

DHS Advisory Committee
Thursday, June 19, 2008
Meeting Notes

Present:

Eliot Abarbanel, Managing Attorney, Prairie State
Legal Services
Phyllis Baxter, Administrator, DuPage County
Family and Community Resource Center, IDHS
Pat Derossett, Assistant State's Attorney, Child
Support
Candace King, ED, DuPage Federation on Human
Services Reform
Kathy Mills, ED, Love Christian Clearinghouse
Elaine Moss, DuPage County Community Services

Kara Murphy, Managing Director, Access DuPage
Kathryn Nelson, DuPage Federation on Human
Services Reform
Carol Simler, ED, DuPage PADS
Phil Smith, Dupage County Community Services
Lisa Snipes, Development Director, Serenity House
Susan Sperry, Resettlement Director, World Relief
Pam Terrell Director of Community Services
Catholic Charities

Welcome and Introductions:

The group was convened by Phyllis Baxter, who welcomed the participants, and asked each member to describe his or her role in the human service system. She explained that the purpose of this group is to provide a framework to make sure we all work together for the benefit of our mutual customers, as well as to help the IDHS work with community agencies. She indicated that she hopes this group can be task oriented, and focused toward resolution of the issues that affect our agencies and our customers. She emphasized that her personal commitment is to excellent customer service, and encouraged participants to contact her with any concerns or issues that may arise.

Since several members have indicated that they need to leave early, the group discussed scheduling of the next meeting and a meeting schedule. The next meeting of this group will take place on Friday, August 1, 2008 from 1:30 to 3:00 PM at this office.

Mission of DHS Advisory Council

There was intense discussion that a clear mission for the Advisory Council is needed. People discussed: Why do we need this? Some of the suggested reasons included:

- It provides an opportunity to forge an authentic partnership and to open communication that has not always been available.
- It provides a place to bring up problems and resolve them together, especially when one organization may need help from others.
- It can create understanding, increased awareness, trust, and a sense of shared challenges about the obstacles we individually face.

One participant commented that, when a relationship has been developed, "At the very least we are less quick to criticize". It was emphasized that DHS needs to be open to a two way communication.

During this discussion, Phyllis Baxter was called from the room due to an office crisis, and Candace King facilitated much of the meeting. She asked the group: What would make you feel it was worth your time to participate in this group? Some of the responses were:

There must be concrete outcomes as a result of meeting. The group wants a roster, both of the committee members and of the DHS staff. They want minutes of the meetings, and most importantly, they want annual goals and a defined work plan that will permit us to evaluate whether we have accomplished the goals. In summary, they want to know that "It made a difference coming here." Some of the results they hope to see include:

- Improved Communication, both formal and informal, between this office and the community;
- Good Advocates
- Barriers (Fixed Prem.)
- Development of Synergy, of collaborative initiatives, of collaboration around Problems

The group would like to see an Orientation to this FCRC on the agenda for the next meeting. This would include information about the office structure, staffing, case loads, functions, decision making structure, reporting structure

Candace asked the participants several more questions.

1. What do we think this office needs from its Community?
 - a. DHS staff need training on community resources. Maybe DHS should sponsor a Resource Fair and invite agencies in to share information about their services.
 - b. DHS staff should find some way to participate in Community Connections
 - c. Maybe there should be a needs survey of DHS staff to identify what they're interested in learning.

2. If there were **One Thing** you could do regarding this DHS office that would make a significant difference, what would it be? Their responses were:
 - a. Fix the Phones. *Fix the Phones.* **Fix the darn Phones!**
 - i. Answer them!
 - ii. Return calls.
 - iii. The switchboard operator needs to know the right phone number for staff and not transfer callers into oblivion.
 - iv. When you call, the voice mailbox is full, the lines are busy and no voicemail comes on, it just doesn't work.
 - v. Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring...
 - vi. What about finding alternatives to phones, like email?
 - vii. There was extensive discussion on the phone problem. It was clear to all that there is both a technology component and a human component to the phone problem.
 - b. In some circumstances, community agencies need easy and simple access to client information. (We should inventory the circumstances when this is the case and figure out ways for them to get the information they need.)
 - c. Susan Sperry from World Relief commented that there's an easier thing: she needs this office to issue temporary medical cards. She'd like to hear from Phyllis how that can happen. (Phyllis responded to clarify whether Susan was hoping that refugees could get 'temp mec' (temporary medical cards) prior to approval of the case, or whether she was looking for a temp mec immediately upon approval. If Susan meant prior to approval, there is no policy that would allow the FCRC to do that. If it's immediately upon approval, we can discuss how to do that.)
 - d. Pat Derosset of the State's Attorney's office mentioned that they are having problems finding supports for noncustodial parents who are in need of employment.

3. If we had a really effective DHS Advisory Committee, what would it be doing?
 - a. Case studies and brainstorming around collaborative problem resolution;
 - b. Talking about unmet needs and developing solutions;
 - c. Setting goals and evaluating whether we got there.