

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD AND FAMILY WELL BEING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes – May 28, 2025

5pm-7pm

PRESENT: J. Blakey, L. Lewis, C. Devonish, J. Williams, D. Woods, T. Russell, H. Yusuf

DCYF: S. McPherson, N. Thyden, D. Gilchrist

ABSENT: J. Rogers, C. Washington, T. Thomas, Y. Lee, K. Porter, A. Hill, N. Johnson

Meeting Called to Order - Chair Joan Blakey

The meeting commenced with the council's approval of the agenda. Chair Joan Blakey discussed the structure of the meeting, which included updates from subcommittees.

The first item of discussion was the MAAFPACWDA Workgroup which is open to public attendance but limited to observation only. Susan McPherson mentioned that meetings are scheduled for the first and third Mondays of each month and will share links for attendance.

Chair Blakey reported on the resignation of A. Aguy, a co-chair of the Child Welfare Outcomes subcommittee, who has taken on a new role as the MAAFPACWDA workgroup project coordinator at DCYF. This leads to the search for a new co-chair to ensure the continuity of the subcommittee's work, particularly as their report is due by the end of the year.

New Business

Naomi Thyden, the new research consultant, provided updates on data analysis related to custody filings, particularly focusing on demographics of fathers filing for custody. She highlighted challenges in accessing specific data from the Minnesota courts regarding these demographics. Furthermore, she discussed ongoing efforts to analyze data on youth aging out of care and potential incarceration rates.

Devon Gilchrist discussed the need for a structured communication plan between the council and the unit, emphasizing the importance of regular updates and collaborative efforts. He proposed quarterly meetings to share information on ongoing projects and case reviews, which would enhance transparency and partnership.

The council also discussed the compliance portal, designed to address public inquiries and complaints regarding child welfare cases. Gilchrist explained how the portal functions and its significance in tracking trends and improving responses to community concerns.

Gilchrist proposed that the Council participate in updating a practice guide focused on African American families' needs. The guide stresses understanding their cultural backgrounds,

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customizing interventions accordingly and delivering services in culturally appropriate ways. It offers recommendations for respecting and addressing these unique needs within the child welfare system, aiming to enhance outcomes through culturally sensitive practices and targeted interventions.

Subcommittee Updates

Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee – Chair Lynn Lewis

Led by Subcommittee Chair Lewis, the council previewed the subcommittee's current recommendations, demonstrating the progress and status of legislative objectives. Their report highlights recommendations for targeted listening sessions, advancement in father engagement and creating a comprehensive digital multimedia strategy to improve communication and awareness regarding the MAAFPACWDA bill, community support, services and initiatives.

Child Welfare Outcomes Subcommittee – reported by S. McPherson

The outcomes subcommittee report has focused on emphasizing the importance of incorporating culturally sensitive practices in child welfare services, understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds of the families they serve, and tailoring interventions to meet their unique needs.

Lynn Lewis suggested including a section in the recommendations for the practice guide and case reviews. This suggestion received support from other council members.

Data-driven strategies were discussed, including analyzing data related to custody filings and youth who have aged out of care to identify trends and gaps in services.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with plans for reconvening steering committee meetings starting June 11, 2025, with emphasis on the importance of funding to support council development and planning of special activities.

The September meeting will focus on reviewing each recommendation and gathering input and feedback from all members. The council aims to have completed its final by the October meeting.

Meeting Adjourned