



**Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment
September 8, 2022, 10:00 AM**

Governor's 2nd Floor Conference Room

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 18, 2022**, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 8500, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (18)	Members Absent (10)
Angela Ducey, Co-Chair	Kathie J. O'Dell
Maria Cristina Fuentes	Zora Manjencich
Berisha Black	Leslie Y. Reprogle
Michael Faust	Rachel Mitchell
Jeffrey James Taylor	Kate Brophy McGee
Kathryn Ptak	Warren H. Stewart
Richard D. Yarbough (proxy for Paul Mulligan)	James D. Molina
Janet L. Garcia	Colleen A. McNally
Claire Louge	Torrie Taj
Brad Snyder	Terry M. Crist
Mark Upton	
Lorrie G. Henderson	
Obed Escobar	
Ryan Young	
Ginger Ward	
Darlene G. Newsom	
Guests and Staff Present (3)	
Kainoa Spenser	Tammy Abernathy
Steve Vogel	

Call to Order

- **Director Maria Cristina Fuentes** called the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment meeting to order at 10:14 a.m. with **18** members and **3** staff and guests present. **Maria Cristina Fuentes** then reviewed the procedures of the Council meeting and welcomed all those joining both in-person and via Zoom.

Opening Remarks

- **Mrs. Angela Ducey, Co-Chair**, welcomed Council members to the meeting and shared about her visits to [Hope Women's Center](#) and [Hushabye Nursery](#) where she was able to learn more about the programs and services they provide. She stated she is excited to visit [Thrive AZ](#) at the beginning of October and is looking forward to hearing from **Director Michael Faust** from the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) about the new Welcome Center.

Roll Call

- **Director Fuentes** conducted a roll call of the Council with a quorum met.

Approval of Minutes

- **Director Fuentes** requested a review of the **May 18, 2022** meeting minutes.
 - **Ms. Ginger Ward** moved to accept the **May 18, 2022** minutes.
 - **Ms. Berisha Black** seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed with no dissenting votes at 10:18 a.m.

Special Recognition

- **Mrs. Angela Ducey, Co-Chair**, presented a special recognition to **Director Maria Cristina Fuentes** for her years of service to the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF) and to the people of Arizona since 2017. Thanks to her hard work, there has been a \$21,000,000 increase in federal grant money brought into Arizona communities, a 52% increase from previous years. Through multi-agency and cross-sector strategies that emphasize trauma-informed care, she has strengthened and expanded Arizona partnerships across the state. This includes receiving national recognition for expanding access to Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) classes within prison systems.

Update from Thrive AZ

- **Director Fuentes** introduced **Steve Vogel**, President of Thrive AZ. Steve and Teri Vogel are the founders of [Thrive AZ](#): Foster Care Prevention, Reunification, and Aged Out. Before entering the nonprofit world, Steve was a Sales Executive for a Fortune 500 company for 20 years. Steve and Teri have 4 kids, and 4 grandkids and have been married for 34 years. Before Thrive AZ, Steve was the Chief Fund Development Officer at the Phoenix Dream Center. **Director Fuentes** discussed the massive growth and expansion Thrive AZ has had since her first visit in 2018.
- **Steve Vogel** relayed the personal story and reasoning of why he and his wife started Thrive AZ and developed a passion for helping aged-out foster care youth. He discussed how it started when they became foster parents themselves and grew into wanting to help other foster parents have the necessary resources to do so. Thrive AZ's initial vision was to be a hub for foster care prevention and family reunification needs, seeing a lack of resources for biological families and wanting to be able to provide for them. One of their main programs is to provide a house with all the necessary furniture and resources to make it feel like a home. He stated that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought the crisis of aged-out foster youth to the forefront and the program saw an increase in needs.
- **Mr. Vogel** went on to discuss how Thrive AZ has recently moved to a 25-acre property to meet the growing needs of the aged-out foster youth population. He shared [the narrated video](#) showing their new campus that includes 9-unit 2-bedroom apartments and a learning lounge with the capacity for youth to finish their education and complete job applications. He added that Thrive AZ's donation truck delivers basic living resources to 6-8 families a day and that all of these resources are housed in their 8,000 square foot warehouse, growing from their previous one of 1,800 square feet.
- **Steve Vogel** continued to discuss the new campus. He stated that there are 15 male dorms that offer the ultimate dorm lifestyle with a common area for them to congregate and hang out, as well as a cafe that has a commercial-size kitchen and can feed up to 300 people at once. He added that in June of 2022, Thrive AZ opened their "Hope House," a 12-room maternity ward for young women who have aged out of foster care and are pregnant. This offers a fully furnished apartment for two young women to share and live in for one year following the birth of their child. Their Thrift store, "Thrift to Thrive," is also located on campus and is full of items that they cannot give to families which allows them to generate sustainable income to keep Thrive AZ's doors open.
- **Mr. Vogel** discussed how one of their main missions is to provide a safe place to sleep to any at-risk children. Currently, they have 45 beds for aged-out youth and have specialists coordinating resources for family reunification. He stated that since 2016, Thrive AZ's impact on Arizona has resulted in 5,700 beds given to at-risk youth, 5,697 children served, working with 556 aged-out young adults, 1,732 foster care preventions/interventions, and 530 family reunifications. He added that their vision and goal for the future are to reach 100 beds for aged-out young adults, expand resources to serve more individuals in prevention

and reunification efforts, and grow Thrive AZ to more locations across other states. Currently, there are homes in Oklahoma City, San Diego, and they are looking to open more homes in southern Texas, as well as Northern and Southern Arizona.

- **Claire Louge**, asked how youth are chosen to be a part of the programming.
 - **Steve** responded that they work with the social workers, school counselors, and DCS to see who is in their young adult programs. Next, there is a 3 step interview process that starts with an Intake Specialist, followed by Teri Vogel, and finally Steve Vogel. Thrive AZ is a semi-supervised campus and is not equipped to run as a crisis center. The interview process helps to determine which aged-out youth they can best serve.
- **Berisha Black**, asked what the age range of youth served is.
 - **Steve** answered that their age range is 18-23.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, asked if any special licensing requirements are necessary for them to run Thrive AZ.
 - **Steve** said they do not. **Director Micahel Faust** added that it is because the youth are over 18 and at this point make their own decisions as to where to reside.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, asked how Thrive AZ finds mothers to reside in their "Hope House."
 - **Steve** responded that this is done through community partners and working with DCS. Thrive AZ does not want young mothers to experience homelessness while carrying and raising their children.
- **Director Faust** asked if they have any young mothers in the "Hope House" yet.
 - **Steve** answered that there are 4 women in the home already with room for 12.
- **Mark Upton** asked how long they are housed at Thrive AZ.
 - **Steve** responded that they are there for one year with exceptions to certain circumstances.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, asked how Thrive AZ developed its model that informed their parent and other programs offered.
 - **Steve** answered that the model is based on his time spent at the Phoenix Dream Center working with aged-out foster care youth. **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, reiterated her excitement to visit the campus in October.

Hope Women's Center

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, introduced **Tammy Abernathy**. Tammy is the CEO of Hope Women's Center, a trauma-informed nonprofit that works with women and teen girls in crisis through six day centers and a home for pregnant or newly parenting moms. **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, stated she had a wonderful time visiting their campus and being able to see classrooms full of mothers.
- **Tammy** started off the presentation by relaying a personal story of what brought her to start Hope Women's Center, stemming from her own experiences as a single mother. She stated that even with having a lot of community support, she still struggled, and saw a need to provide essential resources and services to mothers who do not have the same level of access to care. Hope Women's Center started as a pregnancy center in 1984. Now in 2022, they have grown to serve women and teens facing any difficult life situation and bringing the resources needed to meet their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in 6 locations across the state: Phoenix, Apache Junction, Coolidge, West Valley, Maricopa, and Camp Verde. She added that there is a maternity home in Camp Verde, and emphasized the importance of bringing a holistic approach to helping the individuals served to heal their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in a trauma-informed care setting. They are a faith-based organization but serve all women who need help.
- **Ms. Abernathy** continued by discussing how Hope Women's Center engages women and teen girls to view themselves through a lens of true worth and value. They are taught tools to make positive choices and break unhealthy cycles, encouraging them to heal from abuse, trauma, and loss experienced. Hope Women's Center is a safe place where personal perspectives and choices are respected, trusting relationships are built, and the community encourages the resiliency and strength of each woman. Taking into account trauma-informed care, the language of ProGrace is used in working with women facing unplanned pregnancies, as they believe this fully expresses their commitment to the well-being of both mother and child.
- **Tammy** relayed information regarding the demographics of the women seeking their services and programs:

92% of clients report annual income under the federal poverty line, 6% of clients are homeless, and nearly 100% of clients have experienced some form of abuse in childhood and/or as an adult. Services are free to every woman regardless of income, documentation, or race.

- **Ms. Abernathy** continued by discussing the journey that the Hope Women's Center has been on over the last three and a half years to understand how to truly incorporate trauma-informed care into their organization. With the majority of the women and their children who are seeking services come in with a high score of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) affirms what research shows about impoverished populations having a significantly higher exposure to ACEs. She stated that adversity and trauma shape a person's perceptions, interactions, behaviors, and health, and by realizing trauma is widespread throughout all communities gives them a better service lens to provide the full wrap-around support of services and programs.
- **Tammy** reiterated the importance of meeting clients where they are at in their journey of recovery and walking alongside them. She discussed the different types of services and programs that they offer to women in crisis: drug or alcohol dependence/recovery, domestic or sexual abuse, unplanned pregnancy, postpartum mental health support, unemployment or hardships of poverty, homelessness, sexual violence or trafficking, re-entry support after incarceration, family conflict/dysfunction, parenting education and support, and navigating the reunification process with DCS.
- **Tammy** went on to discuss how they worked alongside **Berisha Black** when looking into developing plans for how to best serve the community, and saw a need within the foster care system. In partnership with [Foster Care Initiatives](#)' 'Hope Initiative,' the organization realized their calling is to serve birth mothers. Almost a decade later, they now help to provide advocacy on working through the system and provide classes for birth mothers that are required by DCS, including but not limited to: preventative, court-ordered, parenting, and recovery from abuse. She discussed the different free programs that they offer such as life skills classes and job training to support the educational needs of clients. She added that participation in classes helps clients accrue points for food, clothing, and utility assistance, helping meet the physical needs of clients and empower the women.
- **Ms. Abernathy** continued her presentation by discussing the boutiques on each campus that the women are able to work and use their participation points to buy products within the boutique, such as hygiene products, toiletries, baby items/diapers, clothing, and household items. These are run by the women themselves to rebuild their confidence and help them feel empowered through entrepreneurial efforts. These points can also be applied toward utility assistance, bus passes, and gas cards. All the services, programs, counseling, crisis services, and pregnancy tests are free of charge with no barriers to entry. One of the biggest barriers that women face is childcare expenses, which on all campuses, Hope Women's Center is able to provide safe and free of charge services.
- **Ms. Abernathy** went on to discuss the other services they provided that include: a food pantry, meals, food distribution, community resource referrals, maternity housing (Camp Verde only, by application approval), a children's program for moms in programming (some locations), and for the clients in housing transition, the use of showers, washer/dryer, and phone. She stated the maternity housing in Camp Verde allows for 4 women to be a part of this home and each mother is allowed to have two kids with them while in the care of the maternity home. During the first year, mother's are required to work on campus (i.e. boutiques) and are allowed to keep 80% of the income they make. In year two, they are able to graduate from the program and transition to a permanent residence with the nest egg of income they earned while working on campus.
- **Tammy** relayed a story of one of the mothers who was coming out of rehab and gave birth to a drug-dependent baby while she was detoxing. Working with [Hushabye Nursery](#), Hope Women's Center was able to provide all the necessary resources for both of them to get back on their feet and live empowering lives. After the baby was born and placed into foster care, they worked with DCS on the reunification so they could detox safely together under the care of the team at Hope Women's Center.
- **Tammy** relayed another story of a mother that came under their care and was a victim of domestic violence and substance abuse. Once she went into labor she knew she wanted to get clean for the life of her child. She discussed the transformation that took place at Hope Women's Center along with the partners that helped to make it possible for her to feel empowered and in control of her life again.

- Between their six day centers, they see over 350 women a month providing services and programs to all. One of the best effects of these day homes is that women of abuse and neglect come into their care isolated, but over time they develop a sense of community amongst themselves. She added that they just launched their hope for teens app, which allows teens to talk directly to the center and reach out for resources, including therapy around mental health.
- Hope Women's Center provides a multitude of educational classes that include: prenatal and postpartum classes and support groups, life skills (finance, cooking, ESL, GED prep), job training, evidence-based parenting classes, faith-based studies, anger management, abuse prevention classes, boundaries and safe people, teen-focused support groups, and other support/recovery groups of all kinds.
- Hope Women's Center offers professional crisis counseling, crisis counseling support groups, and trauma-informed mentoring, giving women a safe place to process wounds of the past or present while establishing goals for a new future.
- **Tammy** continued by discussing the successes at Hope Women's Center in 2021:
 - Provided over 2,600 educational opportunities related to parenting and abuse prevention.
 - The Hope Initiative program offers further support to birth mothers navigating the DCS system by building on three aspects of connection: Community - other local organizations and helpful resources, Individual - safe people who encourage mom's accountability, goals, positive communication, and Peer - Hope Women's Center staff who knows the DCS process and how to succeed in meeting goals and reunification.
 - Invested 3,736 hours of emotional and mental help.
 - As many as 1 in 2 mothers in poverty are affected by severe mood disorders or depression after giving birth and can last up to five years after delivery. In partnership with [Women's Health Innovations \(WHI\)](#), leaders in maternal mental health, Hope Women's Center facilitates classes and support groups that give moms the support and tools necessary for navigating the stressors of motherhood and postpartum health.
 - Served 1,100 women, providing nearly 54,000 client services.
 - Each month, Hope Women's Center averages 1,300 client visits. This is a 30% increase in women seeking services from 2020 that is believed to be correlated to the rising rates of inflation.
- **Director Fuentes** shared that when visiting Hope Women's Center, it was amazing to see how Hope Women's Center, Hushabye Nursery, and Thrive AZ not only deal with the foster care system, but also providing the women with critical wrap around due to the co-occurring experiences/situations of the clients such as intimate partner violence, substance abuse, and sexual assault. **Director Fuentes** asked if **Tammy** could expand on their family reunification program.
 - **Tammy** discussed that they piloted the program in 2014/15 after working with three mothers who all had an open DCS case. Hope Women's Center saw the need to provide holistic wrap-around services to support the birth mother in any capacity, walking alongside them to help them understand their case in the best way possible. Soon after, they realized they had to walk alongside the birth mother to the point of reunification, or in some cases, even the point of severance where birth mothers focus on their own healing and growth. Another main goal is prevention, and this is achieved by providing classes around Triple P, anger management, and rise above abuse class. Thanks to a grant received from GOYFF, they were able to hire a Trauma-Informed Care Coordinator, ensuring Hope Women's Center is able to correctly implement trauma-informed care into all their classes, staff, and volunteers.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, discussed one of the things that struck her most was how warm and inviting the day centers are. One story she was reminded of was how one woman was able to discover her own faith through the faith study classes offered on all campuses.
 - **Tammy** stated one important aspect of being trauma-informed is being transparent that they are a faith-based organization and that all of their faith classes are an invitation and not required. **Tammy** relayed a personal story of how a woman came into their day center wanting nothing to do with her faith. Over time, her faith grew and allowed for a sense of purpose to be renewed within her.

- **Director Fuentes** asked if there is child care provided on-site for the mothers.
 - **Tammy** responded that each day center and the maternity ward provide free and safe childcare to each of the women who attend their classes and programs.
 - **Director Faust** asked if they are a licensed daycare center or just have a childcare program. **Tammy** responded that they are not licensed and have childcare programs while the mother is on campus. Having a partnership with [Fresh Start Women's Foundation](#) allows the mothers of both organizations to utilize the classes and childcare offered at each.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, relayed it was amazing to see the classes full of mothers while their kids have a safe and welcoming environment.

[Hope Women's Center Virtual Tour](#)

Update from Department of Child Safety

- **Director Fuentes** introduced **Director Michael Faust** of the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) for an update from the department.
- **Director Faust** thanked **Director Fuentes** for the introduction and began his presentation by highlighting that under Governor Ducey's most recent budget and with the approval of legislation gave compensation increases to all state employees and more specifically targeted to DCS. There are already positive results due to this such as a decrease in both turnover rates and the rate of the workforce dropoff. He relayed that the DCS workforce sees some very hard situations and is grateful for the financial support for the team.
- Highlighted the "Workforce Resilience" program which is a peer-to-peer support opportunity when there are struggling situations going on. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in domestic violence, substance abuse, and the DCS staff have seen an increase in situations where these are happening simultaneously. The "Workforce Resilience" program is a resource built by and for DCS staff who are experiencing vicarious trauma because of the situations the staff face.
- The normal cycle of increase in DCS reports at the beginning of the school year is continuing but not at the same rate or volume as in the previous year. Leaning into understanding the perspective of older youth as it is understood that kids nowadays are facing much greater stress and challenges than ever before such as fentanyl and other increased stress situations.
- It is critical to invest in programs that help aged-out foster care youth which can be seen in the increased independent living stipend thanks to the Governor's budget and approved by the legislature. **Director Faust** noted that **Ryan Young** is here and is President of the Youth Empowerment Council. He is an advocate within this space and drives home the understanding of how DCS best engages with and supports aged-out foster care youth.
- One of the key metrics that must be looked at is the number of investigative backlogs and assessments, which Arizona's ability to lower these numbers shows a success in this arena. There was a minor setback in February 2021 when a new IT system was put in place, but the team has been working hard to solve this issue. To solve this issue, it was necessary to complete successful assessments that work against this backlog of cases first and to stay the course until complete.
- **Director Faust** stated that he met with superintendents across the state to showcase the immense progress made in the decreasing number of backlog cases due to the hard work of specialists despite the heavy workload. He added that when looking at the big picture, from June of 2015 there were 35,245 backlogged cases, and as of June 2022 this number sits at 9,826. **Director Faust** mentioned **Ginger Ward** at [Southwest Human Development](#) as a great partner in lowering the number of backlogged cases.
- **Director Faust** relayed the great work and skills that the team at DCS has completed to overcome this problem. The DCS is a complex system due to the nature of meeting families in their hardest moments, but this decline in cases shows that what was deemed an impossible task can be tackled. When Director Greg McKay was appointed in 2016 and also had the endeavor of solving the backlog case issue, the agency was operating very differently than how it does today. During that time, there were 19,044 kids and young people, 18,400 minors, and around 600-700 kids over 18, averaging 1,077 kids entering foster care per

month. With numbers that pushed systemic reform, they looked at how to change the safety model they were utilizing.

- o DCS focused heavily on internal reforms and looked at the core practices that were being used during that time. The department has become more transparent, releasing data to the public on a regular cadence, and revamping the safety models. It is now night and day from the DCS of 2016, but progress can always be made in improving the system.
- There is a greater rate of getting kids home or permanency than there are kids entering DCS care, averaging around less than 600 kids entering care and 700 leaving care each month. DCS has spent a lot of time studying re-maltreatment or reentering care but there is no appreciable growth in that number because more kids are finding permanency.
 - o **Director Faust** relayed that these positive changes were seen after fixing internal practices. They are now focusing on external practices such as spending time with parents, families, and the community. As the family and community become more involved, it prevents abuse and kids from entering the system in the first place, allowing them to stay within in-home care. The goal is always a safe return to the home, but walking alongside the kids whose options are permanency, whether with birth parents or through guardianship/adoption with extended family.
- Now in the year 2022, 70% of kids in DCS care return to family care whether birth parents or extended family in part to the greater flow of resources towards kinship. **Director Faust** stated this number can be higher and the organization needs to push itself to innovate how to safely achieve this.
- With the goal being to serve kids in the home in a safe manner and when possible, there have been shifts in the number of kids receiving in-home care plans and services.
 - o Today, there are 11,596 kids who are now in the direct care of DCS specialists due to great partnerships within communities and celebration for the families reunified.
 - o 45-47% of kids reunified are now under the care of unlicensed kinship. **Director Faust** thanked the Governor and the legislature for their increase in the kinship stipend to bring more resources to the family. He stated that there is a significant reduction in foster homes, and about 30% of kids are in licensed foster families. Within that initial 30%, 18% of the kids are with licensed kinship, showing more kids are at home receiving care from the extended family and community.
- 58% of kids are in both unlicensed and licensed kinship and 20% of kids with licensed community foster care. This includes community foster care, child development homes, and therapeutic foster care. Also, it is important to understand that even though there is progress in the drop of kids within foster care, there will always be a need and a child will always need protective services. **Director Faust** greatly appreciates all of the congregate foster care providers and partners but emphasized the importance of kids needing to be in a family setting to help develop sustainable relationships.
 - o **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, asked what is the percentage of kids in congregate care right now. **Director Faust** answered that it is about 14% as of right now. There are three reasons for wanting to keep that number below 10%: it is the right thing to do, the financial responsibility of the state, and it is a mandatory legal requirement to keep less than 10% of kids in DCS licensed congregate care. **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, asked if that number includes therapeutic care and **Director Faust** answered there is a nuance to the number since those facilities are licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services and DCS.
- **Director Faust** stated that from 2004-2014 there was a 93% increase in kids entering foster care, the fastest rate in the nation with the next in line being around 46%.
 - o **Mrs. Claire Louge** asked why that happened? **Director Faust** responded that there are a couple of reasons to take into consideration. One, the nation was coming out of the Great Recession and significant resources were cut to the families that needed them the most during that time. Second, the department was heavily challenged. Lastly, a functioning safety model that is consistent and objective. It stopped being maintained in 2009 and made detrimental changes to it such as confusing its order of assessing risk first then safety. **Director Faust** relayed that DCS has invested sizable amounts of money to practice and coach fidelity training across the organization

and its partners. Second, any changes to the safety model must be brought before the DCS Oversight board proving why the change is necessary.

- o **Director Faust** relayed that when Governor Brewer had DCS removed from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), it allowed all the benefits that a stand-alone agency provides. He added that Governor Ducey did the right thing by appointing former DCS Director McKay who gave the professionals and specialists the tools necessary to drive change at a systemic level.
- **Director Faust** stated DCS's job is to learn and grow from its past so that it can develop strategies and initiatives that lower the rates of preventable abuse, neglect, and death. It is more important to raise awareness of the issues, such as a child in Arizona dying every three days from unsafe sleep rather than sensationalizing the one. It is easy to sensationalize the story of one moment rather than look at the deeper questions facing Arizona families such as how one can engage with parents, communities, and agency partners to bring awareness to the true issues that are facing Arizona's children.
- As the foster population continues to grow as risks grow dramatically along it, there is a drop seen in the numbers of runaway youth from October 2020. Whether discussing substance abuse, domestic violence, or runaway youth, these issues all affect one another. It is also noticeable to look at the numbers of missing and abducted children (when parents are able to take the child away without being found before a risk assessment is done) and how DCS partners with law enforcement so these cases can be conducted properly to better serve Arizona kids.
- Serving youth is a necessity for DCS and it becomes more difficult as there are more challenges that kids face nowadays and especially more challenges than it was just then ten years ago. Opening up extended foster care allows for younger Arizonans to be served by DCS so that they're able to return home safely and build sustainable adult relationships.
- **Ms. Berisha Black** asked how many older youth are going to be able to be served through the [Independent Transitional Housing Program \(TILP\)](#). **Director Faust** responded that this is for older youth finishing up or have completed high school, seeking independence, and is conducted in three phases. Phase one is paying room and board, phase two is income based rent, and phase three is working with a Housing Coordinator to solidify their leases. The hope for TILP is to start with 150 beds and go live on November 1, 2022. The agency must continuously think differently about how they serve the 18-21 population. He stated there needs to be de-stigmatization of making mistakes as children as they are facing unprecedented challenges in regard to substance abuse and mental health.
 - o Due to this growing problem, three years ago **Director Faust** opted into the federal program of extended foster care to grow the ability to provide resources to this community.
- **Director Faust** continued by giving an update on the new DCS Welcome Center which will act as an emergency transition center for kids who come into DCS custody. The purpose is to find them housing as safely and quickly as possible with 50-60% of the kids being placed within their allotted time frame of about 12-48 hours. It will be a transformative and therapeutic place for kids coming into DCS care. There will be seven different sleeping quarters for a total of housing 48 kids with the intention of spending 0-2 days at the center. There is already one location within central phoenix where kids can be taken for a short time to find placement, but overall this is a national issue. It will also house the 60 staff members who handle nights/weekends, housing, and placement to ensure the kids are placed appropriately in the 12-48 hour allotted time frame.
 - o **Director Faust** relayed a story of trauma and neglect to showcase why the new Welcome Center needs to be peaceful and therapeutic to provide a space for safe landing for these kids who are going through traumatic family separation situations. They will also have a warehouse solely dedicated to providing resources to kids and families which is done by working with community service providers and partners that are able to provide these resources directly. The goal by summer 2023 is to have an operating health clinic on campus by working with [MercyCare](#). He stated that they are looking for a contractor to provide entry-level health clinic care that helps with early intervention efforts that will eventually progress into providing care for the families and kids

within the system itself. Arizona is the only state that operates and runs its own foster care-specific health care program out of the foster care system.

- o Arizona has been advising other states on how to handle kids who are stuck within the child safety system and how to bring them into a permanent placement.
- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, stated it is a beautiful, trauma-informed space starting from the point of entry with its architecture lending a sense of healing. It is over 50,000 square feet with 20,000 square feet of that being just for the Welcome Center itself and the location at this time is undisclosed.
- **Director Faust** stated that the main job of the center is to provide a safe space and connect the resources that are already in the community to the people that need them most. This place was found at the right place and at the right time. It is the responsibility of the leadership of DCS and the state to provide innovative and better solutions to care for the new populations, kids, and families of Arizona, and under the leadership of Governor Ducey, the department has progressed closer to the goal.
 - o **Ms. Ginger Ward** requested **Director Faust** to visit their Edgecare Health Clinic which has been serving the community and its school for over 11 years.

Workgroup Updates

- **Director Fuentes**, stated there are no updates from the Workgroups of the Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment Council.

Future Meeting Date

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, reminded members that the next meeting will occur on November 10, 2022, at 8 AM.

Adjournment

- **Mrs. Ducey, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - o **Mr. Ryan Young** moved to adjourn.
 - o **Mrs. Claire Louge** seconded the motion.
 - o The motion passed with no dissenting votes and the meeting adjourned at **11:52 AM**.

Dated 8 of September 2022
Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment
Respectfully Submitted By:
Kainoa Spenser
GOYFF