



Statewide Connected Communities - Thriving Families Convening

Columbia, Missouri

May 30, 2024

Introduction

A joint meeting of the Statewide Champions Group for CC-TF and representatives of the local groups convened on May 30, 2024.

The convening began with a charge to the group to consider actions that each one could take individually or as an organization to move closer to having a community-based network of supports for children and families.

An impromptu discussion of the outcomes the group wanted to pursue in response to their individual actions. Outcomes included the following:

- Families are connected in their communities
- Flip the script – Parents are the experts
- Use of least restrictive environments – more in-home supports
- Reductions in violence, substance misuse and more conflict resolution
- Placing family first
- Reductions in barriers to accessing supports/services
- Reduced role for Children’s Division
- Families have their basic needs met
- A caring, healthy family for every child
- Access to education
- Safety and connection
- More resources for those already in care (older youth supports)
- Connecting families to supports without formal intervention
- Flourishing communities/flourishing families
- Healthy relationships
- Hope and connections

CC-TF Update

CC-TF provided information on the CC-TF vision – hope for the future – along with core beliefs and promises to the communities. Emphasis was placed on promoting prevention, advancing equity, engaging with lived expertise, and promoting policies that advance family, individual and community well-being. We discussed the goals of CC-TF, including:

- **Asking and listening** to families about what they need
- **Eliminating financial barriers** to families actively participating in reunification efforts
- **Increasing access and availability** of supports and services
- **Providing legal representation** to parents.

A panel discussion including Merideth Rose, Latosha Fowlkes and Stephanie Theis addressed three basic questions: What are your one to two takeaways from your experience with CC-TF? What inspired you to do this work? What are your goals for your work in CC-TF?

Panelists emphasized responding to community-identified needs and improving access to resources and supports. Meredith stressed not growing foster care as a goal but growing family support through intensive in-home services and family preservation.

They spoke to the need to address root causes of families becoming involved in child welfare and discussed how we can work with families to build trust and learn from families. They articulated a clear need to flip how we think about solutions to families' needs, with Latosha noting that we should let families and communities drive their own well-being as the path forward. A critical part of building support is the use of accurate and defensible data.

Breakout Discussions

After lunch, the group divided into four sub-groups. Each discussed one of the following four topic areas:

- **Crisis Care/Primary Prevention Strategy** (Led by Elaine Casteel and Danielle Corley)
- **Engaging, Supporting and Amplifying Youth Voices** (Led by Victor Sims)
- **Parent Engagement and Inclusion** (Led by Paula Bibbs-Samuels)
- **Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI) and Economic Supports** (Led by Adam L. Layne and Becca Belleville)

Presentations from the breakout sessions will be available on the MCC website.

Closing Remarks

Shrounda Selivanoff delivered the closing remarks. Ms. Selivanoff is a parent with lived expertise in the child welfare system and is currently a kinship caregiver for her grandson. She is a national advocate for raising the voices of lived expertise and for supporting kin caregivers. She is currently the Social Service Manager at the Washington State Office of Public Defense Parent Representation Program.

Ms. Selivanoff shared her experiences in child welfare that threatened to remove her son legally from her grandson's life but, with her advocacy, did not happen. She provided incredible inspiration for the group on keeping family first in all of our efforts and being passionate about advocating for them.