

Eighth Judicial Circuit Family Law Advisory Group Minutes of April 16, 2007

The FLAG met on Monday, April 16, 2007 at the Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center. In attendance were: Chairperson Myrna Neims, Harvey Baxter, Mary-Ellen Cross, Robin Davis, Randi Dincher, Pebbles Edelman, Josh Fischer, Kathleen Fox, Arlene Huszar, Sharon Levine, Bridget McLaughlin, Susan Miller-Jones, Judge James P. Nilon, Pam Pearce, Leon Plympton, Marcia Rapczak, Cheryl Smith, Michelle Smith and Nancy Wilkov.

At the last meeting, a subcommittee was established to address the issue of information sharing. Marcia Rapczak, Nancy Wilkov, Jeanne Conway, and Judge Nilon are on the committee which met during the month to discuss this issue. They noted that CWLS has access to dependency records but parents' attorneys do not. The guardians ad litem are getting information regarding delinquency/dependency crossovers.

It was reported that Bev White from Meridian Behavioral Services is willing to give a presentation at our next meeting regarding what services are available to parents and children.

Marcia Rapczak will be working on a glossary of terms and abbreviations so that everyone will understand when these are used. Pam Pearce will give her an old one that she has so Marcia can use it as a starting point. We plan to publish the glossary on our website.

Sharon Levine from the Partnership for Strong Families and Bridget McLaughlin from the Department of Children and Families gave a presentation about recent changes in responsibilities with regard to residential placement of children. They explained what Medicaid mental health services are available to children and how to access them. Magellan Healthcare is now administering most everything in Medicaid services except SIPP (Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Services). We also learned that POTS (purchase of therapeutic services) funding can be used for children in the community and under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Justice – not just for children in the care of DCF. Referrals to POTS can be made by anyone and they cover things that Medicaid doesn't.

SIPP is a locked residential facility for those who have been assessed by psychologist and determined to require this level of care. Practitioners need to file a copy of the recommendation in the court file with a courtesy copy to the magistrate and the judge so they can make sure a guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem are appointed. SIPP is limited to 17 slots which are limited to children in this district.

There was discussion about the requirement for a 90-day review after placement in residential treatment. There is disagreement as to whether that is 90 days after placement or right after placement and then every 90 days. Nancy Wilkov pointed out that a review done immediately after placement does not give her any useful information when she is conducting a hearing 2 months later.

The next meeting will be held on May 14, 2007 at 3:30 PM in the Chief Judge's Conference Room.