

## **African American Child and Family Wellbeing Advisory Council Meeting**

**Minutes from July 23, 2025**

Present: J. Blakey, J. Williams, H. Yusuf, T. Russell, J. Rogers, L. Lewis, C. Washington, C. Devonish

Absent: Y. Lee, A. Hill, N. Johnson-Lenoir, T. Thomas, K. Porter

DCYF Staff Present: S. McPherson, D. Gilchrist, M. Seymore, M. Anderson, M. Waltz, C. Dixon, K. Shafer

### **Meeting Called to Order**

- a. Agenda approved by J. Williams and second by L. Lewis and J. Rogers
- b. Introductions of council and guests

### **Introductions and New Leadership**

Council members introduced themselves followed by introduction of new director Michelle Seymour. Michelle Seymour shared her extensive background in child welfare, her national work on equity and post-permanency services, and her vision for the Council's role in sustaining and advancing the African American Child and Family Well-Being Unit's goals. She highlighted the dual challenge of disproportionality in child welfare and underrepresentation in post-permanency services, emphasizing systemic change and community partnership. Seymour expressed enthusiasm for working closely with the Council to ensure culturally responsive technical assistance and to maintain accountability for the act's success.

### **Council's Role and Structure**

Discussion focused on clarifying the Council's role versus the statewide working group. Director Seymour explained that the Council serves as a sustaining advisory body, focusing on continuous quality improvement, reviewing assistance tools, and advising on policies to prevent harmful impacts on communities. She described the organizational structure with co-directors overseeing different aspects of implementation and the importance of effective collaboration between the Council, the unit, and the statewide working group. The Council will also engage in strategic planning and participate in a retreat featuring training on systemic racism facilitated by Joyce James, a recognized expert in addressing racial disproportionality in child welfare. Budget transparency and resource needs for Council activities were discussed, with Seymour inviting members to propose funding priorities.

### **Feedback and Compliance Process**

Kiya Shafer and Devon Gilchrist from the unit introduced the feedback and compliance process related to the MAAFPA-CWDA. They are developing a public portal to receive and triage complaints and feedback, which will be analyzed to identify trends and inform technical assistance and policy improvements. The Council will receive summary data reports to guide discussions and strategies. This process builds upon existing complaint mechanisms but aims to improve tracking, responsiveness, and systemic analysis. The integration of this work with the Council's advisory role was highlighted as a key element for progress.

## Presentation on Promotion and Prevention Unit Programs

Megan Waltz and Charles Dixon presented the Promotion and Prevention Unit's initiatives focused on supporting families before child protection involvement. Key programs include:

- **Parents Support Outreach Program (PSOP):** A voluntary, short-term prevention and early intervention program serving families with children 10 years or younger or expecting a child, focusing on strengths and needs assessment and providing flexible support such as food, housing, and transportation. Challenges include limited funding and staffing disparities across counties, with some families facing waitlists despite the program's preventative goals.
- **Community Resource Centers (CRCs):** Local hubs provide culturally responsive services, family navigation, and kinship support, aimed at increasing social connections and concrete support. Ten CRCs operate across Minnesota, targeting areas with low child opportunity indexes, which correlate with higher neglect reporting, especially among Black and Indigenous families. These centers are guided by a statewide advisory council including parents and community members. Data indicate that PSOP participants have a 63% rate of no child welfare reports within 12 months post-participation, and CRCs serve Black and Indigenous families at rates higher than their population proportions, demonstrating targeted outreach and impact. The presentation included plans for ongoing data collection and evaluation to assess program effectiveness and barriers.

## Council Structure, Subcommittee Reports and Annual Report Planning

Updates were given on the committee's progress in drafting reports for the Council's annual report due October. The Council plans to review and finalize the report in August and September meetings.

Recruitment efforts for new Council members were discussed, including the need to establish a clear selection process with staggered terms to ensure continuity. The Council currently has 7-10 members with plans to expand to 31 seats, possibly structured with an executive board and advisory subcommittees to streamline decision-making. The importance of attendance policies, contract

management, and orientation processes for new members was emphasized to maintain active participation.

## **Planning for Retreat and Member Participation**

The Council discussed the scheduling of a retreat before the end of September with a focus on equity training facilitated by Joyce James. The retreat may include two full in-person days followed by virtual sessions to accommodate members' schedules. Considerations were raised about compensating members for time away from work during training. The retreat aims to align Council members on systemic racism concepts and strategic planning for the coming year.

## **Meeting Adjourned**

Page 2 of 2