

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet Meeting

Wednesday, May 13th, 2015, 9:00am – 2:00pm
Indian River State College
Pruitt Campus, STEM Building
500 N.W. California Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL 34986

Meeting Summary

Note: The following is a summary of the highlights of the proceedings and is not intended to be construed as a transcript. Please contact Executive Director Kriss Vallese at kriss.vallese@myflfamilies.com to obtain meeting materials or visit www.flgov.com/childrens-cabinet.

Attendance Summary

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet members in attendance:

- Chair Wansley Walters
- Executive Director Alan Abramowitz
- Surgeon General John Armstrong
- Ms. Ellen Anderson
- Ms. Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte
- Secretary Mike Carroll
- Secretary Christina Daly
- Secretary Elizabeth Dudek
- Director Zackary Gibson
- Representative Gayle Harrell
- Judge Sandy Karlan
- Mr. David Lawrence
- Interim Director Rodney MacKinnon
- Justice Barbara Pariente (designee)
Ms. Sandy Neidert
- Director Barbara Palmer
- Dr. Judy Schaechter
- Senator Eleanor Sobel
- Commissioner Pam Stewart
- Youth Commissioner Blake Maier
- Mr. Steven Uhlfelder (via phone)

Florida Children and Youth Cabinet members unable to attend:

- Ms. Victoria Zepp

Staff in attendance:

- Kriss Vallese, Executive Director
- Frenchie Yon

Proceedings

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Wansley Walters called the meeting to order and welcomed the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet (Cabinet) members. Chair Walters thanked Representative Gayle Harrell and the Treasure Coast for the warm welcome. Chair Walters thanked Hibiscus Children Center President Michael Waninger for the tour of the center the previous day. Representative Harrell then acknowledged students from Somerset College Prep Charter School who were in the audience. Representative Harrell introduced Indian River State College President Dr. Edwin Massey to welcome Cabinet members to his facility. Dr. Massey welcomed the Cabinet and encouraged everyone to get out and see the community. Dr. Massey commended the Cabinet's success since being created in 2007. Dr. Massey discussed the unique scientific base throughout the community, and provided highlights of the college to produce "bench ready" graduates. Dr. Massey informed the Cabinet that the students are asked to complete community service while attending the college and recognized this is a tremendous learning experience for the students and a great source of support for the community.

II. Community Highlight

Representative Harrell introduced Representative Larry Lee, Jr., Florida House of Representatives. Representative Lee discussed the Literacy Jump Start Pilot Project, which he supported during the 2015 Legislative Session. Representative Lee thanked Representative Harrell for her support and also praised fellow legislators in the House and Senate for their bipartisan support of the bill. Representative Lee explained that the literacy program focuses on two and three year olds and how to get them interested and excited about reading in an effort to prevent some of the problems they encounter later in life, e.g., dropout rates, crime, and poverty. Representative Lee said he is determined to find a way to make the pilot program happen in order to break the cycle of poverty and dependence.

Chair Walters then asked for the roll to be called by Ms. Frenchie Yon. Ms. Yon indicated there was a quorum.

III. Announcements

Chair Walters acknowledged a Youth Commissioner in the audience and also acknowledged new Cabinet member, Judge Sandy Karlan. Chair Walters told of her previous experience working with Judge Karlan and her relentless advocacy for children in her court.

Chair Walters also thanked Director Zackary Gibson for managing the Cabinet and recognized the difficulties he faced in both managing the Cabinet and serving on it. Chair Walters then thanked Secretary Carroll for allowing Ms. Kriss Vallese from his staff to serve as the new Executive Director of Cabinet. Chair Walters welcomed Ms. Vallese and advised that she (Ms. Vallese) will be reaching out to Cabinet members soon if she hasn't already.

Chair Walters then recognized Ms. Sandy Neidert from the Supreme Court as designee for Cabinet Member Justice Barbara Pariente.

Chair Walters welcomed Youth Commissioner Blake Maier back and asked Secretary Christina Daly to discuss DJJ's plan to expand the focus of the program as well as expand the involvement of other departments.

Secretary Daly discussed highlights of a survey completed with Youth Commissioners. In the survey, 76% of commissioners indicated they did not get as much interaction with Cabinet members as they would like. Secretary Daly proposed that Cabinet members should engage The Youth Commission more and suggested the possibility of Cabinet members selecting one youth commissioner to mentor throughout the year as this may be beneficial to expose them to the workings of state government. Secretary Daly expressed her desire to speak about this more at a future Cabinet meeting. She indicated that she does not envision the Youth Commission to be a DJJ Youth Commission, but instead under the auspice of the Cabinet as a whole.

Chair Walters acknowledged Youth Commissioner Maier who spoke briefly on behalf of the Youth Commission. The Youth Commission recently launched an interactive website and also took part in Children's Week. Youth Commissioner Maier discussed the Teens Only Town Hall Meeting and said it was one of the most worthwhile experiences while serving on Youth Commission. He will be graduating this year and attending Northwestern University. Chair Walters personally thanked Youth Commissioner Maier for all of his time and devotion.

Action Item: Include time for discussion at next Cabinet meeting on engagement of Youth Commission by the Cabinet and its members.

IV. Community Highlight

Representative Harrell introduced Sean Boyle, Executive Director of The Children's Services Council (CSC) of St. Lucie County. Mr. Boyle gave an overview of the organization and provided a snapshot of St. Lucie County which has approximately 60,000 children. Mr. Boyle advised the Cabinet of The St. Lucie Round Table which is a monthly meeting with the two major funders -- CSC and United Way -- and community organizations to focus on children. Mr. Boyle discussed successes of the CSC which can be found in their 2014 Annual Impact Report. Mr. Boyle also made mention of the uninsured rate of children dropping from 27.9% in 2008 to 9.2% today and attributed this to the help of the community working together, as well as the funding of a coordinator position to assist with renewals. He reported that since 2007, there has been a 48% decrease in child abuse and maltreatment. Additionally, Mr. Boyle said teen birth rates have decreased 85% since 1990 in St. Lucie County due to collaborative efforts in the community. Mr. Boyle advised the Cabinet of the CSC's reauthorization in 2014 and its success due to the engagement with the business community. Senator Sobel asked Mr. Boyle about the cost of the referendum for reauthorization (\$130k). She then voiced her hopes to see all CSCs exempt from future referenda and that the monies should be used for services instead. Secretary Carroll commented on the title of the CSC's "Annual Impact Report" and how it is more relevant than

calling it an Annual Report. Secretary Carroll recognized that 72% of the CSC budget is spent on children before they reach the age of nine, “great by eight.” He supported the efforts made by the CSC to address local issues holistically through a focus on prevention. Ms. Ellen Anderson inquired how the CSC engages mothers of newborns. Mr. Boyle explained that the CSC contracts with three hospitals in the area. Director Barbara Palmer inquired whether there might be a way for Ms. Vallese to work with the CSCs statewide to collect data from all of the communities that have CSCs and compare results in those areas with communities that don’t in an effort to show return on investment that other communities may embrace. Mr. Boyle encouraged the Cabinet to look at trends rather than one year of data. Representative Harrell noted the St. Lucie CSC has made a big difference on the Treasure Coast and commented that state and local have to partner together. Mr. Boyle acknowledged Representative Harrell as a strong supporter during the CSC’s reauthorization campaign.

Chair Walters then moved on to discuss the Cabinet’s new Multi-System Collaboration Technical Assistance Grant. She noted that one of the issues the Cabinet is making progress on is addressing challenges associated with children and families who are “cross system” families engaged with multiple agencies. Chair Walters discussed how oftentimes other agencies are not aware that the children and families are “cross system.” She discussed the need to work to craft different protocols that would call for a different approach. In the last few months, Director Zackary Gibson has spearheaded an effort for the Cabinet to apply for a grant that provides technical assistance on multi-system collaboration. Florida is one of five sites in the country to receive this assistance. Active so far are DCF, DJJ, and the Courts. The Cabinet is looking to expand that group and add other agency representation. Director Gibson discussed Florida’s unique system of care and other key pieces associated with multi-system collaboration and how it relates to crossover youth.

One of the goals of this project is to bring all efforts together and align with existing workgroups so as not to duplicate efforts. Secretary Daly also discussed the many different workgroups at the state level and that the technical assistance grant will shed light on their missions and outcomes so far. Some efforts are being duplicated within workgroups; now we will be able to be more strategically focused. Secretary Carroll referenced the Memorandum of Agreement as a great start, and commented that agencies still tend to deal with issues on a case-by-case basis rather than a holistic, long-term view. Secretary Carroll has asked that the actual families of cross-over kids be identified and how did they get to be in the systems; identify how big the issue is. The ground work has started. Let’s get one group to drill down and look at the data. Secretary Daly said until we know the families we are actually talking about, we’re not going to be able to streamline services for those families. Suggestions and agreement were shared among Cabinet members. Ms. Vallese discussed the next steps are taking a look at some of the existing workgroups and determine if there may be opportunities to combine the work of some into the Technical Assistance Grant.

IV. Legislative Updates

Chair Walters asked to go around the table and have Cabinet members provide updates and status reports from the 2015 Legislative Session.

Dr. John Armstrong discussed The Florida Department of Health's top initiative of Healthiest Weight; Florida is among top 15 in the country. There have been measurable improvements in behaviors which promote healthy weight in teenagers. Additionally, there was a 7.1% improvement toward healthiest weight in pre-school children in disadvantaged circumstances.

Secretary Elizabeth Dudek discussed an enhanced bill to deal with assisted living facilities to allow people to age in place. Another bill passed to regulate facilities that deal with brain and spinal cord injuries. And finally, a bill was passed to give more flexibility for Home Health Agencies to cover more of the state without unnecessary licensure. Daily conversations are occurring with Federal CMS to provide services to a greater population without expanding Medicaid.

Director Barbara Palmer reported that the legislature put more money in the appropriations bill to take people off the APD waiting list. She also mentioned there is now funding for a Central Client Database, which is critical for the agency. The most significant piece of legislation going on is the "I Budget." This is an assessment through an algorithm, which is being revised, and gives a person an individual ("I") budget, which gives the patient total flexibility with their budget; however, this is currently being challenged.

Executive Director Alan Abramowitz discussed the Regis Little Bill, which provides a guardian to a child who is about to turn 18 and does not have the capacity to be on his/her own. This year, there was a \$4.5 million ask for the GAL budget and the governor supports it. He is hopeful it will pass during the Special Session in June.

Secretary Mike Carroll discussed two priorities; policy and resources. House and Senate picked up most of budget request which was a little more than \$42 million. The legislature invested in the front end of the system last year had an infusion of funding to hire additional CPs and an additional \$10 million for services with CBCs. This year in many communities DCF saw a 66% increase in the number of children served and so the legislature appropriated midstream an additional \$10.5 million to serve them. There was also a big push around reforming how we deliver substance abuse and mental health services. Senate Bill 1666 from last year has been aggressively implemented by the Department. The infrastructure is in place around child fatalities in terms of how we report and track it. A child fatality website has been developed and surpasses legislative requirements. Multiple states have contacted DCF about mirroring the website and doing something similar. The Critical Incident Rapid Response Team (CIRRT) review process was implemented on several high profile cases and has gone through several refinements. Legislation mandates a bigger group of external stakeholders (e.g., agencies, community organizations) to look at the findings of the reports for big policy and practice, big picture recommendations. Additionally, the decision was made that a formal Quality Assurance (QA) will be completed on all child death cases where DCF had involvement within the last five years; this will mimic the same process as CIRRT. It has been a building year for putting the

infrastructure in place. The data will help to inform future practice, policy, and perhaps funding.

Commissioner Pam Stewart discussed House Bill 7069 which specifies, among other things, no school may start earlier than August 10th; this will help provide uniformity. DOE conducted a testing investigation among the districts and compiled the information which is posted on the website. From this, DOE eliminated 11th grade Language Arts assessment, eliminated district double testing, and provided districts the flexibility to determine their method of progress monitoring. The biggest impact is the requirement that school grades and teacher evaluations will not be released until the test has 3rd party validation. Announced a new Chancellor of the Division of Colleges – Madeline Pumariega. Previously, Ms. Pumariega served as President of Take Stock in Children. Dave Lawrence asked Commissioner Stewart how the testing changes are sorting out. She said that overall, the process is proving to be valid and good. She commented that with the new online process, DOE is actually finding issues that they didn't see with paper testing. It has enhanced DOE's ability to assess students.

DJJ Secretary Christina Daly said that most of the agency's focus this year has been on budget. The Governor has supported looking at dollars saved on deep-end services and re-investing them into the front end. Will be able to enhance the services for SNAP (Stop Now And Plan) program and some health services. One bill that did successfully pass, which was not driven by DJJ, but by the faith community, was an edit to The Civil Citation Law. This will enable juveniles to receive 2nd and 3rd citations rather than going into the system or having a record that follows them into adulthood. The House and Senate have been looking at detention cost share, which would have a defined percentage split of cost for secure detention.

Interim Director Rodney McKinnon discussed the changes to federal grant that funds school readiness child care subsidized child care services. The changes included an increased emphasis on quality and licensing standards (under DCF's purview). Director McKinnon stated that he appreciates the Children's Cabinet gracious adoption of The Governor's suggested budget proposal to reduce the wait list.

Steve Uhlfelder suggested that in light of session being in January next year and the fact that the Cabinet voted to support additional funding to reduce the wait list, that the Cabinet's Legislative Workgroup considers looking at legislation to support more funding for reducing the wait list. Chair Walters indicated that the workgroup would be discussing that during their report.

Representative Gayle Harrell discussed the Children's Cabinet Bill (HB 55), which she sponsored. It would add a school superintendent to the Cabinet. House Bill 1055 has passed both chambers as well. It seeks to further enhance Child Protection Teams. A local bill dealing with Baker Acts now requires all school districts (and charter schools) to have a policy that requires parents to be notified immediately if their child is to be removed under Baker Act, unless there is a child abuse report into the Florida Abuse Hotline. There were two significant committee bills. One deals with the cleanup of Senate Bill 1666; defining the CIRRT teams, having more options to use CIRRT teams, as well empowering and distinguishing death review teams. The other major

committee bill dealt with substance abuse and mental health. Rep. Harrell said the House was able to move a comprehensive bill forward; however, she stated, the Senate did not concur.

Senator Eleanor Sobel briefly discussed Bill 1666. She talked about three amendments to Senate Bill 7078, which was supposed to be a glitch cleanup bill. (1) exempts Children's Services Councils from future referenda (2) requires posting the Florida Abuse Hotline number in all the schools (3) Level II background checks in particular for Boys and Girls Clubs. The bill is on the way to The Governor and asking for support. She asked for the Cabinet's support of this bill. She noted that only 40% of Boys and Girls Club are licensed and doing background checks. The next issue would be licensing Boys and Girls Clubs to verify that they are doing background checks.

V. Memorandum of Understanding for Level II Background Screenings

Representative Harrell continued with the discussion of background checks and stated there was a lot of controversy over this. She stated that nothing is more important than ensuring the safety of our children. She invited Secretary Dudek to provide an explanation of the Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse helps to eliminate duplication of background screenings among agencies.

Secretary Dudek reported The Clearinghouse has been in place since January 2013 and currently includes DOH, DOE Voc Rehab Programs, Managed Care Programs, and DCF Summer Camps. DCF will be rolled out within the next two months followed by APD, DEA and DJJ. The Clearinghouse has saved the providers and licensees \$6 million by sharing the information among the agencies. Almost 70,000 screenings have been shared. Of all the screenings done since January 2013, 79% are within The Clearinghouse and can be shared among the different agencies. There is a budget request of \$400,000 to help with system maintenance. There are Letters of Agreement with each agency that joins The Clearinghouse. Dr. Schaefer asked about violations that may occur between screenings. Secretary Dudek said the system has a "grab back" feature that shows up for an individual if they have a violation between screenings.

Representative Harrell said she will be looking to file legislation next year to include contracted staff in The Clearinghouse too, in addition to licensed facilities.

Chair Walters reemphasized how important it is for agencies that have contracted people working with their kids to have the screenings in The Clearinghouse. She provided an example of a previous situation with DJJ and DCF in which The Clearinghouse would have been pertinent in filling a service need for mental health professionals in DJJ.

Senator Sobel added that The Clearinghouse would eliminate the redundancy of summer camp employee screenings, which has been an argument of The Boys and Girls Club. Additionally, it would be up to the employer to determine how "shady" the background of an employee may be. These screenings help to make the employer aware. She reiterated there is no intent in this bill to license. Senator Sobel stated she has asked House and Senate staff, and DCF Secretary Carroll to come up with a group who would come up with a solution to this problem as the Boys

and Girls Club is a well-liked club. She reported that due to so much misinformation, no one knows what they are voting on.

Secretary Carroll agreed there is a lot of misinformation. Most parents would consider The Boys and Girls Club as their child care provider and, therefore, it makes sense to consider a tiered approach. He discussed that this past year sports leagues were required to do Level I screenings. He said eventually he would like these Level I screenings to be pulled into The Clearinghouse. Secretary Carroll advised there is an established list of disqualifying offenses. Secretary Carroll discussed the need for more consistency in how agencies approach the exemption process. Director Palmer and Executive Director Abramowitz provided input on how exemptions affect all agencies and the importance of protecting the people the agencies serve. Distinctions are necessary.

Secretary Carroll advised that consideration should be given to having a limited exemption so one agency isn't held to another agency's decision to make an exemption for the population they serve, or even across programs within an agency. He suggested the need to go back and look at data to see how many of these exemptions actually break down and if they do, are they related to the exemption there is a break down, is it for the reason the exemption was given.

Senator Sobel asked the Cabinet if they would be interested in a bill that would look into who should be Level II Background Screened. Director Palmer said she would be interested in legislation that better defines the exemption process.

Representative Harrell advised that she will send a detailed email to Cabinet members regarding research completed on The Clearinghouse.

VI. Workgroup Updates

Chair Walters advised the Cabinet that Ms. Vallese will be contacting workgroups as some of them overlap and the Cabinet is looking to consolidate in an effort to streamline and work more effectively.

Ms. Ellen Anderson provided updates from the Legislative Affairs Workgroup. Ms. Anderson gave an overview of the legislative mandate for the Cabinet, which is primarily to promote interagency collaboration to better serve children. The workgroup sent a letter to the appropriation chairs supporting the \$30 million in federal funding for the Office of Early Learning. She proposed the Cabinet should not necessarily support bills. Instead, the Cabinet should support initiatives that align with its headline indicators. She urged Cabinet members to focus on developing impact statements related to specific portions of a bill that affect children. Ms. Anderson referenced the handout of a Kid Care study from Georgetown University and encouraged Cabinet to read the study.

Chair Walters agreed that it is important to increase credibility and visibility of this Cabinet and that people view the agencies on the Cabinet as united and supportive of each other.

Director Palmer asked Ms. Anderson for clarification on her proposal. Ms. Anderson clarified the idea is to hold another workgroup meeting and get the agency legislative directors together to discuss priorities. During that meeting, have a public comment time for non-agency groups who want to contribute to the discussion. Then, review and strategize the support during the meeting and The Legislative Workgroup then brings this information back to the Cabinet as a recommendation.

Many of the Cabinet members weighed in on support of this process and how to make it work. Director Zackary Gibson suggested changing the name of the workgroup to be more reflective of the workgroup's focus as presented by Ms. Anderson. Director Palmer moved to change the name to Policy Impact Workgroup. The motion was seconded by Secretary Daly. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Ms. Anderson proposed going back and drafting impact statements for some of the key legislation affecting children and bring those statements back to the Cabinet for adoption.

Representative Harrell discussed the need to have specific direction regarding The Clearinghouse and the group needs to come together to do some framing around what they would like to see happen. She suggested the workgroup come up with some parameters and have input from each agency on how it would affect each of them to create an exemption process for better understanding. She suggested Cabinet time should not be spent classifying the disqualifying offenses and instead a workgroup should do so and come back with recommendations. Senator Sobel noted that there are two types of exemptions. 1) Exemption from getting a background screen in the first place, and 2) Grant an exemption after the screening.

Ms. Vallese asked Ms. Anderson for clarification as to whether Ms. Anderson was asking for each agency to designate a staff person to work with her in doing the analysis and making recommendations. Ms. Anderson advised she would need to know from the different agencies what they would or would not want to see. Director Palmer suggested using the Legislative Affairs people. Secretary Daly questioned if deciding the level of exemptions was getting outside the realm of what the workgroup should do and maybe a different workgroup would be more appropriate for this task. The Cabinet members had a brief discussion of the Multi-System workgroup being better suited for this task.

Representative Harrell advised she believes that the Multi-System group is the group who needs to have further conversation regarding exemptions. She suggested the Cabinet not wait and react, but instead be proactive about what is going to help kids. There needs to be a further step among the agencies to collaborate and make recommendations.

Ms. Vallese made a point of clarification that statutorily the Cabinet is to serve as an advisory council and not get into actual drafting of legislation. Ms. Anderson suggested the motion is that the Cabinet approves that the workgroup will support initiatives related to the Cabinet's headline indicators and not specific bills. A motion was made by Senator Sobel to support initiatives and not legislation. Judge Karlan seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

The Cabinet members had much discussion about The Multi-System workgroup possibly not having knowledge of the subject matter of background screenings and the possible obstacles the workgroup may face. Secretary Dudek recommended a special sub-group. Director Gibson reiterated that Secretary Dudek made a motion to create a special workgroup in which each agency identify staff who will look at the background screening and exemptions and provide information to the Policy Impact Workgroup; Director Gibson then supported this motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Secretary Carroll spoke of Business, Finance and Governance Workgroup. He advised the Cabinet that the group has asked the budget staff from each agency: what types of services they provide, what are requirements/criteria to access, and what is usage. The group is trying to work with the bigger agencies and focus on direct service money and what services we provide under each agency. The group hopes to inform the cross-over group. The group has not covered a meeting and this group is in the preliminary stage.

Chair Walters proposed the Cabinet suspend workgroup discussion until such a time that Ms. Vallese talk to each group and start assessing what is overlapping and what can be streamlined.

VII. Public Comment

Melody Hern, parent and Governor Appointee of Family Care Council, spoke on behalf of the Family Care Council.

VII. Closing

The Cabinet agreed to hold its next meeting on August 27th, 2015 in Tampa, FL.

Chair Walters adjourned the meeting.