

Minutes

Senate Committee on Children and Youth and the House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs Meeting Jointly Wednesday, November 30, 2016

The Senate Committee on Children and Youth and the House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs met jointly on Wednesday, November 30, 2016, at 10:00 a.m., at the State Capitol Building, Room 171, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: **Senators** Stephanie Flowers, Chair; Linda Collins-Smith, Jonathan Dismang, Missy Irvin and Greg Standridge. **Representatives** George McGill, Chair, Mary Broadaway, Karilyn Brown, Mickey Gates, Justin Harris, Bob Johnson, Julie Mayberry, David Meeks, Marcus Richmond, Sue Scott, James Sturch and DeAnn Vaught.

Non-committee members present: **Senators** Ronald Caldwell, Jeremy Hutchinson, Gary Stubblefield and Jon Woods, **Representatives** Charles L. Armstrong, John Baine, Scott Baltz, Charles Blake, LeAnne Burch, Jana Della Rosa, R. Trevor Drown, Jon Eubanks, Kenneth B. Ferguson, Michael John Gray, Michelle Gray, David Hillman, Fredrick J. Love, Mark McElroy, Betty Overbey, Mathew Pitsch, James Ratliff. **Member-Elect Representative** Jeff Williams.

Senator Flowers called the meeting to order.

Consideration to Approve Minutes of October 27, 2016 [Exhibit C]

Representative Johnson made a motion to approve October 27, 2016 meeting minutes; Representative Vaught seconded the motion and without objection the minutes were approved.

Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Annual Report Card, State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016, July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 [Exhibit D]

Senator Flowers recognized Ms. Mischa Martin, Director, DCFS. Ms. Martin gave a summary of the report highlighting the following: (*See Exhibit D for the full summary*)

- During this period 35,493 reports of child maltreatment were accepted by the Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline, 83% were assigned to DCFS and 17% were assigned to the Arkansas State Police- Crimes Against Children Division (CACD). Fifteen percent were handled through Differential Response (DR)
- DCFS initiated 82% of its investigations on time during this period
- At the end of the year, there were 2,860 in-home cases open across the state, involving 6,604 children
- At the end of the quarter 4,947 children were in foster care, this represents a 12% increase from SFY 2015 when the total was 4,418. Currently there are 5,230 kids in foster care
- Nearly 60% of the children in care at the end of SFY 2016 had a permanency goal of reunification (return home) and almost 25% had a goal of adoption
- In 2016, 720 adoptions were finalized
- The average caseload statewide for this period was slightly above 28 cases per worker

DCSF will provide information on child support collections that the division oversees.

Representative Broadway asked if DCFS has any statistics on children that are available for adoption who have special needs. Ms. Martin followed up stating they can provide that information.

The committee discussed adoption subsidy both pre and post adoption and how much is paid per child. In order to receive subsidy a child must meet the special needs criteria outlined on page (18) of the report.

Representative Della Rosa asked for the average number of placements a child experiences while in foster care and the maximum number of placements a child has had. Ms. Martin stated that she would get that information to the committee.

Senator Flowers asked staff to schedule a meeting for December 14th to hear the Crimes Against Children Division (CACD), Oversight Report. She expressed her interest in receiving information on a particular case that occurred in Northwest Arkansas.

Senator Collins-Smith asked if DCFS can provide a report on families they are involved with for the reason given of, “ food inadequacy” and whether or not those families are receiving food stamps. Ms. Martin stated that she would get with the division responsible for food stamps and see if correlations can be run and brought back to the committee.

DHS – DCFS, Review of Rule Regarding Children Missing from Out-of-State Placements

[Exhibit E]

Senator Flowers recognized Ms. Christin Harper, Administrator, DCFS. She provided a brief summary of changes made regarding children missing from out-of-home placements. The two major changes to the current protocol are (1) once a child goes missing after the incident has been reported to law enforcement and a missing persons report is filed, staff must now also call the report in to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and (2) once a child is located and if that child has been identified as being a sex trafficking victim, staff must also report that to local law enforcement. *(See Exhibit E for the full rule)*

Representative Sturch made a motion to recommend approval, Representative Meeks seconded the motion and without objection the motion was approved.

Data Collection on Dependency/Neglect Cases [Exhibit F]

Senator Flowers recognized Jerald Sharum, Deputy Counsel, DHS – Office of Chief Counsel. Mr. Sharum presented an overview of the, “Caseload Report for County Legal Operations: Child Welfare Cases “for the period August 1, 2016 – October 31, 2016. He stressed that this is a preliminary report. The development of the report is based upon four principle characteristics: (1) the number of days an attorney is in court (2) the number of hearings that are held (3) miles traveled and (4) the average length of a hearing. The data presented is collected by county, judicial district and case type (Dependency/Neglect or Families in Need of Services). To date he noted that the number of child welfare cases increased from 3,435 at the end of January to 3,709 at the end of October. This represents a net gain of 274 cases during 2016, or an increase of 9.5%. *(See Exhibit F for the full report)*

Senator Flowers asked that Mr. Sharum and the OCC present this report on a quarterly basis to the committee.

Other Business

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for Wednesday, December 14, 2016 at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

DRAFT