual.

**11:15-11:25am**      **Public Comment**

Matt Furlong wants to inform the State Advisory Council that the behavioral health system has a network of all the counties working with the service area authorities. All 56 counties have the potential of an advisory council. They are looking for stakeholders that intersect with law enforcement, education, providers, services and consumers. Some of those could be places where it is a combined council. There are three service area regions in the state of Montana – Western has 28 counties, Central has 15 and Eastern has 13 .

Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana has a report on the deficits that lists all the organization who are lacking services:

- Shodair Hospital
- Yellowstone BGR
- Aware
- Intermountain
- Youth Dynamics
- Rimrock
- Youth Homes

Matt Furlong will send this report to Nikki since there are many more providers with a lack of services . In reference to the bylaws, he mentioned it should be decided what type of year should be used (calendar, fiscal or state fiscal) and increasing members on regional advisory council. We Get information out to members.

**11:25-11:30am**      **Wrap Up/Next Meeting: Chair Edith Clark**

Nikki closed meeting at 11:10am. She will get 2022 calendars out to everyone. Nikki will get a date for the next state advisory council meeting scheduled.

Lisa Evers asked if the regional administrators meeting will continue or not. Nikki said we will talk about it at the next meeting so we can figure out what is helpful for the regional administrators.