



Support and Retention Workgroup Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2014, 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
DFS Central – Carson City Room

PRESENT

Richard Egan – NV Health & Human Services, Denise Parker – DFS QPI Coordinator, Shannon Rooney – DFS Special Projects Unit, Lauren Soskin – DFS RDR Unit, Karlene Ulibarri – Bountiful Family Services, Lani Aitken – DFS RDRU.

1. Grievance Policy
2. Transition from Initial Licensing to Licensing Renewals
3. Licensing Consistency
4. Advocate for FP changes
5. New Guidance – changes/information
6. QPI Workgroup Descriptions
7. Attrition
8. HUB Homes

MINUTES

Grievance Policy

Denise discussed the different grievance policies from agencies in other states, these policies were sent out a couple of months ago to everyone. We have to take those benchmark policies and make them current with what's happening with the Ombudsman's process and send it up to Executive Management.

Transition from Initial Licensing to Licensing Renewals

Karlene asked if we should wait for the survey results to talk about transitioning from Initial Licensing to Licensing Renewals. Shannon stated from the preliminaries that she saw on the survey, they were the same issues that were talked about before and it may be best to get the final results of the survey to see what they are. Karlene commented that it seemed to go from a ton of support to minimal support, Shannon concurred. Karlene wanted to know if there was a budget to look at options, Shannon said she didn't have an answer for that right now. One of the things that Shannon is doing with the Foster Parent Champion Program is trying to get more support for Foster Parents. The survey showed several responses that the Foster Parents do not feel they have support. Shannon is trying to grow the Foster

Parent Champion program and this is one of the things that has come out of the survey as well. Karlene asked if we could use the Foster Parent Champion Program to come up with ideas. Ideally it would be nice for these families to have their own Licensing Case Managers, but it's not realistic since there isn't a budget and each licensing worker has over 100 homes to manage and once a year contact is about as much as they can do right now.

A lot of homes are being referred to the FPC Program, and caregivers are reaching out themselves. On the date of this meeting, Shannon has three of her people out either at CFT's or home visits with caregivers. Karlene wanted to know if it was a goal of Shannon's to have each Foster Parent be assigned to a Foster Parent Champion. Shannon stated she only has four part time people at the present time. Lauren reiterated that the goal for Licensing is to get case loads down so Licensing Representatives can be more supportive, which is more feasible in the short term. Having more staff in Licensing to get the caseloads down is how we can have more service, so the Licensing Representatives can be in the home more often to support the families and attend more CFTs. The national average of a Licensing Representative is 25-32 homes. Some DFS Representatives have up to 120 homes. This means we would have to double our staff to accomplish our goals. Foster Parents would stay in the program if they were getting the support they needed and there would be less fallout.

Currently we are focusing on keeping the quality homes and not spending as much time on the homes that were not viable resources. Rather than spending so much time on the less viable homes, which does not make much sense. It's very important to look at particular homes and try to narrow them down to the most active, productive homes. It's important not to spend a lot of time on homes that are licensed for adoption only for children ages 0-6 months. We need to have our Licensing Representatives spend more time on the homes that are actually taking placements. This is where we need to place our focus. We are currently looking at all the homes that have closed since January and are evaluating if they were a great resource for us and what we can do to support them and get them back. We also would like to know why they left and are conducting surveys to address this item.

Licensing Consistency

We all agree that we have licensing inconsistencies, but this is not a conversation we can have without Licensing being involved. Shannon discussed concerns from four Foster Parents who were venting during the last two meetings, stating how frustrating the home visits were as they went from one renewal to the next. Their concerns were the inconsistency between workers. Although the home remain the same, one year it is fine and the next it is unacceptable.

This inconsistency can sometimes be due to policy changes since the NACs are changing. This was understood, but the same NAC practices had different workers interpreting it in different ways. We've had this issue come up in many different meetings and it's very frustrating to Foster Parents, not knowing from one worker to the next what's going to happen. Lauren (Licensing) was at this meeting and investigated the caregiver's concern and brought it up at the Supervisor's unit meeting in which they discussed NAC interpretations. NACs are now being discussed at every Licensing unit meeting.

Supervisors go over a couple of NACs and discuss as a group how DFS Licensing is going to interpret the NAC rather than use an individual interpretation.

Richard stated he has been lucky enough to have the same Licensing Representative and she always gives them a heads up and lets them know what's changing and what they will be discussing when she comes out. Fortunately they have not moved within the last six years and have been able to keep the same worker. Richard also stated that it's great to hear that we are talking about NACs and exactly how they read because when he had to teach it, they were a little vague.

It's a process for the Licensing Representatives to be on the same page because you have to get the Licensing Supervisors on the same page then it trickles down to the staff and to agencies. Licensing is having agency meetings quarterly now with Agency Directors. Lauren stated that all of the meetings start with a discussion about NACs. Denise stated the issue is if we don't communicate this out to our families properly, we are going to have the same kind of outpour that we had before.

The Licensing Representative knows the family well, they know the need and can help coordinate and be an advocate for the children. The process alone is so confusing for the Foster Parents who are just coming in, this is another support that is needed. Richard mentioned that once you learn the process, it's not difficult, but trying to learn it is the difficult part, this is when they really need the support. Families are leaving in the first two years, Licensing can help with the loss of Foster Parents during this period of time. As a temporary measure, the Foster Parent Champion Program is starting to help, they are starting to make those connections. Every caregiver will have different needs. We can use the survey to identify the needs and then use the Foster Parent Champions to outline the consistencies.

New Guidance - changes/information

Richard made a point that Foster Parents are good at doing what they are told to do when they are given a definite timeframe, i.e., notices that state you need to hang a fire extinguisher. When the timeframe is realistic, it's understood by the Foster Parent and it gives them time to get it done. The Caregiver Courier is a good way to communicate this type of information to our families, but unfortunately we don't have all of the Foster Parent's email addresses, so the Caregiver Courier is not reaching all of the Foster Parents. We need to brainstorm various ways to make sure we use all viable processes to get information out to our Foster Parents. We need to use all the ways in which we let people know about the Caregiver Survey which was successfully communicated to the Foster Parents and use that same process to get other information out to them.

How do we get the word out that we are going to be communicating with Foster Parents more through email so that people don't dismiss information in their email? Denise stated that we are going to have a Meet and Greet in November which is attendance is going to be encouraged that everyone be present and this is where we will talk about the Partnership Agreement, which is the policy that we are trying to introduce. At the Meet and Greet, we need to ask the Foster Parents the question, "How would you like to get your information?" "How can we get new issues and/or information out to you?"

Karlene suggested that possibly on all of the voicemail messages, or when people are put on hold, similar to what they do for advertising, we have a 10 second message that says “by the way, just be ready for a change...” just before the recording comes on for you to leave a message. This can reach many people, this is a good way to get new information out. Another barrier is DFS needs to be able to identify what information is significant to disseminate to Foster Parents. Lauren talked about putting a “NAC of the Month” in the Caregiver Courier, to ensure that the Licensing Supervisors and staff are talking about the same NACs that are important to the Foster Parents at that particular time. Lauren stated in the Supervisor’s meetings, they always make a decision on the NACs and those decisions are disseminated down to the staff.

It was also suggested that we could have a NAC Corner, like the QPI Corner in the Caregiver Courier. With a NAC Corner, they can look back at information related to the last NAC. We have a lot of parents that sit in the Visitation Center and can look at information on the bulletin boards. We need to move forward on the boards to post updated information. Shannon stated that she can fund the bulletin boards if they are purchased before September 30th.

Denise wants everyone to know that the intent of QPI is for any and all members of the group, Caregivers, Agency Partners, Caseworkers, etc., to know that the workgroups are a safe place to vent, complain or to say whatever you want to say. The responsibility of the workgroup is to identify themes and issues that we want to tackle and then move forward with those issues to Executive Management to make changes in policies and procedures. We need to have QPI going back in the right direction with our participants.

QPI Workgroup Descriptions

Descriptions were presented at the Implementation Team Meeting. Karlene would like Shannon to email the descriptions to her. All of the workgroup descriptions were changed and they all reflect what the groups are doing.

Attrition

Attrition is trying to take a look at other ways for retention. In the Nevada Regional meeting, they are having the same problem, it’s not just in Clark County, they are also wondering how to keep families. One of the things that is being talked about is the need for our Licensing folks to have more contact with our families. The goal is if we get the caseloads down a little bit, then we can do more quality work, this is everyone’s goal, which we hope will happen. The attrition is two-fold, for our group and for our homes.

HUB Homes

We haven’t gotten this program yet, but the County government has a program that maps by zip code all the foster homes, it also puts in stores, community centers, churches (geo-mapping). Until we get that program, QA is working on getting the program from the County because they have a license, once we get it here then we can take the next steps. The program will identify the valuable resources for a

particular area by zip code. Shannon talked about this being a part of the Foster Parent Champion Program assigning Champions to the HUB Homes so they can be supported, but she is not sure that will happen because it will depend on her resources. Richard stated that this is already happening, where homes look to a particular person in that area for guidance and support. If we can get it finalized it will be a benefit. To be able to support an activity in a particular area, i.e., picnic for new parents in an area, or when respite is needed, that is a valuable resource.

Agenda items for next month:

- Communication with Foster Parents
- November Meet and Greet
- Case Workers Supervisors – attending Workgroup Meeting