

## Minutes

Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth

House Interim Committee on

Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs

Meeting Jointly

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

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The Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth and the House Interim Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs met jointly on Wednesday, September 11, 2019, at 1:00 p.m., at the State Capitol, Room 151, Little Rock, Arkansas.

**Committee members present:** **Senators** Bart Hester, Chair; Mathew Pitsch, Vice-Chair; Alan Clark and Stephanie Flowers. **Representatives** Charlene Fite, Chair; Sonia Eubanks Barker, Vice-Chair; LeAnne Burch, Cindy Crawford, Brian Evans, Julie Mayberry, Tippy McCullough, Jay Richardson, Keith Slape, Stu Smith and Danny Watson

**Non-committee members present:** **Senators** Kim Hammer and Mark Johnson. **Representatives** Vivian Flowers, Roger Lynch, Johnny Rye and Jamie Scott.

**Representative Fite acknowledged a moment of silence, as today marks the anniversary of the fallen victims of September 11, 2001.**

**Approval of Minutes: July 9, 2019** [Exhibit C]

**Representative Mayberry made a motion for approval of the meeting minutes of July 9, 2019, and Representative Slape seconded the motion. Without objection the motion was approved.**

**Consideration to Adopt Interim Study Proposal (ISP)** [Exhibit D]

**Representative Evans made a motion to adopt ISP 2019-134: “To Amend the Law Concerning Adoptions and for other purposes”, Representative Slape seconded the motion. Without objection the ISP was adopted.**

**Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, SFY 2019, April 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019 and Annual Report Card, SFY 2019, July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019** [Exhibits E – E1]

Senator Hester recognized **Mischa Martin, Director, DCFS, DHS**. Ms. Martin reviewed the “Annual Report Card for the period SFY 2019, July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019. She reviewed the “quick facts” during that time period which covered:

- **Child Maltreatment Reports** - 34,226
- **Timeliness of Initiating Investigations** - 84% investigations completed on-time
- **In-Home Services** – 2,323 in-home cases open
- **Foster Care** - 4,331 - 3% decrease from SFY 2018
- **Adoption** - 458 kids available for adoption by – November, 2019 – 285 adoptions will be finalized

**Representative Mayberry requested the year-to-year comparisons of child fatalities in comparison to SFY 2019, which is not stated in the report. She also requested more information on infant fatalities and the cause of death. Ms. Martin stated she will provide that information to the committee.**

**Representative Burch requested information on Differential Response (DR) reports. Information from other states regarding In-home Cases Average Number of Days Cases Have Been Opened was also requested.**

**Senator Hammer requested information regarding vacancies compared to total positions in each county. Senator Hester followed up suggesting that information be provided to Senator Hammer individually; it does not have to be included in the report.**

Senator Hester asked if there's a national average for the number of caseloads per worker. Ms. Martin referenced page 40 which lists the "Average Caseload as of the End of SFY 2019, by County". She stated that in 2016, a recommendation was made by Mr. Paul Vincent, a representative of the Governor's office recommended that DCFS reduce caseloads down to 20.

**DHS – Division of Youth Services (DYS), Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR), 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, SFY 2019, January 1, 2019 – March 31, 2019 and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, SFY 2019, April 1, 2019 – June 1, 2019** [Exhibits F – F1]

Senator Hester recognized **Mr. Michael Crump, Director, and Ms. Bonnie Stribling, Peer Recovery Support Specialist, DHS**. Mr. Crump reported on the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, SFY 2019 report as it is the most recent updated report. He stated that DHS' most ultimate goal is to prevent recidivism. The Governor's involvement is to restructure the way DHS approaches things pertaining to assessment and treatment. A new attorney was hired Monday for the legal operations unit to handle court related issues pertaining to DHS youth. Ms. Stribling shared her thoughts on her role at DHS, how her past experiences led her to recovery and her ability to assist the youths at DHS having come from a troubled past as well.

**GiGi's Playhouse Little Rock – Down Syndrome Achievement Centers** – [Exhibit G]

Senator Hester recognized **Ms. Katy Sursa, Web Director, and Dennis Dixon, Recipient**. Ms. Sursa presented a PowerPoint presentation on GiGi's Playhouse and also provided Handout 1 regarding the "Down Syndrome Achievement Centers". GiGi's Playhouse Little Rock is a part of a nationwide network and is ranked number 46 in the nation. Being the only center located within 600 miles of Little Rock, it provides services to the entire State. The mission and goals of the centers are to provide therapeutic-based programs. GiGi's Playhouse Little Rock provides FREE tutoring, life-skills, and therapeutic programming for individuals of all ages with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental delays. The centers are 100% donation and grant driven and are 99% volunteer run.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m.