

Rock County Steering Committee Meeting 5-9-22

Abbreviations & Acronyms

FG – Focus Group

CPS – Child Protective Services

CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates

HS – Human Services

Welcome Opening Remarks & Introductions

Attendees

- Amber Johnson
- Ashley Brock-Baca, Senior Research Associate at the Butler Institute for Families at University of Denver
- Kate Luster, Rock County Human Services Director
- Tera O'Connor, Deputy Human Services Director
- Jamie Proctor, CPS Supervisor Rock County
- Robin Gleason, CPS case manager
- Harriet Everette, kinship foster parent.
- Harriet Everette, Foster Parent-Family
- Rachel Belanger – Foster partner
- Amber Johnson – Social worker with Rock County for 7 years.
- CASA Representative Sandy Johnson – Executive Director CASA Rock County.

Review of Group Agreements & Decision-making

Review of project values: Integrity, Equity, Transparency, Competence, Partnership.

Group Concerns and questions were raised.

Discussion

- Kate Luster: At a recent county board meeting, a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteer shared concern about this process and its integrity, stating that it is inappropriate for human services staff to participate on the steering committee. We have two human services staff on this steering committee, and we want to be cognizant of that, and to convey to all here our openness to feedback, and that we're wanting to hear concerns. This was a one-way comment rather than part of a larger discussion. Afterward I let the person know the Frequently Asked Questions location. (I am not sure I see it as our role to engage in that explanation.)

- Ashley: maybe that's something a county board could assist with?
- A steering committee member who is a parent partner responded: I had heard similar questions coming from foster parents. As a representative who's not in CPS or Human services, I am comfortable with members of the steering committee.
- Charmaine: we want this in the minutes, having this response is helpful. It is very important to have that staff and their knowledge on this steering committee.
- A committee member from CASA: A lot of members in the community are concerned about optics. I struggle with it myself. When we're talking about children and families we serve, it's difficult for people to think it's an unbiased assessment when top leadership is on the committee. I said to that individual, 'it is what it is,' we understand your concerns. People need to be able to say this in a public forum, though I'm not sure it's appropriate this individual spoke on behalf of CASA.
- Charmaine – I appreciate that, and it's important to bring it up in the interest of transparency. I want to emphasize these concerns have been communicated widely, and also to encourage the concerned to share their concerns with us about project membership and anything else to ensure contextual representation.
- Charmaine – we are waiting for IRB approval, which is required before going forward with FGs.
 - Ashley: I want to emphasize that FGs are an opportunity for confidential feedback. That is the purpose of FGs and interviews. Confidential feedback. No one from county or dept will be able to track it, know who said what. Important to emph this is going a 2 prong process: 1 person from Dept to answer questions, then 2 independent reviewers. And what we learn from FGs (and case reviews as well) will do WHAT.
 - Sandy Johnson, CASA Representative: with the upper leadership on committee it's an optics thing. Looks like when things are randomly picked it puts doubt in people's minds. I want this assessment to be as fruitful as possible for this community. But it does feel as if 'the cat is out of the bag.' This is casting doubt in the community about the unbiased nature of the assessment.
 - Ashley – It's important they let their voices be heard. Questions about the FGs or about the process itself. They can sign up to participate. The steering committee will not see who said what and who participated (emphasizing that). Only butler staff will see.
 - Charmaine: Butler staff will be writing the reports, and there will not be input from DHS, CPS staff, or the steering committee. We will report, interpret findings, and make recommendations. And there will likely be public comment process. Steering committee though – we want you to help get the word out. The notes are detailed
 - Kate Luster: I want to emphasize our desire to receive feedback from all of you in this process.
- Participant question: What is CFSR?
 - Charmaine – CFSR stands for child and family services review – They look at services in all 50 states and territories to determine compliance and whether things are happening as

they should. Fed has set standards on expectations. Emphasizing that no state has ever been fully in compliance. And every state has developed an improvement plan to work on noncompliance. These teams are made up of people from all over the country including local. It's a comprehensive review, and looks at systemic factors as well.

- Ashley presented the group agreements:
 - Communicate with respect
 - Speak for yourself
 - Honor differences
 - Participate intentionally
 - Engage in the process
 - Call people in
 - Have candid conversations
 - Listen to understand, not to respond
 - It's okay to disagree. Everyone is different.
 - Maintaining a safe space
 - Respect confidentiality when personal and professional experiences are shared and opinions expressed
 - Acknowledge power differences and maintain steering committee space as a safe space
 - Share ideas and perspectives free from ridicule and retribution by others
 - Agree on the takeaways to be shared publicly at the meeting's conclusion as well as what is confidential
- Review of five-finger approach to decision making previously approved by the group:
 - Group members express their level of agreement by holding up fingers on one hand. 5 fingers = completely agree, 4 = almost completely agree, 3 = I can live with it, 2= this is not worth agreeing on, 1= do not agree at all.
 - Group agreement is signified when each participant holds up at least 3.

Focus Group Logistics and Invitation Flyer

Ashley and Charmaine presented focus group logistics and invited discussion regarding:

- FG invitation flyer content and distribution,
- Schedule,
- Recorded, verbal consent

Focus Group Logistics

- Before sending out the FG invitation, we need to wait until we receive approval for our IRB application.
- We have set the schedule for the FGs based on our availability.
- All FGs will be recorded – full transcription will happen

- Recordings will be analyzed by software that analyzes dialogue and put it into themes. This is a scientific approach to analyzing the information and themes, across the FGS.
- Each FG will start out with a statement of consent. It specifies that that everything discussed in the focus group will remain confidential.
- Ashley – we have opportunities for individual interviews.
 - Foster parents can request these if they feel they have too much to share or prefer not to be in a group.
 - If we receive too many requests, we will have a drawing of names.
 - If no room for the person, they are welcome to attend a FG.

Flyer Language and Content

Charmaine presented the FG invitation flyer previously emailed to the group. Charmaine shared suggestions emailed by one of the group members. The group discussed this feedback and contributed other suggestions.

Replace 'kin' with 'relative'

- “Foster parents non-kin” or “foster parents kin” for signup.
 - Ashley; “Foster parent (including kin foster parents)”
 - The language I use is ‘relatives’, not ‘kin’
- Ashley: Relative and non-relatives foster parents are combined in the FGs to give them scheduling options. Separating them reduces the opportunities for them to participate. Does anyone feel it’s important to separate these 2 in the FGs (knowing it would make it more difficult with the scheduling for them to participate)?
 - If we communicate about that challenge, and the intent of putting them all together in a clear way, it will help.
- DECIDED: replace ‘kin’ with ‘relative’.

Categories

- Should we specify the categories of Human Services Staff vs. open to everyone?
- Charmaine – ‘other interested parties’ was the language. What are the other groups?
 - Ashley – Schools, Law Enforcement
- Human services staff change to Child Protective Services. But will that limit participants? Carve them out separately?
- ‘how about Non-CPS human services staff’

Group voted: Agreement to move forward with “non-CPS human services staff”

“Birth-Parent’ to ‘Parent/Caregiver” (“caregivers who previously had a CPS case”)

- In the flyer we reference birth parents. Recipients might not identify with “caregivers who previously had a CPS case”. It’s important for them to understand that even if they’re not a birth parent they can be a part of this.
 - Children who have been in the system or a CPS case could make it a little bit clearer.

- “Have had a case” or “have has a case in their family”?”
- Birth parent, foster parent, parents who have had a CPS case?
 - Ashley – that last category is parents who have had an investigation. (If we changed the phrasing they might see themselves as simply parents, not birth parents. ‘birth parent or parent who has had a case in their family’
 - I was confused because if I birthed the child and had CPS interaction that’s inclusive. But maybe it needs to be broken down further.
- There are lots of families where it’s not the birth parent. They might be a relative who has guardianship of the child. So it was a little too narrow as ‘birth’. Grandparents or someone who had custody would be included.
 - Ashley – how about Parent/Caregiver?
- CHANGE DECIDED: ‘Birth-Parent’ to ‘Parent/Caregiver’

Flyer Distribution

- Charmaine – We’re asking people to post them in a variety of places where people might see it. It has a QR code for sig- up.
 - Foster parents are asked to post it on their Facebook pages.
 - They are posting it on the Human Services site. We hope CASA will post it as well.
 - To review, We’re limiting the number of people in the groups, but if too many sign up for the interviews, we will make accommodation.
- Human Services Plan
 - Posting on any social media. Also our parent partners and Community Cultivator to get it out to locations in the community. And also staff get it out as well.
 - County Administrator office will create a press release.
- Charmaine – Also, Human Services will be emailing it out to each of the categories. Lots of moving parts here so lots to coordinate.
- Member comment: We don’t want to miss anything. Optics. We want to cover variety of avenues. that’s why we’re doing this.
- Member comment: My grandchildren were fostered outside the state. Would this category be included? How do you glean the information about children in this situation, possibly dropping through the cracks. Assessing the relationship between states.
 - Ashley – Assessing the practice of another state?
 - Charmaine – if they are selected in a random sample they would be. I’m not comfortable inviting other states to participate in the focus groups.

Finalizing Focus Group Protocols

Ashley prepared the group to review the FG questions

- She explained the edits she made to the questions since the group’s previous round of feedback:

- I edited questions for clarity when you commented something was confusing or unclear.
- Also, when asking for examples in a question could make it take too long, so I substituted for example 'how much'
- As you review the questions, please consider:
 - whether we've included all questions we need to ensure we receive what the participant community wants to contribute.
 - Also, please think about what both the community and stakeholders want to be addressed on these protocols.
- Instructions
 - We have too many questions for a 75 minute focus group session, and we need to prioritize which are more important, and narrow them down. I put questions that were higher priority toward top. If something's important please let us know by saying "prioritize this."
 - Please make comments. If you can delete questions please do. Because we're not getting to all of them. Move priority questions up in the list.

Breakouts for Questions Feedback

The group worked for 20 minutes in the following three breakout groups.

- Group 1: Foster Parent, Human Services
- Group 2: Birth Parent, Provider, Other Interested Parties
- Group 3: Youth, Court Personnel

Finalizing Questions Feedback

Members returned from breakouts. Several said they needed more time. They also reported technical difficulties adding feedback to the questions documents.

- Ashley to adjust the settings,
- She invited members to email her their versions of the documents if needed
- Documents will available for participants to add their feedback until the afternoon of 5/10.

Next Steps

- Next Steps:
 - Canceling 5/23 meeting because we'll be doing the focus groups at that time.
 - We'll share the flier as soon as we get the letter from IRB.
- Concluding question: Is there anything you do not want publicly shared.
 - Group members indicated they didn't have concerns.