



Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment
May 11, 2023, 10:00 AM
Hybrid Meeting

1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007
 A general meeting of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment
 was convened on **May 11, 2023**, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (17)	Members Absent (6)
Tonya Hamilton (Proxy for Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair)	Obed Escobar
Colleen McNally, Co-Chair	Dr. Lorrie Henderson
Berisha Black	Kate Brophy McGee
Terry Crist	Warren Stewart
Claire Louge	Jeffrey James Taylor
Barbara Marshall (Proxy for Rachel Mitchell)	Ryan Young
James Molina	
James Molina (Proxy for Torrie Taj)	
Paul Mulligan	
Darlene Newsom	
Katie O'Dell	
Kathryn Blades Ptak	
Leslie Repogle	
Brad Snyder	
Mark Upton	
Ginger Ward	
Richard Yarbough	
Staff and Guests Present (6)	
Amy Peep, GOYFF	Kim Vehon, Foster Arizona (Speaker)
Conrad Lindo, GOYFF	Victoria Strayer, CASA of Arizona (Speaker)
	Molly Peterson, Prevent Child Abuse Arizona (Speaker)
	Gillian Vanasse, Department of Child Safety (Speaker)

Call to Order

- **Tonya Hamilton** introduced herself to the Council stating she is the Director and Tribal Liaison for the [Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family](#) (GOYFF). She explained that she will be the proxy for **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**.
- **Tonya Hamilton** called the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment (CSFE) meeting to order at 10:09 AM with **17** members and **6** staff/guests present. She reviewed the Council meeting procedures, welcomed all those joining via Zoom, and thanked them for their flexibility

Approval of Minutes

- With quorum met, **Tonya Hamilton** requested a review of the **March 9, 2023** meeting minutes.

- **James Mollina** moved to accept the **March 9, 2023** meeting minutes.
- **Terry Crist** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **10:15 AM**.

Foster Cooperative

- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, introduced **Kim Vehon** to speak to the Council.
- **Kim Vehon** is the founder and CEO of [Foster Arizona](#) and Foster Arizona Housing Project, non-profit public charities focused on educating, empowering, and engaging foster and at-risk youth, families, and communities to offer hope through connections. Kim's personal mission continues to be positively impacting lives through the power of connections.
 - In 2018, Kim was recognized with the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's Angels in Adoption® Award and Arizona Foothill's Woman of the Year Award for her work advocating for legislative changes that positively impact the lives of Arizona children and families who enter the foster care system.
 - Kim is passionate about helping children and families who are facing adversities because she has experienced the personal joys and challenges that come from being a foster/adoptive mom. She is a proud mom of seven children, four who have experienced Arizona's foster care system.
- **Kim Vehon** began the presentation by explaining that the [Foster Cooperative](#) is an open-sourced online community for champions of helping children and youth facing adversity to be empowered with tools to meet the communities they serve where they are. Powered by Foster Arizona, the platform was seven years in the making and launched in March 2023.
 - The Cooperative provides connections, quality resources, peer support, local events and trainings, and above all else.
 - **Kim Vehon** explained that the platform's first focus is designed not just for those who are involved in the foster/adoptive space, but also for the birth parents, grandparents, and people who have guardianship. The second focus of the platform is targeted towards teachers, coaches, etc., to give them resources to care for kids.
 - To view the video that played during **Kim Vehon's** presentation, click [here](#).
- **Kim Vehon** gave an overview of the site, including its features and what it offers to its users.
 - New communities can only be created by those that either are a "super user". Individuals and organizations can be elevated once they are approved by the Foster Cooperative staff, ensuring the site maintains quality control (i.e. who can post as well as what is posted).
 - Community groups allow the opportunity for peer-to-peer support, giving users the ability to connect with others who can relate with/to their circumstance(s).
 - Organizations on the site include a point of contact, populations served, what resources they provide, and a rating from users. The rating functionality is to maintain accountability and a bad rating does not mean an organization is automatically removed as these are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Foster Cooperative staff.
 - When posting events on the site, "super users" do not need to put the specific address of the event location. However, they do have to provide a general area so potential attendees are able to see if the event is feasible to attend (for accessibility sake).
 - Available trainings posted by approved organizations are also offered on the site. As stated previously, organizations have the ability to post content for site users to complete as they see fit.
 - A housing portal is currently being drafted to add to the site. No date has been selected yet as to when users can expect for this feature to be added to the site.
 - Individuals can get involved by signing up, claiming resources, begin engaging with the site to become more familiar with its functionality, and invite others to join the movement.
 - Since launching in March 2023, 30-day site analytics show that there are currently 150 users benefitting from the resources offered.
- **Kathryn Blades Ptak** asked if the trainings completed count towards the 12-hours of foster parent licensing requirements for potential foster parents.
 - [Arizona Department of Child Safety \(DCS\) Kinship/Foster Go-To-Guide](#)

- **Kim Vehon** answered that this is currently being drafted to build that portion of the site out. However, previous trainings have been deemed acceptable by DCS to meet licensing requirements.
- **Katie O'Dell** asked if all trainers/trainings on the site qualify as acceptable requirements.
 - **Kim Vehon** answered yes. They have had 10-12 trainers donate their time, free of cost.
- **James Molina** asked if the trainings are free and if individuals receive a certificate of completion.
 - **Kim Vehon** answered that the trainings are free. She added they are working to build this portion of the site out as well but as of now, site users are able to view and share trainings but do not receive certificates upon completion.
- **Terry Crist** asked if organizations are able to advertise the link to the Foster Cooperative on their websites.
 - **Kim Vehon** responded absolutely; the more the site is shared, the more Arizona children and families will receive the support necessary to thrive.
- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, commented she appreciates **Kim Vehon** and her support to plan the upcoming Family Reunification Day event on Saturday, June 24, 2023.
- **Claire Louge** emphasized to have council members' organizations and families sign-up.
- To view **Kim Vehon's** presentation, click [here](#).

Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference

- **Tonya Hamilton** introduced **Molly Peterson** to speak to the Council.
- **Molly Peterson** is the Director of Strategic Partnerships at [Prevent Child Abuse \(PCA\) Arizona](#). Molly has her bachelor's degree in Nonprofit Management and Leadership, and master's degree in Public Administration, both from Arizona State University. She chose these disciplines to positively impact her community through cross-sector partnerships, specifically through increased community-based collaborations that support families in need.
 - Molly is certified in training on the Protective Factors Framework of the Strengthening Families approach. This curriculum has fostered her passion for engaging individuals in a strength-based method that unlocks the potential in families and those that support them. In 2021, Molly became certified in Dare to Lead™, which furthered her understanding of reducing shame and vulnerability while cultivating courage and authenticity in personal and professional settings.
- **Molly Peterson** began the presentation by discussing the upcoming [29th Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference](#) will take place July 18th and 19th at the Renaissance Phoenix Glendale Hotel & Spa. This annual, statewide conference is used to connect with leaders, organizations, and individuals who are utilizing evidence- and strength-based solutions that increase resiliency in their populations served. The 2023 theme is, "I Am Prevention".
- **Molly Peterson** stated that 700-800 child welfare professionals, advocates, healthcare workers, early education providers, community leaders, volunteers, law enforcement professionals, and policymakers are expected at 2023 conference. Based on the reach of each attendee, approximately 40,000 Arizona families are positively impacted from the knowledge, networking, and tools received each year.
 - 2022 Conference demographics:
 - Almost all 15 Arizona counties were represented with Maricopa County having the largest attendance (62.9%).
 - **Molly Peterson** mentioned that the PCA Arizona Conference is the only child abuse prevention-focused conference in the State of Arizona.
 - 2023 Conference details:
 - 50+ workshop presenters.
 - The keynote speaker is Dana Suskind. She is nationally recognized and her expertise is in best practices, data trends, and perspectives for change.
 - Shequan Palmer will be speaking on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in schools from a lived experience perspective.
 - The goal of the conference is to help empower those who work in the areas of foster/adoptive/birth parents, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), and other child welfare professionals to bring their best self to the families they serve.

- **Molly Peterson** mentioned that 2024 will mark 30 years of hosting this conference. The 2024 theme will be, "What is prevention".
- **Claire Louge** commented she is looking forward to Dr. Bruce Perry being the keynote speaker at next year's conference.
- To view **Molly Peterson's** presentation, click [here](#).

Family Reunification Day Event

- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, introduced **Victoria Strayer** to speak to the Council.
- **Victoria Strayer** is the Co-Chair of the Maricopa County Family Reunification Day committee. She is also Co-Founder and co-Executive Director of Voices for CASA Children, a non-profit organization committed to expanding child advocacy in Arizona and supporting the Maricopa County Court Appointed Special Advocate program.
 - Victoria serves on various child welfare workgroups and has been involved with the Family Reunification Day committee since the inaugural event in 2014. She is unwavering in her dedication to a collaborative community network that enables children and families to thrive.
- **Victoria Strayer** began her presentation to the Council by explaining the upcoming [2023 Family Reunification Day](#) event. **Victoria Strayer** is the Co-Chair of the planning committee. She explained that 10 families were recognized at the first event. Last year, they were able to honor and recognize 50 families.
 - The 2023 theme is, "We Believe in the Resiliency and Strength of Families". The purpose of the event is to:
 - Celebrate the accomplishments of families who have overcome an array of challenges to reunify safely and successfully.
 - Recognize the vital role that community partners (including mental health and substance abuse providers, courts and judges, foster parents, and others) play in helping to reunify, strengthen, and support families.
 - Inspire other parents, particularly those going through the recovery process, that it is possible to confront and resolve the issues that led to the separation, as well as the reunification with their children.
 - Inspiration to Action:
 - Reunification heals families and nourishes those working within the Child Welfare System. The event supports positive, long-lasting permanency outcomes by harnessing the power of parent participation to co-create a better Child Welfare experience that prevents reentry.
 - The principles: serve children and families with hope and heart as family voices are central to the work. By teaming with reunified families to co-create a psychologically safe forum for parents to share their concerns and express their needs, Arizonans can actively cultivate their local community to be reflective of the larger and more diverse demographics seen across the state, remaining culturally sensitive when doing so to acknowledge the pervasive impact of historical trauma for certain populations and communities.
 - The vision for Arizona's reunified families:
 - Reimagine the family reunification process and support from local communities:
 - Family Reunification Day events become a statewide initiative for all counties to participate in.
 - All reunified families feel supported and cared about.
 - Increased empathy and understanding in local communities.
 - Leverage the strength and hope of the reunification community to help families stay together and provide inspiration for families in the reunification process.
 - Increased collaboration between stakeholders that has shown to be an evergreen support channel.
 - The Planning Committee is in discussions with Foster Arizona to include a Reunified Family community within Foster Cooperative.

- Continuous promotion of families recognized at previous years events to provide on-going inspiration to others year-round, not just during Family Reunification Month recognized in June. Continuous awareness will support connecting with the families as they reunify.
- **Victoria Strayer** explained the 2023 Family Reunification Day event will be on June 24th from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. The planning committee decided to not go through with the nomination process this year. Instead, any families who have been reunified are invited to attend. She also mentioned the possibility of expanding this event to be bi-annually or quarter-annually, instead of annually.
 - To view the 2023 Family Reunification Day flier, click [here](#).
- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, stated interested individuals can find more information, register for the 2023 event, and see videos from the 2022 event on the GOYFF [website](#). She added any agencies who would like to participate are open to join.
- **Paul Mulligan** commented that the affirmation of families is a good thing and something to be celebrated.
- **Tonya Hamilton** thanked **Victoria Strayer** for her presentation and stated she will be in attendance at this year's event.
- To view **Victoria Strayer's** presentation, click [here](#).

Arizona Department of Child Safety Welcome Center Update

- **Tonya Hamilton** introduced **Gillian Vanasse** to speak to the Council.
- **Gillian Vanasse** is an accomplished, practical professional with 18 years of experience successfully developing, implementing, and managing programs specific to child safety, foster care, and adoption. In her current role at the [Department of Child Safety](#) (DCS), she works collaboratively leading a team of professionals, assessing risk factors adeptly, and making recommendations to ensure the smooth execution of operational activities.
 - She is a solutions-oriented leader with a commitment to continuous improvement, a proven ability to prioritize and analyze multiple projects, and experience that leads to operational success. Gillian aspires to help people in need and make process improvements to benefit families and children.
- **Gillian Vanasse** started her presentation by explaining that the [DCS Welcome Center](#) is a trauma-informed transition center for children entering foster care. She explained that the previous welcome center was a repurposed government building that did not aid in creating a calm and inviting environment for the children. After finding the new building, DCS experienced a number of challenges:
 - The site sat vacant for years and was pillaged by vandals; all the copper plumbing and 14 air conditioning units located on the roof had been had been stolen.
 - Tenant improvements on the space began in October 2022.
 - The need for investments beyond the operating budget was clear and a capital campaign was launched in the Fall of 2022, raising nearly \$1 million to pay for age-appropriate furnishings and outdoor playgrounds for the children.
 - DCS took occupancy and began using the space in March 2023.
- **Gillian Vanasse** explained that based on the site location, features they were able to design include but are not limited to:
 - Indoor Spaces
 - Intake walkway and room with showers, and a separate room for lice treatment.
 - Crisis response room.
 - Nursery and Day Room for infants.
 - Boys and girls sleeping quarters for toddlers, elementary-aged youth, and teens.
 - Game rooms for toddlers, elementary-aged youth, and teens.
 - Sensory Room.
 - Indoor Play area.
 - Maker's Space/Small group activity space.
 - Commercial kitchen and Café.
 - Donations warehouse.

- Office space for Placement Administration, Kinship Support, and the After Hours Investigations Team (AHIT).
 - Outdoor Spaces
 - An abundance of natural light that floods the facility to provide the therapeutic benefit of "bringing the outdoors, in".
 - Three outdoor playgrounds with artificial turf for toddlers, elementary-aged youth, and teens.
 - Two RV hookups for mobile health and dental clinics.
- **Gillian Vanasse** reviewed statistics of the Welcome Center since opening.
 - On average, 212 children enter the Maricopa County Welcome Center each month.
 - The average duration of each child's stay is 48 hours.
 - The median duration of each child's stay is 24 hours.
 - Approximately 27% of all children entering care will stay at the Welcome Center at least once.
 - Approximately 20% of children entering care will have the Welcome Center as their first caregiver.
 - Children aged 12-months old and younger are the highest age group staying at the Welcome Center. The second is 16-year-olds followed by 14-year-olds. The lowest age seen at the Welcome Center are 12-year-olds.
 - The Welcome Center saw the highest influx of children during the month of September and the lowest influx of children in January.
- **Gillian Vanasse** shared interior and exterior pictures of the site, highlighting some of the unique features of the building.
- **James Molina** asked what the capacity of the center is.
 - **Gillian Vanasse** answered that while considering staffing, the center can accommodate up to 35-40 children. Daily, they see 10-15 children.
- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, commented that when she was hearing cases, it was distressing for children when they did not have a place to go. She asked if the Welcome Center is filling that need.
 - **Gillian Vanasse** responded yes, both the previous and the new Welcome Center filled that need. However, the new center was designed specifically for children.
- **Claire Louge** asked what happens to children when they need placement and they are not in Maricopa County.
 - **Gillian Vanasse** responded that Pima County has a welcome center. If they are in the Northern Arizona, the children will likely stay at the DCS office. There may be scenarios whereby they are driven to the Maricopa County Welcome Center.
- **Berisha Black** asked what has been the longest stay at the center.
 - **Gillian Vanasse** responded that the longest stay is logged for multiple days (5-10 days) if finding caregivers is particularly difficult.
- To view **Gillian Vanasse's** presentation, click [here](#).

Workgroup Updates

- **Tonya Hamilton** introduced the Prevention Workgroup Chair, **Claire Louge**, to share any updates with the Council.
- **Claire Louge** explained the Prevention Workgroup has not had the opportunity to meet in a few months. She is hoping to schedule a new date and time so that it is more accommodating for everyone's schedules. She also welcomed anyone who would be interested in joining the Prevention Workgroup to reach out.

Upcoming Meeting

- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, reminded members that the next meeting will be on **September 7, 2023, at 10:00 AM** in the Executive Tower. The meeting will be offered in a hybrid format and members are welcome to attend in person or virtually.
- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, mentioned that all members should have received a copy of the [2022 Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment Annual Report](#). You can view this and previous annual reports on the GOYFF [website](#).

Adjournment

- **Colleen McNally, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - **Paul Mulligan** moved to adjourn.
 - **Terry Crist** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes. The meeting adjourned at **11:34 AM**.

Dated 12 of May 2023
Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment
Respectfully Submitted By:
Amy Peep
GOYFF

FINAL