

**Illinois Department of Human Services  
Community Advisory Committee  
September 12, 2008  
Meeting Notes**

**Present:**

Eliot Abarbanel, Managing Attorney, Prairie State Legal Services	Kathryn Nelson, Program Director, DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform
Beth Epstein, Program Director, DuPage PADS	
Cathy Ficker-Terrill, CEO, Ray Graham Association	Susan Sperry, Resettlement Director, World Relief
Myralee Khouri, Ray Graham Association	
Candace King, Executive Director, DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform	
Kathy Mills, Executive Director, LOVE Christian Clearinghouse	<b>Absent:</b>
Elaine Moss, Assistant Director, DuPage County Human Services Division	Phyllis Baxter, IDHS Daniel Williams, IDHS Lottie Wiggins, IDHS Kathy McAlister, IDHS

The meeting started at 1:30 PM, as scheduled. The above listed individuals were present. IDHS staff were absent. No prior communication had occurred to indicate IDHS would be unable to attend, so Candace and Kathryn attempted to contact administrative staff at IDHS to find out the reason for the absence or to locate a representative of IDHS that could attend. The first attempt was unsuccessful since the assistant administrator and the Regional administrator were both at lunch. An office supervisor was contacted to find out who was in charge when senior administrative staff were absent. The supervisor was unable to locate the chain of command list and apologized that he could not attend. This supervisor later contacted the assistant administrator upon his return from lunch, but the administrator failed to come into the meeting.

In the absence of anyone from DHS, the group first discussed whether to simply leave. The group decided to remain and work through the agenda as best they could. The items on the agenda about the issues raised at the last meeting (Actions taken to improve phone service, Client Information Possibilities, Health Care and Employment and Training) were deferred to a future meeting when DHS is present.

Candace and Kathryn reported what they knew about the phone service improvements, which was that a substantial amount of money had been spent to increase the electronic storage for voice mail, but that there were still major issues regarding the overall capacity of the phone service to the building. Their understanding of the situation is that, since this space was originally designed as warehouse space, the utility service to the building is not adequate for its present use as office space, with its intensive needs for electrical and phone service. Hence, the only long term solution that has been identified is to relocate the facility. Further, it is clear that there is a technological component to the phone problem, which has been partially addressed, and a human component, which remains problematic. DHS staff are carrying high caseloads, and are prioritizing their time to serve face to face customers rather than return phone calls.

The participants began a discussion of Mission for this committee, as well as Vision, Values and Goals. The following was proposed:

The proposed mission of this committee is

- to serve as a forum to open two way dialogue between DHS and the Community for the purpose of improving customer service;

- to identify gaps in the system for individuals and to implement collaborative strategies to fill those gaps;
- to identify unmet needs for people in poverty from this County and bring those issues to the attention of those organizations or individuals who have the ability to address them;
- to hold IDHS accountable to achieve its mission.

There was discussion about the role of this committee, and whether it is distinct from other groups, such as the one sponsored by the Illinois Hunger Coalition and the Community Connections group. It was clear that these participants perceive a need for a leadership group that focuses on making change that is apparent to the community, and that it does not duplicate other groups.

Prior to adjourning, the group wanted to discuss the absence of IDHS staff. There was concern that the unexplained absence reflected a lack of respect for the participants, and the community at large. This was particularly evident since no other staff from the office attempted to come in and discuss the absence of Ms. Baxter and this was even of greater concern since she had convened the meeting. There was discussion about whether the fact that a group of non-DHS individuals were in the office unescorted constituted a safety hazard, but Candace and Kathryn assured the group that they were adequately chaperoned.

The next meeting was set for Friday, October 17, 2008 at 2:00 PM, pending confirmation from Phyllis. The suggested agenda for the next meeting should include:

1. Review and obtain feedback on the proposed mission from Phyllis Baxter;
2. Receive an update on customer service to primary and secondary customers, meaning low income\* persons and the partner agencies that also serve them;
3. Discussion on how DHS and its partner agencies serving the same populations can enhance mutual collaboration and mutual respect.

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The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.