

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN'S JUSTICE
FEBRUARY 24, 2003
MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Judges Glenn Norton, Vice Chair, James Welsh and Roy Richter; Senators Bill Foster and Anita Yeckel (attended for Peter Kinder); Representatives Bryan Stevenson, Yvonne Wilson; Julie Cole-Agee, Deanna Gallagher, Steve Renne, Melanie Scheetz and Betty Sims

Members Not Present: Judges Susan Block, Thomas Frawley, John Holstein and Nancy Rahmeyer; Commissioner John Payne; Senator Pat Dougherty; Representative Catherine Hanaway; Beth Dessem, Patrick Lynn, Frank Martin and Andrea Whitfield

Commission Staff Present: Gary Waint, Norma Rahm and Maggie Forbes

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Commission on Children's Justice was called to order by the Honorable Glenn Norton, Vice Chair, in the Division II Courtroom, Missouri Supreme Court, Jefferson City, Missouri at 10:00 a.m.

The Chair called for approval of the minutes from the meeting of February 17, 2003. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Judge Norton requested that Commission members turn in their expense reports.

Judge Norton advised that the agenda packet contained case specific correspondence but the Commission would not be discussing specifics related to particular cases. Such concerns should be forwarded to the appropriate agencies or persons responsible for addressing those issues.

II. ACCREDITATION

Ms. Cole-Agee introduced Carmen Schulze, Director of the Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies (MCCA). Ms. Schulze addressed the issue of the safety standards of 24-hour reformatories that are exempt from licensure. Missouri is the only state that allows anyone who thinks they are exempt to claim or file an exemption related to the religious institution exemption. She also stated that parents who place their children in these facilities often inaccurately assume that Missouri requires minimal safety standards, such as fire safety and sanitation, in order for these facilities to operate.

MCCA does recognize the need for such facilities but supports enactment of some level of health and safety standards. She added that MCCA members who are faith based affiliated have not had to change their religious identity to serve children to be licensed and current DFS licensing rules are open to children practicing their own faith. Ms. Schulze discussed possible solutions, including having separate programs for faith based institutions or having the standards of such institutions merged with DFS standards in some way.

Other recommended solutions offered by MCCA to improve the child welfare system are to renew the emphasis for DFS accreditation, have the courts and agencies review the ASFA requirements pertaining to filing petitions for termination of parental rights, and updating and revising the Missouri Child Fatality Review Panel statute.

III. PROTECTING CHILDREN BY PROTECTING MOMS

Colleen Coble and Nina Balsam with the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence made a presentation and presented the Commission with materials, a training curriculum and a video.

Their agency has been incorporated since 1980 and is the clearinghouse of training and technical assistance in Missouri. They have been working with OSCA and the Department of Social Services since the early 1990s to address appropriate responses to issues related to domestic violence and the co-occurrence of child maltreatment.

The presenters stated that all too often communities around the country, including the child welfare agencies, law enforcement and the courts, seek to hold the non-offending parent responsible in a domestic violence situation. The presenters suggested that this was an appropriate time to shift from the traditional approach. Instead of routinely removing children in such situations, there should be an effort made to keep the child and non-offending parent, typically the mother, together. In addition, the actual perpetrator of the abuse should be held accountable.

The Commission was advised that St. Louis County is one of six in the nation that has implemented the “Green Book Initiative”. The initiative is a system-wide, community based response to insure the safety of the non-offending parent and children and to hold the perpetrators accountable for the abuse. Cases are screened for domestic violence and appropriate court orders are entered. It was recommended that such a program should be implemented in other counties.

IV. SENATE BILL 43

This item was not presented.

V. CHILDREN’S TREATMENT SERVICES FUND

Denise Cross, Director of DFS gave the presentation. Ms. Cross advised that loss of federal funding had impacted the ability to fund services to children. From fiscal year 1999 to fiscal year 2003 the caseload was not fully funded. Funding used to support children, such as Medicaid and contracts to provide services, have been reduced. The adoption subsidy is available and is paid regardless of the income level of the adoptive parent.

Ms. Cross gave a detailed list of CTS services and advised that these are for preventive upfront services to help support the child and the family and to provide safety. Utilizing these resources up front might reduce the number of placements in alternative care.

VI. COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Judge Norton advised that the Commission should break into smaller work groups. Gary Wait of OSCA provided a handout on key issues and lead a discussion on the items under each issue. It was agreed that the four key issues to be addressed by the Commission would be (I) Prevention and

Efforts to Prevent Removal; (II) Hotline Intake; (III) Foster and Relative Care, Permanency; and (IV) Judicial/Court.

The Chair announced that four work groups would be established and that at the next meeting the workgroups would begin to define solutions for their assigned issue. Members who have preference for which work group they wish to be assigned should notify the Chair. The Commission members were reminded that the interim report was due March 28, 2003.

VII. NEXT MEETING/ADJOURNMENT

The Chair announced that the next meeting would be held in the Division II Courtroom, Missouri Supreme Court, Jefferson City, Missouri, at 10:00 a.m. on March 3, 2003.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.