

Name: Erica Moltz

Organization (if applicable): Adoptions Together

Address: 10230 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 200, Silver Spring, MD 20903

Phone Number: 301 422 5101

Contact E-mail Address: emoltz@adoptionstogether.org

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On behalf of Adoptions Together, I would like to thank the Subcommittee for giving our organization the opportunity to present testimony about the importance of post permanency services for at-risk children and youth.

Organizational Background

Adoptions Together is committed to building healthy permanent families by providing the highest quality child placement services and lifelong therapeutic support to children and their families. Adoptions Together provides family reunification services as well as services designed to meet the needs of children in foster, kinship, guardian and adoptive families. Adoptions Together also advocates for systemic change and continuous improvement in the child welfare system.

Adoptions Together employs a racially and culturally diverse staff of 40 people and maintains contractual relationships with over 50 licensed clinical social workers and professional counselors who provide therapy, assessment and training services. The Board of Directors is a diverse group of individuals who advise the agency as community leaders in business, health care, nonprofit management, development, and financial management. Volunteers and interns support the agency on a regular basis.

Adoptions Together has offices and key projects in Maryland, Washington DC and Virginia. Projects in each area are designed to reflect each community served with

the highest outcomes possible. Many of these programs have been built based on best practices from programs across the country that are achieving strong results.

The Importance of Post Adoption Services

Post-permanency services are a critical feature of child welfare practice as public agencies work diligently to place children with special challenges in permanent families. Children who have experienced trauma and are unable to be raised in their birth families are at risk for developmental challenges as they mature. The children needing the most intensive post-permanency services are usually older with a history of child abuse/neglect, multiple foster home placements, learning disabilities, and/or medical issues. Families who provide guardianship and adoption for children need a range of services to keep themselves strong, healthy, and flexible. Post-permanency services are designed to provide this range of services which include: information and referral; preparation of the child for guardianship or adoption; crisis counseling; individual and systemic advocacy; individual, group, and family counseling; support groups for children, adolescents, and adults; respite care; and training for professionals as well as parents.

Post Permanency Family Center

Towards this end, the government of the District of Columbia (through the DC Child and Family Services Administration) contracted with Adoptions Together in 2007 to establish the Post Permanency Family Center (PPFC). Now in its fourth year, PPFC has a deep understanding of the community, the population, and the services that best serve children and families brought together through resources of the government in DC—services that keep families strong.

Current PPFC services include therapy and case management, training, community outreach, crisis intervention, therapy groups, and respite. Additionally, the staff of PPFC (100% residents of the District of Columbia) are frequently called upon to serve arising needs in the community and provide expertise on key matters affecting families in the District of Columbia. PPFC is also a center for future

leadership through PFFC’s strong history of partnered with student interns and researchers from key academic institutions in the region, and a community gathering place.

Adoptions Together values this partnership with CFSA as a representation of the heart of our mission: ***“Adoptions Together builds healthy lifelong family connections for every child and advocates for continuous improvement of systems that promote the well being of children.”***

Therapy and Case Management

The goal of the therapy and case management services at PFFC is to provide a holistic approach to therapeutic needs that are tailored to each child and family we serve. These services included the following:

- Peer support/mentoring
- Case Management
- Crisis counseling, and 24 hour hotline for crisis intervention
- Phone coaching
- Short term issue-related counseling, and Therapy and management of severe disorders (i.e. mental illness, medication, and severe attachment disorder)

At intake, each child and family is assessed for their individual needs and presented with the full milieu of treatment options available. A treatment plan is tailored for each family to address the presenting challenges. Resources from the surrounding community that can support this healing process are also presented. If the family of origin remained active in the child(ren) life, they are encouraged to play a role in the therapeutic process.

In 2010, PFFC responded to 290 inquiry calls. 1,063 in-center therapy sessions were held (1351 total hours) and 135 in-home therapy sessions were held.

Some examples of participant comments in this area

- A parent who attends therapy and parent trainings at the PFFC wrote in an email, “Because of your help, I don’t respond so harshly...to my daughter

(when she acts out.) We just talk about what caused it and how to handle the situation the next time. I am also giving more hugs. Thanks again.”

- Parent who had completed intake stated (during a brief follow up phone call): “Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. After our meeting it was the first time I had felt hopeful in a long time...and what you said to me really helped give me permission to take some very important steps [in figuring out a visitation plan for her son and his biological family]”.

Training

The goal of training services at PPFC is to train professionals (including CFSA staff and other community leaders and staff), and parents in support of the community and families we serve. Forty three parents and fourteen professional trainings were given in 2010 and three hundred fifty-four people attended those trainings. The 2010 trainings offered at PPFC were as follows:

Parent Trainings

Trauma and Sexual Behavior in
Adolescents & Youth

Discipline vs Punishment

ADHD Basics

Attachment 101 & 102

“What Triggers You?”

Professional Trainings

Youth & Porn
Addiction

The Process & Impact
of Disruption

Emotional &
Regulatory Healing

Attachment Training
Series for
Caseworkers (4
sessions)

Attachment Training
(@ Latin American
Youth Center)

“Working with Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, Transgender, and
Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth &
Parents”

Working with the
LGTBQ Community
(PPFC Staff)

The Ins and Outs of Guardianship

Joy, Loss & Trauma

The Impact & Process of
Disruption

Trauma and
Sexualized Behavior

Roll with the Punches

Self Care for
Professionals

Love & Logic Series

Ethics in Child
Welfare (@ ATTACH
Conference)

Youth & Porn Addiction

Addressing the needs
of LGTBQ Youth

Birth Parents & the Triad

The Impact of Process
of Disruption

Adoption Law

Sexualized Behavior
and Trauma

Managing & Understanding the
Triad

Learning about Youth
Villages (for PPFC)

Psychotropic Youth

Understanding the IEP

Relax, Refuel, & Rejuvenate

Over three hundred professionals, parents and children attended training programs at PPFC during 2010. The evaluations from the 2010 parent and professional trainings are overwhelmingly positive.

- One participant wrote, “This workshop was exactly what I needed, it was professional and had so much information, I was really glad to find this!”

Therapy groups

The goals of the therapy groups hosted at PPFC are to provide peer support and strategies for successful parenting in a group setting. This form of treatment aids in socialization, relationship building, and allows flexibility in working with key sub groups within the adoption and guardianship community. Ninety-six people attended multiple sessions of group therapy during 2010.

Therapy groups active at PPFC during 2010 included:

- Open Teen Group
- Open LGBTQ Parent Group
- Clinical Rap Group
- Strengthening Family Coping Resources (SFCR) Group
- Coming of Age for Girls
- Respite Groups

The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund awarded Adoptions Together support for PPFC and wider staff to be trained in an evidenced-based model for a family support group called Strengthening Family Coping Resources (SFCR). The clinical team was trained in the model and led the first group session. It was a great success, with each family attending group every week, for ten weeks, without missing one session! The SFCR group is an evidence based support group designed for families at risk of developing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder was a huge success and ran from April 28 to June 30. One client recently stated “I would have been in jail by now if I didn’t come here to talk.”

Respite

The goal of the therapeutic respite program (*A Place to Go & Grow*) at PPFC is to provide families with a chance to have a break from the pressures of family life (which are often exacerbated) when children have a history of trauma, neglect or abuse. PPFC families were able to attend respite one Saturday each month.

In 2010, thirty six children were able to utilize this program. PPFC was also the recipient of a \$5,000 mini-grant from Adopt-Us-Kids to support our respite program.

Key examples of participant comments in this area

- A parent whose child participates in the monthly respite program, *A Place to Go and Grow* told the respite coordinator, “I really appreciate that my daughter can now talk about her feelings and thoughts about adoption and growing up.” Her daughter chimed in and said, “I like respite because I know I can go there and feel comfortable expressing myself.”
- Parent who had just brought her daughter to respite for the first time stated: “Kim and her team are so good, were so on point and are just doing a really great job. My daughter loved it and already found a little group of friends to hang out with.”

