

Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel (MCCRP)

November 10, 2020 Meeting

Minutes

Persons Present:

Wilma Brier
Kathleen Dunn
Laura Brown
Angela English

Kay Farley
Marci McCoy-Roth
Stacey McNeely
Sarah Stanton

Guest Speakers from Montgomery County Child Welfare Services (CWS):

Sophie Hotch, Social Worker, Foster and Adoptive Parent Services
Sarah Lewis, Supervisor
Charonne Randall, Supervisor for Recruitment and Retention

Welcome

Marci McCoy-Roth called the meeting to order.

Review and Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the October 13, 2020 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. Wilma Brier made a motion to approve the minutes. Sarah Stanton seconded the motion, which was approved.

Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families

Sophie Hotch presented a PowerPoint presentation, *Foster Care Information Meeting*, which provided an overview of the information shared with prospective resource families during the agency-hosted information meetings. The agency offers these meetings each month. The meetings have been in-person meeting, but are now being offered virtually given the COVID-19 pandemic.

The information shared during these information meetings includes a presentation of the requirements for being a resource family. The agency gets a lot of inquiries, but some people drop out after learning of the requirements.

- Some families cannot meet the physical/space requirements in their homes.
- Some families are only interested in adoption. The agency does not have an adoption-only track as such a track does not meet the needs of the county. Resource families are licensed as both foster care and adoption homes. The resource families must be willing to take both type of placements.

Laura Brown asked a question about the number of inquiries versus the number of families completing the process. In October 2020, the agency received 62 inquiries. Twenty-two individuals attended the October information meeting. Of those 22 individuals, 14 individuals took an application. On average, the agency receives about 4 completed applications per month.

The agency is receiving an increased number of inquiries during the pandemic, but many do not meet the requirements.

Kathleen Dunn asked whether the agency reaches out to the alumni organizations in the area regarding recruitment. Shortly before the COVID-19 shutdown, the agency partnered with a college for an event. They have not reached out to all of the alumni groups.

Marci McCoy-Roth asked about the retention rate of foster parents. The longest serving foster parent is 85 years old and has taken many teenagers over the years. Some foster parents leave after the first placement. Other foster parents adopt their foster children and drop out when their families are complete. **Angela English will take a look at the retention numbers.**

Ms. McCoy-Roth also asked about whether there are barriers to completing the applications. The agency tries to do front-end screening to facilitate the process. Some families cannot initially meet all of the requirements or make the needed commitment but come back to the agency at a later time when they can meet the requirements and/or make the commitment.

Stacey McNeely asked if there is a follow-up process to reach out to the individuals that drop-out of the recruitment process. The agency does gather contact information on the sign-in sheets for the information meetings. The agency, however, has not wanted to put pressure on individuals if the individuals are not self-motivated to proceed.

A suggestion was made to send a follow-up postcard to offer additional information. In the information meetings, the social worker really emphasizing her availability to answer questions. The social worker spends a lot of time up-front with the prospective resource families and is seeing a payoff for that effort. Whenever she receives a contact or paperwork, she immediately follows-up with the person and explains the next steps.

To increase the connection with the prospective resource families, the agency added a new narrative in the application asking the individuals “what would you want someone to tell the foster child about your family”.

Even though Montgomery County has 20 out of Maryland’s 34 Hispanic-speaking foster care homes, the county needs more Hispanic-speaking foster care homes. The county also needs more African-American families. Ms. Dunn suggested reaching out to bi-lingual schools to help with recruitment.

Ms. McCoy-Roth inquired about geo-mapping information on the children coming into foster care and the licensed resource homes. Ms. English shared a map showing the foster homes by zip code and a map showing the zip codes for CWS removals. The data on the removals is from 2018. The agency is trying to get more current information.

The agency also needs more homes for teenagers and families who are available after hours for emergency placements.

Relatives who take children in emergency situations are usually not getting any financial support, at least, initially. Some relatives are willing to take in children, but just cannot handle it financially. The relatives can apply for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which provides some financial support. It takes time to get approval for a guardianship agreement and/or restricted resource home license. It would be helpful to have an expedited process for relatives.

The agency has been asking prospective resource families about where they heard about the opportunity. The internet is the most often source of information. Dates of the information meetings are posted on the agency’s website at

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/CYF/CYFFosterCareMeetings.html>.

The faith community has been a good partner for recruitment and information meetings. A faith community event is planned in January 2021 for the northern part of Montgomery County.

There was consensus to devoting the December meeting to discussing the recruitment and retention background materials provided by the agency and ideas for improving recruitment and retention processes.

December Staff Wellness Hour Brown Bag

Ms. McCoy Roth previously suggested hosting a mini-workshop on meditation for the agency social workers. There was agreement on the topic. Ms. Brown and Ms. Dunn volunteered to explore options for a trainer who would provide the training at no cost.

October 1, 2020 Forum - *Many Pathways to Wellness*

Kay Farley reported on the October 1st forum co-hosted by the Montgomery County's Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council (AODAAC), Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC), and MCCRCP. The planning committee for the forum recently had a debriefing session. One hundred sixty-three people registered for the Forum, but only 57 people actually attended. Some of the feedback was that people had difficulty accessing the Microsoft Teams platform. A follow-up survey was sent to all people that registered for the event. The feedback received thus far from those who attended the virtual meeting were very positive.

The planning committee began discussion about a 2021 event. It is likely to also be held as a virtual meeting. Each of the three advisory groups (AODAAC, MHAC, and MCCRCP) were asked to provide feedback on the timing of the event - should the event return to a meeting in May or stay as a meeting in October. There was consensus that October was a less busy month and would have fewer conflicts with other meetings.

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: December 8, 2020