

JUDICIAL DISTRICT 2A SUMMIT TEAM MEETING REPORT FOR April 2009

The Judicial District 2A Summit Team first met on April 11, 2007. The group was facilitated by Associate Juvenile Judge Gerald W. Magee. Initial team member/participants were: Jan Streich, DECAT community coordinator for Cerro Gordo, Floyd, and Chickasaw Counties; Cassie McAllister, D.H.S. supervisor; Bob Lincoln, multi-county CPC/case manager; Charlane Pralle-Janssen, At Risk Counselor for the Hampton-Dumont Community School District; Peg Eppolito, substance abuse counselor at Prairie Ridge Addiction Treatment Services, Mason City; Scott Hand, District 2 Court Administrator; Gregg Rosenblatt, Assistant Cerro Gordo County Attorney; Janet Brown, Iowa State University Extension; Paul and Nancy Magnall, Waverly, Iowa, foster/adoptive parents; Becky Heilskov, child protective investigator for D.H.S.; Jean McAleer, Francis Lauer Youth Services located in Mason City, Iowa; Suzan McKiness, area CASA coordinator; and Ted Hovda, attorney from Garner, Iowa. State Senator Amanda Reagan and State Representative Linda Upmeyer also attended this meeting.

At the initial meeting the Children's Justice Initiative Summit held in Des Moines in March of 2007 was discussed, including recommendations of the PEW Commission on children in foster care. Statistics were presented regarding child abuse in our area, reports of re-abuse rates, numbers of children in foster care, and the incidents of parental substance abuse. Introductions were made and there was extensive conversation regarding collaboration and desired outcomes of the 2A summit team. These desired outcomes were identified as expediting the adoption process, implementing alternative dispute resolution, achieving permanency for children, providing better services to adolescents, improving kinship care, improving independent living program, improved collaboration with AEA and school districts regarding special needs and special education programs, improving access to mental health services, and providing assistance with transportation. A series of chores/tasks were developed, and four work groups were proposed.

The team met again on August 17, 2007. Priorities of the Supreme Court and Summit committee members were discussed. Priorities were identified as: 1) help children at risk of out-of-home placement; 2) help children already in out-of-home placement by shortening the duration of foster care and accelerating permanency; 3) look to improve services for children and youth with mental health needs; 4) increase support for foster parents; 5) improve communication between agencies. Progress since the April meeting included distribution of directories in certain areas of the Second Judicial District identifying resources, agencies, and contact information. There was also noted the program of "functional family therapy" targeted toward children ages 11 to 17, which was now available for Juvenile Court Services cases. Also noted was a new program at Prairie Ridge Addiction Treatment Services entitled "Taking Charge" which is an intensive treatment service for treatment of methamphetamine use. There was extensive conversation concerning services provided by case management, and Bob Lincoln indicated that case management could participate in providing assessments for children if requested by juvenile court. Work groups were slightly reorganized and memberships filled out, as follows: 1) helping children at risk of out-of-home placement, (team members: Jan Streich, Becky Heilskov, Charlane Pralle-Janssen); 2) expediting permanency, minimizing numbers of out-of-home placements, and increasing support for foster parents (team members: Scott Hand, Cassie McAllister, Suzan McKiness,

Paul and Nancy Magnall); 3) improve services for children and youth with substance abuse and mental health needs (team members: Gregg Rosenblatt, Peg Eppolito, Judge Magee, Bob Lincoln, Jean McAleer); and, 4) improving communication (team members: Janet Brown, Judge Magee, and Ted Hovda). It was agreed that the work groups would meet within 60 days, and a large group meeting would be held in November.

The large group met again on November 16, 2007. Reports from work groups were reviewed. All work groups identified strategies and ideas to improve their areas.

The next large group meeting was on May 2, 2008. Reports were again received from the work groups. The communication work group had collected a large number of directories from several different counties of service providers and agencies dealing with children and youth. Ways to distribute this information to social workers, schools, and other agencies were discussed. The mental health/substance abuse work group presented the idea of case management/CPC being a “navigator” for children in need of substance abuse or mental health treatment that are involved in the court’s system. The provision of mental health/medical services in schools were discussed, including a pilot project from Black Hawk County. The new “array of services” utilized by the Department of Human Services was discussed, including the use of LPHA assessments, remedial services, and the role of service providers in assisting with transportation issues. There was also extensive discussion of the need for “crisis intervention” services being made available quickly to families when the need arose. Many grant funds in the amount of \$3,000 were to be used toward the funding of a “Strengthening Families” program in our area.

Associate Juvenile Judge Gerald Magee had been active in being a coordinator/facilitator for our district team, and had been active on two work groups. On May 2, 2008 he announced his intent to retire as of September 30, 2008.

The next district task force meeting was held on March 13, 2009. There were several changes in the group roster. Charlane Pralle-Janssen was no longer able to participate due to a job change. It was agreed that Area Education Agency 267 should be contacted to participate in the district group if possible. Also there is a new director at the Mental Health Center of North Iowa in Mason City, Andy Eastwood, who will be contacted about joining the task group. Karen Salic, Hancock County Attorney, has agreed to be the new county attorney representative on the group. Judge Gerald Magee is still actively participating as a senior judge. The group also believed that David Carlson, sub district supervisor for Juvenile Court Services, would be a valuable member of the group and should be invited.

Scott Hand reviewed the results of the mini grant funding that were utilized for the “Strengthening Families” program. The funds were used for training facilitators. The “Strengthening Families” program has been well-received by families, and some pamphlets describing the program were distributed for use by group members. It was noted that Juvenile Court Services is making use of the “Strengthening Families” program. There has been involvement by the Mason City YMCA in the “Strengthening Families” program, and television station KIMT has expressed interest in doing a feature on the “Strengthening Families” program. Also discussed were some new programs offered by Francis Lauer Youth Services. The “Stepping Stones for Women and Men” is a new program, for supervised apartment living, for individuals aged 16 to 21 years. There is capacity for six males and six females in that program. Parents can also bring their infants to participate in

the supervised apartment living program. There was also a presentation about the “Dream Team” team meeting to be held on March 19, 2009, a youth-driven and youth-focused group meant to help children in foster care make connections with each other, and with successful young people who have “aged out” of the foster care system. There was also discussion of the possibility of trying to form another “Elevate” group in our area. A one page “Service Directory” which could be laminated and utilized by area social workers and Juvenile Court Officers and FSRP providers was brought to the meeting by Judge Magee. We will meet again within six months, and the work groups will meet prior to our next large group meeting.

Members of our group all believe that one of the major benefits to having the task force group consisting of members from many agencies in our area has vastly improved communication. This occurs not only during meetings, but during the work groups, and also during day-to-day activities. We all feel it is important to be aware of what resources are available for children, what the limitations are and why, and who can be contacted if certain issues arise. The use of the mini grant funding to enhance the “Strengthening Families” program in our area is also seen as a success by the group.

A difficulty has been, with a relatively large task group and several work groups, individual’s availability to attend meetings, and scheduling meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregg R. Rosenblatt
District Associate Judge
2A Judicial District

District 2 Children's Justice Initiative Summit Team
(Full Team List)

Kurt Wilke, Chief Judge of the Second Judicial District

Victor G. Lathrop, Associate Juvenile Court Judge

James A. McGlynn, Associate Juvenile Court Judge

Gregg Rosenblatt, District Associate Court Judge

Scott Hand, District Court Administrator

Thomas Southard, Chief Juvenile Court Officer

Tina Meth Farrington, Assistant County Attorney for Carroll, Sac & Calhoun Counties

Kenneth Riedel, DHS Service Area Manager

Luann Burgers, DHS Line Supervisor

Shannon Leighty, Asst. Public Defender - Story County

Ted Hovda, Attorney & Guardian Ad Litem

Patty Freund, Boone County Clerk of District Court

George Belitsos, CEO Youth & Shelter Services

Jean McAleer, Executive Director of Francis Lauer Youth Services

Steve Haberman, Middle School Principle, Clarion

Jan Schneider, CASA Volunteer