

**Eastern Citizens Review Panel
Meeting Minutes
OCFS 200 South
December 12, 2014
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

Attendees: Angela Baris Edward Blatt
Lance Jackson Mary McCarthy – facilitated meeting
Maureen McLoughlin (by phone)

Guest: Tanya Krupat (by phone), The Osborne Association

OCFS: Charles Carson Lisa Gordon Chris Cargain
John Clinton Melaney Szklenka Michelle Heyward

WRI: William Dorr Evelyn Butler

Excused

Absences: Carrie Jefferson Smith Hector Ramirez Sharon Chesna
JoAnn Merriman

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Eastern Citizens Review Panel Meeting Minutes September 19, 2014
- Joint Citizens Review Panel Meeting Minutes October 2, 2014
- Child Protective Services Program Manual June 2009
- New York State OCFS, Local Commissioners Memorandum August 9, 2010
- New York State OCFS Local Commissioners Memorandum June 12, 2014
- Administration for Children and Families Information Memorandum October 23, 2014
- KEYS to Excellence in Your Supervision
- NYS CRP Proposed 2015 Meeting Dates
- New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Facilities and Regional Map
- New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, Initiative at a Glance, The Osborne Association
- New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, Fact Sheet for Teachers, Counselors, and School Professionals, The Osborne Association
- New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, Parental Incarceration’s Impact on Children’s Health, The Osborne Association
- “What Are My Rights as a Parent in Prison or Residential Drug Treatment with a Child in Foster Care? “
- Parental Incarceration and Child Wellbeing, an annotated bibliography by Christopher Wildeman, PhD, Cornell University, September 2014 The Sills Family Foundation

- New York State Office of Children and Family Services, You Don't Have to Stop Being a Parent While You Are Incarcerated.
- Children of Incarcerated Parents: Booklist, New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, The Osborne Association

The meeting began with a welcome and introductions. Mary McCarthy facilitated the meeting in Hector Ramirez's absence.

Case Review Protocol (Angela Baris and Charles Carson, OCFS)

Angela provided a historical review of why the Panel is interested in the possibility of developing a committee protocol.

Charles Carson from OCFS Legal Affairs provided a legal prospective to the panel. The panel is not obligated to review a case if asked to and the panel may review a case, if not asked. The panel has the authority under the Law to review cases and is not required to have a protocol.

The Panel has access to confidential information and has to secure it, if it possesses it. The panel is not allowed access to unfounded reports.

The Panel can refer any case that comes to its attention to OCFS.

Mr. Carson provided several cautionary notes: The Panel may not re-disclose information about reports. The Panel needs to decide who in the Panel gets copies of reports and related documentation, how it is kept secure, and what is done with the documents once the review is completed. OCFS can help get documents and OCFS can destroy them when returned.

In regards to liability, the panel has protection under the Public Officers Law, same as state employees' protection, for a review done in the capacity as a Panel activity. If sued, the panel would be represented by the State Attorney General's office.

In regard to disclosures, the statute does not protect the panel from testifying before a court, if subpoenaed.

Regarding allowable action by the panel, the panel may make recommendations which can be case-specific or identification of systemic issues. The Panel should advise OCFS of any finding recommendation.

Next Steps: Angela Baris will do a first draft of a protocol and distribute to the panel.

Michelle Heyward – OCFS

As part of the case review protocol discussion, Ms. Heyward distributed a case review instrument that is used by the OCFS regional offices in their periodic review of indicated and unfounded child protective services cases. Case reviews are conducted in each local department of social services (LDSS) by the OCFS regional offices on a four-year cycle. However, the OCFS regional office may use its discretion to conduct more frequent reviews, as deemed necessary. After the cases are reviewed, the results are analyzed and the letter of findings and recommendation is sent to the LDSS. The final step in that process is for the LDSS to submit a corrective action plan to OCFS, if warranted by the findings.

Lisa Gordon - OCFS

Ms. Gordon distributed a draft Child Welfare Practice Model under development by OCFS, working with a national consultant and with stakeholders' input. The Panel suggested that other state agencies have the opportunity to provide input.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR): The federal government reviews states' child welfare programs through the CFSR process. The review of New York State will be conducted in 2016 and preparations have begun. The areas reviewed will include recurrence (subsequent CPS reports); maltreatment of children in foster care; timely permanency; and re-entry into foster care.

KEYS – Handout (formerly known as BASSICS) - This supervisory training model is being rolled out in partnership between OCFS and the Center for the Development of Human Services at SUNY, Buffalo State.

At this time 6 counties have implemented KEYS and 4 more will be added in 2015. Others will be implemented incrementally. The focus of KEYS is supervisory coaching and support for casework staff.

Multidisciplinary Teams – OCFS Melany Szklenka, Child Advocacy Center (CAC)

Melany did a PowerPoint presentation which she will distribute to the Panel. Currently, 43 counties have implemented multidisciplinary teams and CAC's. Some counties have inter-county partnerships and shared services.

The Children Justice Task Force has evaluated the program for effectiveness and it is considered evidence-based. The focus is the child victim and family and to provide a neutral, non-threatening setting where agencies can work together to decrease the number of interviews a child has to go through by bringing professionals from multiple systems into one location while the child is interviewed.

OCFS has a monitoring and technical assistance role to the multidisciplinary teams and child advocacy centers.

There are ten standards for approved programs:

- Multi-team approach, members sign a MOU
- Cultural competence and diversity
- Forensic interviews
- Victim support and advocacy
- Medical evaluation – specialized exams
- Mental health services
- Case review sharing of information
- Case tracking
- Organizational capacity
- Child-focused setting

Child Fatality Review Teams (CFRT) - OCFS John Clinton

The authority for CFRTs is provided in Section 20 of Social Services Law. Eighteen teams are approved in New York State, and they reflect the Public Health Model. The teams review child fatalities in their jurisdiction and may draft a report, which may only be issued by OCFS. The report of findings may provide recommendations that are case specific or systemic. There is always a focus on prevention. For example, The Safe Sleep campaign by OCFS was an outcome of a number of deaths occurring from unsafe sleep practices.

There was also a discussion of concern about “near” deaths and whether they should be reviewed. Currently, these are not covered in the law but there is some interest within OCFS to take a closer look at how to handle them. One issue is establishing a common definition of “near death”; currently, this seems to be based on individual doctor discretion.

Unaccompanied Refugee Children – OCFS Chris Cargain

Since January, 2014, about 100,000 unaccompanied children have entered the United States. Mostly coming from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Approximately 1,000 of those children are being cared for in the NYS Childcare residential system. They are predominantly in the downstate and Long Island area. The youth are being cared for in voluntary agencies, many of which had numerous beds available due to the lack of beds needed for NYS youth since placements are down. About 14 of the 82 licensed NYS not-for-profit voluntary agencies are caring for the unaccompanied children. As soon as the children are identified by the federal government, legal temporary custody is taken and a search for “sponsors” begun. The sponsor is most likely a parent or other relative. Once the federal government completes their pre-placement approval, the child is placed with the sponsor, who takes responsibility for the child. The sponsor receives a federal subsidy payment to support the care of the child.

There is currently an RFP which voluntary agencies bid on and the proposals are being reviewed by the federal government. OCFS expects that 6 more voluntaries may be approved to care for unaccompanied minors.

Children of Incarcerated Parents – Handouts – Tanya Krupat, The Osborne Association

There is a series of handbooks on The Osborne Association’s website on the topic. Although there is little data in the NYS child welfare system that helps identify the number of children of incarcerated in NYS, it is believed that about 1 in 20 have a parent incarcerated (federal data) and there is disproportionality of minorities within that population.

For children of the incarcerated, stigma is a significant issue along with an increase in isolation that is often experienced by the family.

Some services that the Osborne Association assists with are: parenting programs, HIV/Health programs, re-entry support; direct work with children and families; and referral source for transportation for visits.

The Osborne Association has identified that there is a need for training of caseworker staff and other service providers on the effects of lack of contact between the incarcerated and their children.

The Osborne Association is trying to work with the Department of Corrections to partner with other state agencies to develop a system that will encourage and provide the ability for the courts to identify facilities in as close proximity to family/children, as possible, so visitation could be possible.

Impact Assessment

The panel discussed possible approaches to the impact assessment this year. There was consensus that the goal of the assessment should be to promote accomplishment of the outcomes identified by the panels. Perhaps the following questions discussed and answered by each panel would be helpful: What are the panels assessing? What's the purpose? What metrics are being used? How do they align with what we are attempting to assess?

The Eastern Panel would like to know what approach other panels are taking.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

The next meeting for the Eastern Panel is February 27, 2015, Room 144 North at OCFS.