

**Eighth Judicial Circuit Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG)
Minutes of June 18, 2007**

The FLAG met on Monday, June 18, 2007 at the Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center. Present were: Ruth Angaran, Tracey Carlisle, Robin Davis, Randi Dincher, Pebbles Edelman, Josh Fischer, Judge Stan Griffis, Arlene Huszar, Judge James P. Nilon, Leon Plympton, Myrna Neims, and Nancy Wilkov. Also in attendance were three law school externs and our guest speaker, Dr. Theresa Harrison.

The minutes of the May 14, 2007 meeting were approved.

Under Old Business, we followed up on these topics:

1. Obtaining birth certificates as part of data collection for case files
Pebbles Edelman from the Partnership reported that birth certificates are being requested earlier in the case and the requests are being tracked to make sure the certificates come in. We discussed the problem of only being able to request one free certificate per year. The first one is usually used to obtain a Social Security number. Judge Nilon questioned whether we could use a photocopy for the court file as long as the court can examine the original. Pebbles will follow up to see if that is permitted.
2. Parenting Plan/Website Committee
Ruth Angaran has gotten six attorneys and six therapists who are willing to work on the project. Randi Dincher also volunteered.

There was a request to put the list of parenting coordinators on the website. Arlene will follow up on that.

We still need some sort of glossary to explain abbreviations, acronyms, and terms of art. Pam Pearce was not able to find the one that the guardian's office used to have so we will just start from scratch. Anyone can contribute to the list.

3. We discussed the issue of the people doing assessments on children in dependency cases not being given sufficient information about the child. The Family Care Counselors usually have the information. Nancy Wilkov will try to convene the proper people to try to remedy this. There needs to be a point person for this. At the Partnership, Pebbles Edelman can help get the necessary documents to the right person if she knows it needs to be done. We agreed that, to some extent, this is a training issue. If it is a problem in a case, the first person to contact would be the Family Care Counselor's supervisor.
4. With regard to the need for training regarding the side effects of medications that are currently prescribed for children, it was felt that it is most important that the caregivers have this information. They are more likely to note

problems than the judge or magistrate. We talked about putting on a training but we were not sure who the target audience should be. We talked about training people who work in the court system, attorneys ad litem, guardians ad litem, and family care counselors. We decided to start by having a training at one of the monthly dependency brown bag lunches. All of the FLAG members will be invited.

We tabled the additional items under Old Business to allow time for our speaker to make her presentation.

Under New Business, we addressed the following:

1. Judge Nilon asked that a list be made available with names of therapists who are willing to work with people who have personality disorders. They would have to be people who are willing to work for the fee that the Partnership pays. Myrna Neims asked for specifics as to how much the therapists could get paid. It was mentioned that Bev White would know. Judge Nilon is concerned that the difficulty in finding these services is causing delays in dependency cases. Myrna agreed to look into this.
2. Nancy Wilkov pointed out that there is also a need for intensive therapy for some individuals. Pebbles Edelman noted that, if they have Medicaid, they go to Meridian. Tracey Carlisle stated that Meridian only sees them once a month which is not intensive enough. Judge Nilon is concerned about the time frames for the cases and is also concerned about helping the parents.

Dr. Theresa Harrison, the executive director of Peaceful Paths, was our speaker. She noted that there are 1,800 arrests for domestic violence crimes in Alachua County annually. Theresa explained that the mission of her program is education and support. They do not provide diagnoses or mental health services but they do refer people to those services. Peaceful Paths has a program for children and they are starting one for teens that will be at Loften High School and at one traditional high school in the community. It will be structured as a prevention program. The children's program is available on Monday or Wednesday nights in Alachua County and on Tuesday nights in Bradford County. It is group counseling but the groups are very small.

After three contacts with a child, Peaceful Paths does an assessment in the form of a letter. The letter states that the assessment was completed and includes recommendations for additional counseling, if appropriate. The letters are sent to the Family Care Counselors.