

**Eastern Citizen Review Panel
Meeting Summary
December 9, 2016
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

Attendees:

Panel Members: Angela Baris, Erin Christopher-Sisk, Maureen McLoughlin
Nadia Allen, Mary McCarthy, Edward Blatt

Guests: Davin Robinson, Deputy Director, Outreach, Prevention and Support,
NYS Justice Center
Ryan Johnson, Kinship Care Navigator Program
Lisa Gordon, OCFS
Jeanette Feingold, Director of Child Protective Services, Nassau County
Department of Social Services (by phone)

WRI Staff: Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director, WRI (by phone)
Jennifer Goldman, WRI (by phone)
Judy Stanger, Program Specialist and CRP Coordinator

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Outline of Recommendations for the Citizen Review Panels' 2016 Annual Report
- Summary of Citizen Review Panel Chairs' Meeting with The Governor's Office and the NYS Division of the Budget on November 2, 2016
- Nassau County Data re: Blind Removals
- Overview of the Justice Center
- Kinship Navigator – Kinship Services in New York State
- 10/18/16 Joint CRP Meeting Minutes
- 9/16/16 CRP Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Welcome and Introductions

Panel Chair, Edward Blatt, opened the meeting and introductions took place.

Agenda Item: Justice Center Presentations

*Davin Robinson, Deputy Director,
Outreach, Prevention and Support*

Ms. Robinson began her presentation reviewing the establishment of the Justice Center. The discussion focused on the Justice Center's responsibilities, jurisdiction and the types of investigations. The Justice Center operates a 24/7 call center to take reports of alleged abuse and neglect of children and adults in residential care across New York State. The Justice Center has its own database and case management system that are not tied to OCFS' CONNECTIONS

computer system. The standard of evidence for the Justice Center to indicate a report is “a preponderance of evidence.” The Justice Center indicates approximately 30% of investigations.

Ms. Robinson described the categories of indications, which range from one to four, with Category 1 being the most serious offenses. There was a discussion about the steps agencies must take, and those they may take, when a staff member is under investigation and, similarly, if the case is indicated.

Ms. Robinson discussed the Justice Center’s upcoming focus on preventing abuse and neglect in residential facilities and on gathering data at the systems level related to abuse in residential facilities.

Agenda Item: Kinship Navigator

Ryan Johnson

Mr. Johnson began his presentation stating that in the majority of kinship care cases the children are not in foster care but rather are in the direct care of a relative; more than half of kinship caregivers are grandparents. The Kinship Navigator has a database of kinship caregivers with over 300,000 children currently in kinship caregiver placements.

Mr. Johnson discussed the resources available to kinship caregivers and gaps in resources for kinship caregivers who are not foster parents. He stated that overall, there are better long term outcomes for children placed with relatives as compared with children in foster care. Mr. Johnson also provided a brief overview of New York’s kinship guardianship program known as KinGAP, which is currently funded through counties’ foster care block grant allocations.

Agenda Item: Nassau County DSS’ Blind Removal Statistics

Jeanette Feingold

Ms. Feingold, Director of Child Protective Services at the Nassau County Department of Social Services, provided the Panel with an update on the outcomes data from their “blind removals” work to reduce disproportionality in the placement of children of color into foster care. This no-cost initiative involved the caseworker redacting case information to eliminate any information about a family’s race and ethnicity, including names, addresses, etc. This redacted information is presented to administrators during the conference where the decision whether to remove a child is made so the decision made “blind” to race and ethnicity.

Ms. Feingold referred Panel members to the data she provided which shows, among other outcomes, an overall reduction in the number of children placed into foster care by Nassau County between 2012 and 2015. In addition, the rate of disproportionality has been reduced (improved). There was a discussion about the intersection of Family Assessment Response (FAR) and the blind removals initiative.

Agenda Item: OCFS Updates

Lisa Gordon

Ms. Gordon provided updates on work OCFS is doing related to the Panels’ recommendations.

- Children of Incarcerated Parents: OCFS has a meeting scheduled with the Osborne Association in December to discuss ways in which OCFS can support this work.

- Child and Family Services Review (CFSR): OCFS has still not received the final report from the federal Children’s Bureau from the on-site review held in June. However, OCFS continues to analyze data, and specifically permanency data, to develop strategies for improvement.
- Opioid Epidemic and the Impact on Child Welfare: OCFS is working with the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and is holding joint regional forums on the topic. At these forums, the film “Hungry Heart” is shown to stakeholders, after which work is done on action plans. The film is about the opioid crisis in Vermont, through the eyes of a pediatrician. Ms. Gordon will provide a copy of the film to WRI for the Panels.
- Webinar: OCFS recently conducted a webinar presentation detailing what OCFS is currently working on in child welfare. An archived copy of the webinar will soon be available on the OCFS website.
- County Plan Process: Counties are required to submit a plan to OCFS every five years about their plans for services to children and families. The five-year cycle is ending soon, however OCFS is going to work with counties for a year, providing data and a template for planning, after which time the next five-year plan will be due.
- Child Fatality Reports: OCFS is required to oversee fatality investigations by counties and issue a written report for each fatality. OCFS has moved the function of report writing from regional offices to the home office to bring consistency to the process.
- Safe Sleep: OCFS continues their work with three participating hospitals in the western part of the state to educate new parents about safe sleep practices with infants. Work will soon begin with an additional hospital in Westchester County. Ms. Gordon reported that there is tremendous demand for the Safe Sleep kits and videos that OCFS developed.

Agenda Item: WRI Updates

Lee Lounsbury

WRI provided an update on the status of the joint Panels’ 2016 report, which Panel members have had the opportunity to review and comment on. Once the format is finalized by WRI, it will be sent to the printer and hard copies distributed in January.

Agenda Item: Topics for 2017

Panel

There was a discussion about topics that Panel members would like to discuss during Panel meetings in 2017. Ideas include: more information on OCFS’ work to promote race equity in child welfare; OCFS’ work to expand the implementation of FAR and what the future of FAR looks like in five years; the new Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) requirements that are replacing the SACWIS requirements for computerized child welfare records nationally; and how OCFS is assessing the implementation of the practice model, including family engagement, in counties.