



African American Child and Family Well-Being Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2025

Location: Virtual **Time:** 5pm-7pm

Members Present: J. Blakey, L. Lewis, J. Cannon, C. Devonish, T. Russell, N. Johnson-Lenoir, H. Yusuf, J. Rogers

Members Absent: K. Porter, Y. Lee, A. Hill, C. Washington, T. Thomas

DCYF Staff Present: S. McPherson, Director Michelle Seymore, Assistant Commissioner Rebecca St. George, Director Windy Ross

Meeting Overview

This session served as a debrief following a two-day retreat and focused on finalizing the annual report, clarifying Council roles, and initiating strategic planning for the upcoming year. The meeting included reflections from Council members, commitments from DCYF leadership, and action items to strengthen collaboration and community engagement.

1. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve meeting agenda passed unanimously.
- Motion to approve previous meeting minutes passed unanimously.

2. Retreat Reflections

- Council members praised the retreat's training on structural racism led by Joyce James.
- The experience fostered community, shared language, and renewed urgency for action.

3. Council Challenges

- Members expressed concerns over limited progress and unclear boundaries.
- Many felt the Council's role had been misunderstood or minimized.
- Calls for autonomy, clarity, and actionable authority were emphasized.

4. Community Engagement & Representation

- Strong desire to move beyond virtual meetings and into community spaces.
- Emphasis on including diverse Black ethnic groups (Somali, Nigerian, Liberian) and religious institutions in outreach and recommendations.

5. Strategic Planning & Collaboration

- Agreement to hold separate strategy sessions for the Council and the Unit, followed by joint planning.
- Goal: define shared initiatives, clarify roles, and build a unified front.
- Council seeks to advise—not merely review—DCYF work.



6. Budget & Resource Needs

- Council requested transparency around available funding.
- Advocated for resources to support outreach, surveys, materials, and incentives.
- Acknowledged current stipend (\$55/meeting) is insufficient given the scope of work.

7. Annual Report Contributions

- Members were invited to submit final edits and recommendations within 72 hours.
- Emphasis on including lived experiences, culturally specific education, and informational platform.
- All contributions will be honored and integrated into the final draft.

8. Bridging the Council–Unit Gap

- DCYF leadership committed to improving communication and presence.
- Strategic planning will address how to integrate Council members into agency activities.

9. Personal Advocacy & Urgency

- Nashauna Johnson-Lenoir shared her lived experience in foster care, underscoring the real-life impact of policy delays.
- Called for accountability, deadlines, and direct involvement in decision-making spaces.

Closing Remarks

Council members expressed renewed motivation and commitment to the work. Leadership acknowledged the importance of direct engagement and pledged to support Council efforts moving forward. The meeting concluded with a shared sense of urgency and unity.

Motion to end meeting passed unanimously at 7:05pm