

OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES
Children Services Division
Early Childhood Development/Health Services Advisory Council
ECD/HASC

Disabilities Services Committee Meeting

Agenda

March 11, 2011

- I. Welcome – The attendees were welcomed by Beatrice Nichols and Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas.**
- II. Introduction of Members – The participants introduced themselves to the group.**
- III. Identification of Note Taker – Gina Pacella was identified as the note taker.**
- IV. Review and Correction to December 2010 Meeting Minutes – Amy Labb of Albany Park Community Center stated that there are corrections to the meeting minutes with regard to entering children’s developmental screening information into COPA. She has forwarded the new information in the revised COPA manuals to Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas just recently. This information will be made available once it has been reviewed by Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas. Genola Washington of YMCA motioned to accept the meeting minutes following the correction of the minutes by Amy Labb. Camille Gant of Westside Holistic seconded the motion to approve the minutes.**
- V. RCADD Update – Dawn La Brose spoke to the group and provided an update regarding the RCADD program. Dawn reported that RCADD served 341 patrons during the last quarter which included classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. Dawn welcomed the participants and shared the program’s operating hours (i.e., Monday through Friday, 9-5pm, with the exception of Wednesdays, when the program opens at 11 am).**
- VI. CFC Update – Carmen Butron was to present, was absent from the meeting today.**

VII. Parent Involvement - Equip for Equality Update – Mr. Lam Ho, Attorney for Equip for Equality, spoke to the group regarding his organization. Equip for Equality is a protection and advocacy program that provides legal services for people with disabilities. A special section of this entity, called the Special Education Clinic, is solely dedicated to special education issues. The organization encourages parents and families to become self advocates, but does provide full legal representation when needed. Eight attorneys work for the organization at a pro bono rate. Therefore, not all of the services provided by the organization are free. Parents and families of children with disabilities are encouraged to call the self-advocacy helpline at 866-KIDS-046 if they have any questions or concerns regarding children’s special education.

VIII. DFSS Administrative Update – Bea Nichols presented the administrative update for DFSS. Meetings have recently been held with Betty Ann Larkins, the Federal Review Team Leader, in preparation for the forthcoming federal review. One meeting was with the grantee and the other with the delegate agency executive directors and program directors. Betty Ann is well aware of our efforts in trying to reach the 10% enrollment requirement of children with disabilities and the issues that we have been experiencing with the LEA, CPS.

Currently, approximately 5-6 delegate agencies have met the Head Start 10% enrollment requirement of children with disabilities. The focus for these agencies will be to maintain their enrollment percentages. For those delegate agencies that have not met the 10% enrollment requirement of children with disabilities, Disabilities cluster meetings have been held. The next Disabilities cluster meeting is scheduled for March 28, 2011 at King Central Service Center. The time will be determined. Disabilities Coordinators who are required to attend will be notified via email per Bea. In preparation for the next Disabilities cluster meetings, Bea indicated that she will be reviewing agencies for the following information:

- The actual current enrollment of children with IEPs (not just children who are listed on the PIR as having been enrolled with IEPs);**
- The number of children’s referral packets submitted to CPS for processing;**
- The number of actual children whose enrollment and evaluations are underway at CPS.**

Of particular importance during the monitoring checks, all COPA reports should be complete and should reflect accurate information. That is, the number of children appearing on the Disability Referral Tracking Report should equal the total number of children enrolled with

suspected disabilities. Similarly, all children enrolled with IEPs should be listed on the Disability Status Report and the PIR.

Bea Nichols, and Beth Stover, DFSS grant-writer and policy-reviewer, have been meeting to discuss and address the issues we are experiencing at CPS. The problem was identified and potential solutions were discussed. The problem is as follows: The local education agency (LEA), namely CPS, has been unable to fulfill its legal obligations under the IDEA Part B to ensure that all children who need an IEP receive them in a timely manner. The continued failure of the LEA to process children referred by the grantee (DFSS) and its delegates for evaluations in a timely manner jeopardizes the DFSS Head Start grant, as DFSS is unable to fulfill its federal mandate under the Head Start Act (i.e., that 10% of children enrolled in its Head Start program must have diagnosed disabilities as documented by an IEP).

Bea and Beth brainstormed many possible solutions and arrived at a two-pronged approach/legal strategy to address this problem. This approach consists of (1.) holding the State Education Agency (SEA) and the LEA legally accountable for this problem and (2.) clarifying the Head Start policy (see handout entitled Disabilities Update of February 15, 2011).

- IX. CPS Update – Romeldia Salter of CPS was to speak to group, however, she was unable to attend the meeting today. Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas presented a summary of questions that were proposed to Romeldia on behalf of the delegate agencies and the Disabilities Team and shared Romeldia’s responses to those questions.**
- X. Paraprofessional Update - Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas provided an update regarding the DFSS funded paraprofessional program. The paraprofessionals will be participating in a Resource Room event at three resource rooms in the community on March 18, 2011. The events will be held at the Center for Early Education, Malcolm X College, 1900 W. Van Buren, The Autism Project (TAP) Room at Easter Seals, 1001 W. Roosevelt, and the Resource Center for Autism and Developmental Delays, Garfield Central Service Center, 10 S. Kedzie. The purpose of the Resource Room day is to (1.) encourage the paraprofessionals to utilize the resource rooms to support the children and families of children enrolled with disabilities; and to (2.) share resources with the families of children with disabilities and encourage families to independently seek such resources.**
- XI. CPS/DFSS Disabilities Team Update – Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas provided an update for the CPS/DFSS Disabilities Team. The team is continuing to review children’s CPS referral packets and returning them to the agencies’ Disabilities Coordinators if/when corrections are needed.**

The team is also in the process of completing speech-only evaluations for our Head Start children who are awaiting evaluations at CPS. In addition, the team is conducting delegate agency site visits, reviewing COPA reports including the PIR for completeness and accuracy, observing children with suspected disabilities and making the appropriate recommendations for follow up.

- XII. Summary of Recommendations - Rhonda Gumbel-Thomas reminded the group to ensure all program's have the most current Disabilities Policies & Procedures (for 2010-2011) on file at every site. This document is available on the DFSS Children Services division website.**

The motion was made to close the meeting today by D. Washington, of Home of Life. The motion was seconded by Bill Rogers, parent, Home of Life.

Next Meeting: June 10, 2011