

**Eastern Citizen Review Panel
Meeting Summary
May 6, 2016
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

Attendees:

Panel Members

Angela Baris, Sharon Chesna, Erin Christopher-Sisk, Carrie Jefferson Smith, Maureen McLoughlin, Mary McCarthy

Guests:

Nadia Allen, Prospective Panel Member
Linda Joyce, OCFS State Central Register
Pam Knowles, OCFS State Central Register
John Thompson, OCFS
Joanne Ruppel, OCFS

WRI Staff:

Judy Stanger, Citizen Review Panel Coordinator

Handouts:

- Agenda
- 3/18/16 Eastern CRP Minutes
- MSNBC & Associated Press Article: “Painkiller sales soar around US, Fuel Addiction”
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) & Students in Foster Care
- A Shared Sentence: the devastating toll of parental incarceration on kids, families and communities, April 2016 Policy Report Kids Count, The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- OCFS Informational Letter, March 24, 2015 Re: Ashley’s Law Relating to Notification of Rules and Regulations of Correctional Facilities Concerning Visitors
- OCFS Local Commissioners’ Memorandum (LCM) Re: Phillips v. Orange County— Considerations for Child Protective Investigations
- OCFS Administrative Directive (ADM) Re: Sharing Child Protective Services Information with Law Enforcement When a Child is Missing
- CPS Differential Response System: Program and Data Updates (distributed by OCFS)

The meeting was called to order by Panel Member Mary McCarthy, Acting Panel Chair.

Agenda Item: Welcome/Introductions

The meeting was held at the OCFS State Central Register in the Albany area to allow for a tour of the facility. The meeting was called to order and members introduced themselves, including guest and prospective Panel member Nadia Allen. Ms. Allen is the Executive Director of the Mental Health Association in Orange County and chairs the Orange County Task Force on Cultural Competency and Equity.

Agenda Item: Tour of the OCFS State Central Registry

Linda Joyce, Director of the OCFS State Central Registry (SCR) and Pam Knowles, OCFS Child Protective Services Specialist, provided Panel members with a tour of the SCR, beginning with an overview and history of the program. There are a total of 250-300 SCR staff, including 30 supervisors that rotate in staggered shifts so that there is around-the-clock coverage, including weekends and holidays.

When a call is received, staff interview the caller to determine whether the allegations rise to the legal level for a report of suspected abuse or maltreatment to be taken; this level is “reasonable cause to suspect” abuse or neglect. If a report is not taken, an appropriate referral is made whenever possible. When a report is taken, the SCR staff person transmits the report through the CONNECTIONS computer system to the county Department of Social Services, or equivalent, where the family resides, for investigation. In 2015 there were 297,000 calls answered by SCR staff; about half of them were taken as reports for investigation and the other half were not. Callers are provided the opportunity to consult with a supervisor at the SCR if the call is not being taken as a report.

Training for new SCR staff is an eight-week curriculum, with two of those weeks as on-the-job training. Intensive supervision is provided and worker performance is assessed, including supervisors randomly listening in on calls. The supervisor/worker ratio is 1:7. The SCR has Quality Assurance staff who assist in informing the training programs, supervision and SCR practices. New software gives SCR the ability to assess how they are doing: question-by-question and can judge staff performance. Listening in on calls promotes customer service since workers handle emotionally charged callers and extraordinary situations. Calls are recorded and recordings are retained for one year.

Support for SCR staff is supplemented through the Employee Assistance Program and staff have access to “quiet rooms” after a stressful call. The SCR has a language service with capacity for translation in hundreds of languages; there has not been a language that they have been unable to accommodate. The Panel was able to listen to a live call and took a tour of the call center facility.

Agenda Item: Training Updates from OCFS

John Thompson, OCFS

Mr. Thompson updated the Panel on OCFS’ work to incorporate the principles of the Family Assessment Response (FAR) into all child welfare training curricula. This means that even if a

county chooses not to implement FAR, their staff are still trained in FAR principles, including family engagement. OCFS is revising its professional development program for caseworkers and supervisors to be competency based. All county child welfare staff will receive foundational training Phase I. OCFS is in the process of developing a competency assessment tool, and is rolling out the second Phase of the training curriculum domains as follows: differential response; principles of partnership; solution focused; and the child welfare practice model, which has the key values woven throughout all of the training.

OCFS' training staff have looked at other states to refine their training. From the above domains, functional competencies are taught. Depending on the role of the employee, required training in specialized domains is in place in order to achieve a set of competencies.

A Panel member asked about training for the voluntary agencies. Mr. Thompson said that money has not been earmarked to fund training for the voluntaries.

Agenda Item: FAR Updates from OCFS

Joanne Ruppel, OCFS

Ms. Ruppel handed out "CPS Differential Response System: Program and Data Updates". She introduced OCFS' updated statistics on FAR and pointed out that the service configurations vary from county to county, which makes evaluation challenging. A Panel member asked who funds the FAR training for counties and Ms. Ruppel answered that OCFS does. There are no plans to make FAR mandatory.

Ms. Ruppel reported that previously, the FAR implementation process was much more inflexible, but that has changed. There is more variability across FAR by region, and every county has different rules about which types of cases are eligible for FAR. Some counties would like to expand FAR, but it's time consuming and training is extensive.

When a report of suspected child abuse/neglect is received, the county has seven days to establish if a case will be handled as a FAR case or on the traditional investigative track. Counties can switch reports from investigative to FAR, but that is rare.

AGENDA ITEM: Agenda Items for next meeting:

Members would like to:

- Tour the Justice Center and/or hear a presentation by the Center.
- Have a presentation from the Kinship Navigator Program.
- Invite Greg Owens from OCFS back to provide an update on Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR).
- Invite Melissa Baker from Casey Family Services to discuss legislation about uncapped entitlement funding, including expanding funding to agencies for training
- Invite John Thompson back to provide training updates.

Mary McCarthy adjourned the meeting.