

Indiana GAL/CASA

Advisory Commission Minutes

February 21, 2020

Members Present

Judge Darrin Dolehanty, Deena Personett, Magistrate Kimberly Schmaltz, Glenna Cheesman, Leslie Hendricks, Rehana Adat-Lopez, Kurt Kiefer, Katina Murray, Coleen Connor, Judge Stephen Galvin, Kristin Bishay, Suzanne Draper, Cindy Booth, Tonya Ruble-Richter

Ex Officio Members Present

Leslie Dunn, Lindsay Reynolds, Teresa Lyles, Stan Piercefield

Members Absent

Judge Susan Orth, Judge Stephanie Campbell, Magistrate Heather Mollo

Guests/Committee Chairs Present

Annette Craycraft

Welcome and Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Add Rehana as absent on the November 2019 minutes. Kurt moved to accept, Leslie Hendricks seconded, all moved to approve.

Committee Reports

State Conference/Training Committee

Public Relations and Legislative Committee-Annette

CASA Day March 4, 2020

Review of Presenters, 30 Year Anniversary T-Shirts

Certification Standards and Best Practices-Coleen

Committee has been very active, and is working on completing the Best Practices to update everything and create a final draft that is paginated with a Table of Contents

Judge Reports

Judge Galvin-Senate Bill 206 regarding when a child can be deposed may be pertinent to CASA. Prosecutors are very much in favor

Senate Bill 345-Interim Study Committee on Child Services

State Director Report

Question about Parental Participation Petitions-Discussion as to whether it is jurisdictionally required

Foster Parent Form-Training-After much communication, some items regarding CASA were removed, and other items were negotiated before the final draft

Foster parents can choose whether they use this form, file a different report, a letter, or nothing at all—nothing is required

Leslie sent out an email to the network about how the form is filed, as well as other instructions—CASA should not take the form from the foster parent and file it for them; it is their responsibility

Foster parents should not get a copy of the CASA report if they are not a party to the case

Glenna mentioned that she has received several calls from foster parents recently regarding the last question on the form that asks if they have received assistance from the CASA. Leslie said that we need to make it clear to the foster parents that we do not provide services, and that more education is needed.

GAP/Guardianships-Leslie has been asked to sit on a Value Stream Committee that is looking at the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP); DCS is in the process of evaluating and probably changing the criteria

Leslie believes we will start to see it used more often as a permanency option for children (based on her involvement in the committee and its goals).

Best Interest—Every decision, every hearing, every time!

We have to be prepared to make an argument for what is in the best interest of the child when we do not believe that a guardianship is best for the child

DCS Trends

Discovery-DCS served interrogatories on a CASA because CASA does not agree with them; this creates a challenge as most CASA programs do not have attorneys

This is due in part to new attorneys coming on board with DCS

Issues we do not agree on can be better handled at the CFTM

Leslie recently talked to the Deputy General Counsel about this, and the local DCS attorney was going to sit down with CASA and try to work it out, and will hopefully withdraw the interrogatories

Relatives/BI-DCS is only required by statute to exercise due diligence to look for suitable family members for the first 12 months of the case

We are seeing trends that DCS is using new tools to find family years into the case which is causing conflict with foster parents who have had the children for many years

FFPSA Judicial Workshop-Families First Prevention Services Act-Leslie is sitting on a task force that is working on analyzing and implementing this legislation

VOCA Grants-Leslie has been contemplating the possibility of writing a grant to help to provide attorneys for programs

VOCA prefers that this be done at the local county level, and programs can now apply at local level and can include a request for an attorney. It is important that it is stated that the attorney will be for the best interest of children, not client directed

Kappa Alpha Theta Anniversary-Cindy-They are having their 100th year anniversary celebration in Indianapolis in July and we will probably participate in some way in the events

Program Coordinator Report

Teresa provided an overview of changes to various programs in structure and leadership, and the steps we are taking with several new programs in Adams, Wells and Huntington Counties

Adjournment

Indiana GAL/CASA

Advisory Commission Minutes

May 15, 2020

Members Present

Judge Stephen Galvin, Judge Stephanie Campbell, Judge Darrin Dolehanty, Rehana Adat-Lopez, Brenda Matuszkiewicz, Cindy Booth, Tonya Ruble-Richter, Katina Murray, Kurt Kiefer, Leslie Hendricks, Suzanne Draper, Coleen Connor, Kristin Bishay, Deena Personett

Ex Officio Members Present

Leslie Dunn, Teresa Lyles, Lindsay Reynolds, Stan Piercefield

Members Absent

Judge Susan Orth, Magistrate Kimberly Schmaltz, Glenna Cheesman

Guests/Committee Chairs Present

Annette Craycraft—Legislative and PR Committee Chair, Katie Hall—Conference and Training Committee

Welcome and Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Advisory Commission Chair welcomed the members and asked for approval of the February meeting minutes. Rehana Adat-Lopez moved that the minutes be accepted as written, and Brenda Matuszkiewicz seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the minutes were passed as written.

Committee Reports

State Conference/Training Committee—Committee Chair Katie Hall announced that the 2020 Annual Spring Directors Meeting was held as a virtual event, and that the State Office and the Committee are still in the process of deciding whether the Annual Conference will be a live or virtual event in September of 2020 due to COVID-19. The decision will be made soon, but a conference will be held in one form or another.

Public Relations and Legislative Committee-Committee Chair Annette Craycraft reported that there were over 450 people in attendance for CASA Day at the State House on March 4, 2020 and that the event was very successful.

Certification Standards and Best Practices Committee- Committee Chair Coleen Connor stated that the Committee was not able to meet on the day of this Commission Meeting as planned. She asked Commission members to consider if there are any immediate best practices the Committee should develop for the network due to the pandemic.

Judge Reports

Judge Galvin reported that the number of CHINS filings in Monroe County has recently increased, and that there are currently about 50 children on a waiting list for a CASA volunteer, whereas in the past there were more volunteers than cases. He also noted that while the courts in Monroe County are set to open on June 1, 2020, he will still be holding many hearings virtually.

Judge Campbell reported that she recently had two full days of virtual hearings on CHINS cases. She noted that she has parents showing up to attend virtual hearings that she has never seen before in her courtroom.

State Director Report

State Director Leslie Dunn asked Stan Piercefield to provide an update on OPTIMA. Stan reported that there is a new password protocol going into place on July 1, 2020 for all OPTIMA users and that he would be sending out information to all program directors regarding the new protocol. He also stated that he is preparing a webinar training to assist new volunteers who are learning to use the program. Finally, Stan reported that the number of case log entries is up from previous months.

Leslie gave an update on the Impact Litigation. The case was dismissed on March 4, 2020 by a federal court judge who stated that the matter should be held in state, not federal court. So far, there has been no new filing on the matter at the state level. The "A Better Childhood" case is still moving forward citing failure to protect and failure to provide services by DCS.

Kristin Bishay, Coleen Connor, Deena Personett and Magistrate Mollo will be rotating off the Commission effective July 1, 2020. We will be holding elections and committee sign-ups in June to fill the empty seats and organize committees for the next fiscal year.

It was announced that the State GAL/CASA office will be closing the Indiana Child Advocates website and moving some content to the casa.IN.gov website over the next several weeks. It is time for our third round of grant distributions to certified GAL/CASA programs across the state. Since there have been some cost savings due to the pandemic, Leslie has requested permission to increase the amount of the third distribution to help offset needs of the local programs because of COVID-19 related costs and due to possible budget cuts at the county level.

Leslie reported that she has been having weekly calls with DCS Director Terry Stigdon. She reported that it is not correct that no children can be removed from their home after the new Family Preservation plan goes in effect on June 1, 2020. Rather, children will remain in the home with more services in place when it is safe to do so. Additionally, DCS has been asked to review all pending cases and send children home if it is safe to do so due to the pandemic.

As to the topic of resuming operations of trial courts, there were varied comments from both judges and program directors present as to what is occurring in their respective counties. It was decided that it would be a good idea to for the State Office to provide some guidance to local programs regarding volunteers returning to face-to-face interactions with children and families. Further, the availability of PPE for programs and volunteers was discussed. Information on The Market Place was sent out to programs where they can apply to receive PPE free of charge. Additionally, there is money available via the Cares Act to obtain PPE. It was noted that it is extremely important to have good communication with judges regarding resuming court processes. Members were encouraged to be watchful as plans are constantly changing as we are learning more about the spread of the virus.

Program Coordinator Report

Program Coordinator Teresa Lyles reported that the State Office is currently working through the certification process to start new GAL/CASA volunteer programs in Huntington and Wells Counties. Once certified, this will bring the number of counties with certified counties to 88 of our 92 counties. She also reported that Caitlin Cataldo has been named as the new Program Director in Elkhart County, and Brooke Wilcoxson is serving as interim director for Northeastern Indiana CASA, Inc. Additionally, Teresa reported that she and Stan Piercefield are going to be facilitating a Flex Training on the Initial Training for the new directors.

Adjournment

Having completed reports on the agenda, Kurt Kiefer moved that the meeting be adjourned; Rehana Adat-Lopez seconded the motion. All members voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned.