

Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council



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KCFCCC Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2001, 12:00p.m. – 1:30p.m.

Wedgwood Christian Youth and Family Services Chapel
3300 36th Street, S.E.

Members/alternates present: Candace Cowling (and Mary Banghart Therrien), Sandra Davis, Beverly Drake, Karl Hascall, Lynn Heemstra, Debra Holmes Garrison (and Barbara Terry), Bonnie Huntley, Ph.D. (and Mary Dengerink), Patti Nussbaum, Jack Roedema (for Judge Nanaruth Carpenter), Diana Sieger (and Wendy Jackson), David Van Rooy (for Richard Gritter), Mary Alice Williams, Andrew Zylstra (and John Cole)

Members absent (with no alternate present): Susan Broman, Ellen Brubaker, Ruth Buntin, William Forsyth, Linda McDonald, Miles Murphy, María O'Hare, Cathy Raevsky, Milton Rohwer, Mike Weiler

Others present: Bethanie Archbold, Mary Swanson (staff); Elizabeth Bethard, Kathy Humphrey-Vaughn, Bob McKown, Mark Olthoff, Kate Scheid, Jill M. Send

I. Welcome, Introductions, and Approval of Agenda

Diana Sieger opened the meeting at 12:15pm and asked the participants to introduce themselves. There were no changes to the agenda.

II. Approval of Minutes

Wendy Jackson moved to approve the minutes of the previous Council meeting. Debra Holmes-Garrison supported. Motion carried.

III. 211

Ms. Sieger reported that United Way's First Call For Help was seeking support from the Council, as the MPCB designee, in order to pursue designation as a 211 site. The Michigan Telecom Act requires agencies seeking 211 designation to first gain agreement from the MPCB that they are the logical entity to pursue designation from that community.

Debra Holmes-Garrison presented an overview of United Way's planned framework for implementation of 211. United Way staff will operate the 211 call center 24 hours a day. Evening, weekend, and holiday hours will be provided by United Way staff at an offsite location. The agency is beginning communications with neighboring counties regarding the possibility of United Way providing direct or back-up 211 access.

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Bob McKown of United Way's First Call For Help reported that the legislation requires that agencies seeking 211 designation must 1) demonstrate to the Michigan Public Services Commission their ability to meet its requirements, and 2) obtain agreement from the local MPCB. United Way approached the Council in June to gather Council input for planning and hosted a stakeholders meeting September to gather community input. He reported that the meeting resulted in feedback and support for United Way to continue to develop plans and move toward serving as the 211 call center for Kent County.

Ms. Holmes-Garrison asked for any questions on 211 and the United Way's plans.

Beverly Drake asked for the operating cost of the project. Ms. Holmes-Garrison replied that the annual operating cost for 211 was estimated to be \$500,000 to \$700,000. This cost includes the current operating cost for First Call For Help. She stated that the operating cost would depend on the increase in call volume when the service becomes available 24/7. Other information and referral sites throughout the country have seen their call volume increase by approximately 40 percent when increasing their hours to 24/7. Mr. McKown reported that First Call For Help currently receives between 23,000 and 27,000 calls per year. The projected call volume after 211 implementation is 44,000.

Karl Hascall asked what types of requests First Call For Help receives and what software the program utilizes for its resource database. Mr. McKown answered that the majority of requests are for assistance with basic needs, e.g., food, utilities, rent, etc. Other requests include family support, mentoring, financial planning, and information on where to send donations. He stated that First Call For Help uses an information and referral software called "Refer."

Sandra Davis asked whether United Way had considered contracting for off-site services. Mr. McKown reported that United Way had considered contracting services, but ultimately it was more cost effective to provide the services through United Way staff. He stated that United Way staff would provide evening, weekend, and holiday services from an off-site center with 24 hour accessibility that would be computer linked so that staff could continue to access the First Call For Help computer. He reported that providing evening, weekend, and holiday service off-site had both monetary and security advantages.

Candace Cowling reported that the Child and Family Resource Council had hosted a community forum to examine the existing information and referral system and to make recommendations regarding the county's information infrastructure. She stated that one of the major recommendations that came out of that process was for a 24-hour telephone information and referral service. She stated that the 211 project is an excellent fit.

David Van Rooy asked what the United Way's plan was for long-term funding for the project. Ms. Holmes-Garrison replied that the United Way was committed to ensuring that 211 was sustainable. Mr. McKown reported that conversations are taking place with local agencies and local and state legislators regarding possible long term funding.

Wendy Jackson asked whether United Way had approached Ameritech to discuss sustainability. Mr. McKown replied that initial conversations with Ameritech have focused on rate setting to provide the service.

Ms. Sieger asked Bethanie Archbold to clarify the MPCB action that would be required by the legislation. Ms. Archbold stated that the legislation required that the local MPCB be “in agreement” that the agency is the logical entity to pursue designation as the 211 call center for this community.

Andrew Zylstra moved that the Council provide its agreement as the MPCB designee that United Way’s First Call For Help should pursue designation as the 211 call center for Kent County. Ms. Drake supported. Ms. Holmes-Garrison abstained. Motion carried

Ms. Sieger thanked the United Way for its proactive efforts to encourage Council input into 211 planning and to facilitate the MPCB approval process.

IV. Strong Families/Safe Children

A. FY2001 Year End Report

Ms. Sieger stated for guests’ information that in addition to the Council’s responsibility for coordination of services, the Council is also responsible for the allocation of Strong Families/Safe Children funds. She reported that the FY2001 Year End Report was offered for the Council’s review, discussion, and action.

Ms. Archbold presented the summary of the Year End Report and asked for questions or comments.

Mr. Van Rooy asked for clarification on how decreased referrals for the Family and Community Compact/ Kinship program resulted in the program not meeting its objective for diversion from foster care. Ms. Archbold responded that one reason was the different composition of the families referred; the majority of the cases diverted from foster care in FY2001 were single-child families. In previous years, the cases diverted from foster care had been families with a larger number of children.

Ms. Jackson added that the decreased number of referrals was believed to be the main reason that the number of diversions was down. She reported that in previous years with a high number of referrals, University of Michigan data had demonstrated the project to divert between 28 percent and 30 percent of the children referred. Since identifying the problem, the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, the two kinship provider agencies, FIA, and the Court have created a strategy to increase the number of referrals. She stated that the partners would continue to monitor outcomes to determine if the efforts to increase referrals will result in increased diversions from foster care.

Mr. Zylstra added that one identified problem that adversely affected the number of individuals who chose to participate in the kinship program over traditional foster care is that families who chose the kinship program received significantly less financial support than foster parents. As a result, the program often excluded individuals who were otherwise willing and able to care for their relatives’ children but lacked the financial resources to do so. Mr. Zylstra stated that the local FIA had engaged in significant advocacy to correct this barrier, resulting in increased financial support for individuals who take on the responsibility to care for their relative’s children.

Mr. Hascall offered a correction to the outcomes reported for the Perspective 21! Early Impact services provided by Family Outreach Center. Indicator A.3) should read: “84 percent of families (68/81) who completed the services in FY2001 had no substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect (category 1, 2, or 3) during the year, as reported by FIA.” Ms. Archbold will make the correction.

Ms. Holmes-Garrison moved that the Council, as MPCB designee, approve and submit the FY2001 End of Year Report, with the above change. Ms. Jackson supported. Motion carried.

B. Proposed Multi-Year Planning Process

Ms. Sieger presented the draft process proposed by the Executive Committee for the Council’s next multi-year SF/SC planning process. She stated that the proposed process was presented for Council discussion and input.

Ms. Archbold reported that the proposed process is based on Council past practices. The key difference is that in the past, the Council’s Budget & Planning Committee had prepared the initial draft of the multi-year plan. As that committee no longer exists, the Executive Committee proposed the appointment of an ad hoc committee to review the current plan and make recommendations to the Executive Committee, which will in turn present the final recommendations for Council action. In response to the concern raised by Mr. Zylstra several meetings ago that the new committee structure be linked with the SF/SC planning process, the Executive Committee recommended that the ad hoc committee be made up of the four chairs of the intervention committees and up to two Executive Committee members.

Ms. Sieger asked for questions or discussion on the proposed process. Mary Alice Williams asked whether a formal motion was required for the process. Ms. Archbold stated that a formal motion was not required for procedures; however, the Executive Committee wanted to ensure that the Council was in agreement before implementing the process. There being no further questions or discussion raised regarding the proposed process, Ms. Sieger reported that the Executive Committee would move forward in appointing the ad hoc committee.

V. Bylaws Revisions

Ms. Sieger reported that the Executive Committee had completed its annual review of the bylaws and was presenting its recommendations for Council discussion and action. She presented the proposed Bylaws changes. Ms. Sieger stated that the majority of the recommendations were to clarify language or readjust deadlines to facilitate Council actions. She reported that the one significant recommended change was to the definition of Private Agency Representatives in Appendix A (changes marked):

Private Agency Representatives: *Representatives of private agencies that provide services to children, youth, and families. At least ~~two~~ one shall be representatives of a publicly funded child welfare agency, i.e., any private agency that is funded by Community Mental Health, the Family Independence Agency, or the courts to provide*

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out-of-home placement for children removed from their homes due to mental illness, delinquency, or abuse/neglect.

Ms. Sieger reported that the purpose of the proposed revision was to clarify the definition of “publicly funded child welfare agencies” and to change the required number of child welfare agency representatives from two to one. Ms. Sieger asked for Council input and discussion on the proposed changes.

Mr. Van Rooy stated that the Council had spent significant time earlier in the year revising the Bylaws to reflect the new Council structure. At that time, the Council had decided to ensure that at least two of the three represented private agencies were child welfare agencies. He stated that the rationale behind that decision was to ensure representation from those agencies that worked directly with the largest group of identified at-risk children served through the Court, FIA, and CMH. Mr. Van Rooy stated that the need was still there to ensure private agencies had a significant voice in the Council, and that he urged the Council against adopting this amendment. He stated that the original policy had never been implemented.

Ms. Sieger stated that the Executive Committee’s intent in making the recommendation was not to exclude child welfare agencies from having a voice, but instead to ensure that other agencies had the opportunity to participate as well. She stated that based upon the clarified definition of child welfare agencies as only those agencies providing out-of-home placement, the Executive Committee felt that the policy was too restrictive. Ms. Heemstra added that it was the intent of the Executive Committee to broaden the definition to be inclusive of all agencies that deal with at-risk kids.

Bonnie Huntley stated that there were separate issues on the table: 1) the definition of a child welfare agency, and 2) the number of child welfare agencies that would be represented.

Ms. Holmes-Garrison stated that the total number of private agencies would not change under the recommendation; there would still be three private agency representatives. Under the recommendation at least one, but as many as all three, could be an agency that provides out-of-home placement for children. She stated that the purpose of the recommendation was to leave the door open for other private agencies that may want to contribute.

Ms. Williams stated her concern that the Council had only recently reviewed the bylaws and discussed this issue in depth. She wondered why it was being presented for discussion again so soon. Ms. Archbold replied that the Bylaws call for an annual review of the Executive Committee at the end of each year. It was the Executive Committee’s responsibility to review the Bylaws annually, and present any recommendations to the full Council. The decision on whether or not to accept the recommendations is solely that of the Council.

Ms. Sieger suggested that recommended change to the definition of Private Agency Representatives in Appendix A be removed from the table for future discussion so that the Council could vote on the remaining items. Mr. Van Rooy moved to remove the item from consideration. Ms. Holmes-Garrison supported. Motion carried.

Mr. Hascall moved to approve the remaining recommended Bylaws revisions. Mr. Van Rooy supported. Motion carried.

VI. Executive Committee/ Officer Nominations

Ms. Sieger reported that the Executive Committee was calling for nominations or volunteers to serve on the Executive Committee for next year. According to the Bylaws, the Executive Committee is composed of a minimum of seven members, including the Chair and Vice Chair. Membership must include at least two public service providers, one private service provider, two consumers/advocates, and two private funding organizations. The Executive Committee will gather nominations and present a slate of electors for Council action. She encouraged Council members to volunteer or make nominations for officer and/or Executive Committee positions. Any nominations for these positions should be submitted to Richard Gritter or Ms. Archbold by December 13, 2001.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Early Childhood Committee (ages 0 to 5)

Ms. Williams reported that the committee has broadened its membership to be more inclusive of individuals working in the early childhood field. She stated that the committee is looking at ways to increase the general public's understanding of the significance of the early years of a child's life and to provide universal opportunity for every family in Kent County to access quality services during those crucial years. She stated that the four main service components included in universal opportunity were a medical home, family support services, parenting education and skill-building, and early childhood education and care.

B. Elementary School Years Committee (ages 5 to 10)

Ms. Jackson reported that as its first foray into working together, the committee had targeted increasing the number of children participating in the summer food program. The committee was taking a two-pronged approach to the problem: 1) increasing the number of children served through existing Grand Rapids sites through outreach and community partnerships, and 2) increasing the number of sites in out-county areas.

Ms. Jackson reported that the committee had finalized its action plan for Grand Rapids. The committee will be targeting four Grand Rapids neighborhoods: Baxter, Buchanan, Sibley, and Plainfield Methodist. The committee will convene stakeholders groups in each of the neighborhoods in January to discuss specific strategies to increase participation in each neighborhood. The committee is still exploring possible partners to increase the number of sites in out-county areas.

Ms. Heemstra asked how closely the committee was working with summer recreation programs. Kate Scheid, of the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, stated that the Recreation Reaps Rewards program was actively participating in the initiative. She stated that the program was currently provided in all four of the targeted Grand Rapids sites. She stated that the challenge was reaching out to other youth programs to encourage them to bring their children to utilize the free service.

Ms. Jackson stated that one challenge that the committee had identified was how to fund outreach efforts. She stated that funding was not yet an issue, but that the committee

wanted to take a proactive approach in case it became one. She suggested that the Executive Committee consider the question of funding for all of the committees.

Mr. Zylstra stated that the funding was available to provide the service. He asked whether funding would be needed for outreach. Ms. Jackson replied that yes, some of the neighborhood groups may require funding for advertising or printing costs. Mr. Zylstra suggested that the committee research how other sites around the country have financed their outreach efforts. Ms. Jackson replied that the committee had already begun to explore other groups' strategies, the majority of which have been public/private partnerships.

Mr. Zylstra asked whether the committee had identified clear, measurable objectives for determining whether they are effective. Ms. Jackson reported that the committee has almost finalized its objectives, and that data will be available to demonstrate the committee's effectiveness.

C. Middle & High School Committee (ages 10 to 18)

Mr. Van Rooy reported that the committee had engaged in several vigorous discussions regarding its priorities for the coming year. He stated that the group determined that it will focus on those youth with the highest risk of engaging in risky behaviors such as substance abuse or failing in school. He stated that the committee had determined that the kids who are most at risk are the least likely to benefit from education, enrichment, and recreational opportunities. The committee will be exploring ways to improve the community's response to building assets in these youth.

D. Ongoing Family Support

Ms. Davis reported that the committee had met a couple of times to discuss possible areas of focus, and had identified that it would focus on ways to identify and treat substance abuse early for families at risk of child abuse and neglect. She stated that she had asked committee members to draft some preliminary objectives and strategies, and that she and staff would be incorporating the answers into a draft action plan. She stated that the committee was still in the information gathering stage.

VIII. Other Community Information & Updates

A. Creating Community Connections

Ms. Cowling presented an overview of Creating Community Connections, a new program of the Child & Family Resource Council. She stated that the program was built upon previous community initiatives, particularly Our Children, Our Future: Standards for Kent County Kids and the Next Steps planning process.

Ms. Cowling reported that the purpose of the project was to gather data about our community's progress towards the Standards, and to use that data to guide advocacy efforts. She stated that a major component of the program was the creation of an advocacy training program, which has received funding by the Frey Foundation and Grand Rapids Community Foundation. The purpose of the advocacy training program is to enhance the capacity of individuals to advocate for families and children by helping them to develop the skills to be effective advocates. Through training, the program seeks

to develop a “critical mass” of individuals advocating for families and children. The initial focus of the program will be on the issues faced by families of children ages 0 to 5.

Ms. Cowling stated that the program presents an opportunity for partnership with the Coordinating Council, particularly because the Coordinating Council faces some limitations on advocacy. Ms. Cowling outlined several opportunities for the Coordinating Council and the advocacy training program to provide information and input to one another.

Ms. Davis stated that Senior Leadership Grand Rapids had used a similar model and would be happy to offer assistance.

Ms. Sieger congratulated the Child & Family Resource Council on an excellent plan. She stated that the program would fill an evident need in the community. She added that the Executive Committee had discussed inviting staff from the Michigan League of Human Services to give a legislative overview to the Council. She stated that although the Council faced some limitations on its collective advocacy, the Council should serve as a forum to keep members informed so that they can advocate through multiple channels.

B. Member Rotation

Ms. Sieger reported that the meeting was the last meeting for Ellen Brubaker, Richard Gritter, Lynn Heemstra, and Maria O’Hare as official members. She reminded the members that Council meetings were open to public participation, and encouraged them to continue to attend and remain involved. She invited the members rotating off the Council to attend the January 8, 2001, Council meeting to review the Council’s Annual Report and be recognized for their contributions.

IX. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:35pm. **The next Kent County Family and Children’s Coordinating Council meeting will be January 8, 2002, from 12:00pm – 1:30pm at the Wedgwood Christian Youth and Family Services Chapel, 3300 36th Street, SE.**