

Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: Friday, August 15, 2008 **TIME BEGAN:** 8:02am **TIME ENDED:** 10:05am

FACILITATEDBY: Sarah Fox

SUMMARY BY: Judy Buswell

PRESENT: Micheline Roy, Sarah Fox, Jim Pilliod, Sandy McLaughlin, Emily Clement, Gil Schohan, Laurie Belanger, Ruth O'Hara, Betty Anson **COUNCIL ASSOCIATE:** Andre Paquette **GUESTS:** Deb, Schackett, Deb Rosato **STAFF:** Judy Buswell , Alan Robichaud

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1. **Welcome & Introductions** - *Sarah Fox, Council Chair* Welcome to guests, Deb Schackett, Belknap County Administrator, and Deb Rosato, LRCS Early Childhood Learning Program.
 2. **Approve Meeting Minutes - 6/20/08** Motion made by Emily Clement to accept the minutes of the June 20th Council meeting; second by Ruth O'Hara. Motion carried.
 3. **Annual Child Abuse/Neglect Conference** – Council members interested in attended all or part of the 2-day conference on Child Abuse and Neglect on Sept 25 and 26 should let Alan know as there are some Council funds to defray registration etc costs.
 4. **Service Integration Initiative Alignment and Council Structure** The Council is now involved in a new initiative around better coordination between the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Originating from the Issue Brief prepared and distributed by the Council in January 2008, “Perspectives on Child Maltreatment, CHINS, and Juvenile Delinquency in Belknap”, the Council is leading a county-based effort to bring systemic change to the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. A successful Symposium on June 5th, sponsored by the Citizens Council, was attended by about 50 people. Those attending included NH DHHS Commissioner Nick Toumpas, Senator Kathleen Sgambati, a number of DHHS division heads, and executives of local agencies. The event concluded with a pledge from Commissioner Toumpas for a continued change process that would better link these two huge systems, ultimately doing a better job of service provision through a more efficient use of resources.

Other consecutive events such as (1) the passage of House Bill 2 that changes the funding processes for some of the juvenile justice programs and the long-term care of seniors and (2) municipal cutbacks in the support of the non-profit juvenile court diversion programs that threatens the existence of these programs has “muddied the waters” with misperceptions and incorrect information. These dynamics could lead to eroding the continuum of services for juveniles, eliminating the early intervention diversion programs that keep youth out of the much more expensive court-ordered programs and placements. The costs for these earlier intervention programs at about \$2,500/youth are far less than the \$60-180 thousand per youth if they are placed outside their homes. As child abuse and neglect is seen as a strong predictor of entry into the juvenile justice system, the Citizens Council advocates that early intervention and service provision for these children is essential.

The Citizens Council has been working with John Tuell of the Child Welfare League of America who is leading similar integration efforts around the country. Mr. Tuell has already donated time and effort to this Belknap County effort. A request for technical assistance funds to retain Mr. Tuell has been submitted to OJJDP. Even though the Council may not know the outcome of this request, the Council has negotiated with Mr. Tuell to spend a day in the county (September 22) meeting with designated leaders and launching the beginning of this integration project in Belknap County.

Based on models generated by other systems integration efforts, Alan and the Council Planning Committee have developed a proposed process, committee structure, organizational charts, and leadership structure for Belknap County that he reviewed with Council members. This model will require some infra-structure modifications of the Council. Five committees, three new and two existing - but modified committees - are

suggested including: Administrative Oversight, Leadership Executive Committee and Legal & Policy Committee (new) and Professional Advisory Committee (formerly JJAC) and the Council Data Committee.

The Council was presented draft job descriptions for each of these committees along with a first draft of Goals & Objectives for the next three years. Based on new federal grantee guidelines, agencies competing for grants must submit evidence of five year plans. The Council will need to consider expanding their planning efforts out to five years.

Andre Paquette spoke of the need to expand the function of JJAC to a more inclusive Professional Advisory Committee in order to address issues that take us beyond juvenile justice and into child welfare and the various disciplines affected by the new service integration initiative. Betty Anson then led a breakout group activity, examining each of the four key components of the Council's charge as stated in the Proclamation. Each group was asked to review their assigned Proclamation element (e.g. promote well-being, stewardship, comprehensive planning, and advocacy and collaboration) in the context of the service integration initiative, organizational design, and proposed goals and objectives. Groups reported back to the whole with thoughts and recommendations for consideration for the Council three year plan. Items presented for further consideration were as follow:

- **Promote Well-Being**
 - Deliberate outreach to schools and communities
 - Closer affiliation with the Belknap County Early Learning Council
 - Need to define "prevention" specific to the role of the Council (e.g. promote strength-based, parent-centered services)
 - Strengthen relationships with the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire, NAMI/NH, and other child and family advocacy organizations
- **Stewardship**
 - Expand Juvenile Justice Advisory Council to Professional Advisory Council
 - Partner with the Belknap County Early Learning Council
 - Find more resources (e.g. local consumers)
 - Better market Council's role and outcomes
 - Connect to "real life" people
 - Solidify and channel all recommendations through the Executive Director
 - Promote Council's mission (inspire others to become part of the Council's work)
 - Liaison to general public and local communities
- **Comprehensive Planning**
 - Suggestion - add a box to Organizational Chart depicting the development of needed services/programs based on data supporting best practices
 - Under the Proclamation, 2.b, "Conduct community needs assessments", add "for all ages.
 - Switch "Develop outcome indicators that support best practice among all programs and services" with "Enhance the delivery of services and supports through coordination and development of needed services" adding "and programs" at the end of that sentence.
 - Under #4 of the Proclamation: it was suggested to alter the current language to include "appropriate age" after "array of services" and change "children and families" to "all citizens".
- **Advocacy and Collaboration**
 - Through Juvenile justice Advisory Council (JJAC) and the Balanced and Restorative Justice Work Group (BARJ), promote best practices [in juvenile justice services].
 - Pursue consultation with John Tuell and the Child Welfare League of America, to promote success in the service integration initiative.
 - Continue Council oversight and advocacy for quality program outcomes.

Further Discussion

Involving Other Stakeholders

Additional discussion ensued on the inclusion of other key stakeholders in this initiative moving forward. Laurie Belanger and Sandy McLaughlin spoke of the importance of involving the educational community (Vice Principals, Guidance Directors, Special Education Directors, etc.). A strategy will be directed to approach the Lakes

Region School Administrators Association to appoint/assign a couple of representatives who will attend meetings and provide input from the Association. Sandy McLaughlin and Laurie Belanger have offered to assist in this activity.

Action Alan will address this item with Sandy and Laurie for an update at the next Council meeting.

Laurie Belanger also brought up the need to have representation from the law enforcement community. While Sheriff Craig Wiggin is represented on the Administrative Oversight Committee, we will seek a representative from the Belknap County Police Chiefs Association (BCPCA) to the Leadership Executive Committee.

Action Alan will contact the BCPCA for a representative delegate.

Betty Anson and Sarah Fox both advocated strongly for consumer voice to be a major part of this initiative. We have confirmation that Karen Carpenter (NH Children’s Trust Fund – Prevent Child Abuse New Hampshire) and Claudia Ferber (NAMI/NH) will participate in the Administrative Oversight Committee. They, and others, are approaching local people to serve on the Leadership Executive Committee.

Action Alan will seek out a representative of the Foster Care network to serve on the Leadership Executive Committee.

Communications

The Council needs to reinvest in communications with Belknap County communities and other local and state constituencies. Since our inception, we have promoted the successes of our efforts through the outcomes of others, diminishing the significant roles and relationships the Council has played. The fact is that much of the Council’s work goes unnoticed as we promote the needs of families and children and the outcomes of our efforts through the work of others when, in many cases, the Council’s efforts are what have provided the resources, actions, and successes of others. We need to rethink and reinvest in communication strategies that bring Council accomplishments to the fore.

Outreach

We need to strengthen our efforts to engage the very people at whom our work is directed i.e. children, youth and families. This is an issue that is an enigma to some of our leading consumer organizations as well (e.g. NAMI/NH) but we will need to improve our outreach to assure our efforts appropriately target the outcomes needed by various constituent/consumer groups.

As we move into the next phase of Council operations we need to consider that in the past our work has focused a great deal on organizing and investing in making “systems” primarily the juvenile justice system, more cohesive and cost-effective. We have invested the magnitude of our time and resources to that end. While much work remains to be done in that arena, we must now direct our focus toward the whole concept of “community justice” in the context of the service integration initiative among juvenile justice, child welfare and all the salient components of the not-for-profit and private community sectors. Adding to the challenges of our success will be the added threats brought on by the current budget crises facing our providers and local, state and federal funding sources and the political climate that ensues. Our Council must strengthen its commitment to our mission and rally others to join the effort.

Other Business

Laurie Belanger gave an example of a very simple, yet effective community building strategy she recently learned of while vacationing in Maine. In Bethel, Maine, neighbors were asked to “open their front doors” and “be present” on their porches between 1:0 and 3:00 PM on Sunday. Since then, neighbors have come together for cookouts, sharing stories, and strengthening relationships among themselves. This type of community building fosters caring, safety, compassion for others and...doesn’t cost a thing! Thanks for sharing Laurie!

Comment of the Day

In summarizing her thoughts on participating in today’s Council meeting and relating to our need to carry our message to the greater community, Debra Shackett stated: “There’s something really good going on here but I’m not sure what it is.” That’s one of our big challenges for the next year!

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

WHEN: Friday, September 19, 2008, 8-10am

WHERE: Busiel Mill River Level Conference Room