

Joint Citizen Review Panel Meeting
Meeting Summary
June 9, 2016

Attendees:

Panel Members: Eastern: Mary McCarthy, Ed Blatt, Maureen McLoughlin,
Carrie Jefferson Smith
Western: Ellen Kennedy, Sarlyn Tate, Melissa Cavagnaro
NYC: Wayne Ho, David Lansner, Marion White

Guests: Kari Siddiqui, SCAA
Lisa Gordon, OCFS
Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu, OCFS
Renee Hallock, OCFS
Barb Irish, OCFS
Claire Strohmeier, OCFS
Stanley Capela, NYC Panel Guest

WRI Staff: Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director
Judy Stanger, Program Specialist and CRP Coordinator (by phone)
Cindy Alois, Administrative Support Specialist

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Summary of Panel Meeting for first two quarters – 2016
- Child Welfare Policy Priorities 2016-17
- NYS Child Welfare Data Child Family Services Review
- County Level Permanency and Safety-Data
- Schuyler Center's Last Look: NYS Budget 2016-17
- The CQI Process: Three Essential Phases
- 2015 Annual Report

Agenda Item: Welcome and introductions

Mary McCarthy opened the meeting and announced Hector Ramirez's resignation from Chair of the Eastern Panel due to health issues. Introductions took place.

Agenda Item: Updates on Child Welfare Advocacy from SCAA Kari Siddiqui

Ms. Siddiqui discussed the primary focus of SCAA's advocacy during the past year, which fell into six categories as follows: Prevention; Community Based Services; Primary Prevention

(reaching families earlier); Housing subsidies for youth; Kinship Caregiver services; Guardianship; and Home Visiting.

Ms. Siddiqui noted that there was some progress with Child Welfare issues, including: \$5 million was appropriated for post permanency services and funding for foster youth to attend college was increased from \$1.5 million to \$3 million. These funds are distributed to address the gaps between semesters for employment services and housing services. Casey contributed matching funding for continuity of services for individual support to help navigate youth through these systems.

Ms. Siddiqui stated that SCAA conducts advocacy as a large part of what they do. In March they organized a Child Welfare Advocacy Day that included 30 participants from organizations across the state representing a cross section of system advocates. Mary McCarthy from the Eastern Citizen Review Panel was a participant. During this event, representatives met with approximately 20 legislators to discuss an advocacy agenda that included five primary initiatives:

1. Primary prevention
2. Housing
3. Fostering youth success
4. Kinship guardianship
5. Post permanency services for adoptive and KinGap families

Ms. Siddiqui discussed university recruitment coming through a coalition wherein universities hope to identify candidates earlier in foster care. Progress was also made with the Kinship Navigator program receiving an additional \$1 million. OCFS will be issuing an RFP to expand these services.

However, there was no further development in the following areas:

1. Healthy Families NY has been flat funded for 10 years in a row.
2. SCAA's home visiting workgroup is reconvening to strategize about how to get more funding.

Ms. Siddiqui discussed a preventive services housing subsidy that is available for families in the child welfare system at \$300 a month. Currently there is a push to increase this subsidy to \$600 to enable aged out youth the ability to live with roommates and have a good support network.

On other initiatives, Ms. Siddiqui stated that NYS is one of only two states that continue to treat 16 year olds in the criminal justice system as adults. SCAA continues to advocate for Raise the Age to correct this situation.

The upcoming CFSR's review is scheduled for this month (June 2016). In comparison with national standards, NYS ranks very low. This is a good time to make a case for an under resourced system.

During Panel discussions, it was decided CRP's role should be to look at root causes and bring these issues to the attention of OCFS, the Governor's office and the Legislature. SCAA is also looking at the issue and barriers that inform why New York's performance is so poor, and will be talking with other states to see what they're doing to address these issues. Ms. Lounsbury made reference to the packet handout on this subject, *County Level Permanency and Safety Data*, and asked if the Panels would like WRI to do further work to research their counties' performance.

Agenda Item: OCFS Presentation Lisa Gordon, Lisa Gharthey Ogundimu, Renee Hallock Barb Irish, Claire Strohmeier

Ms. Gordon made reference to CRP's 2015 Annual Report stating that OCFS's response has been written and will soon be issued. The following updates were provided by OCFS in regard to the CRP's recommendations:

- **Public Health Driven Approach:** OCFS met with the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and reviewed 75 child fatality cases related to safe sleep. The collected data revealed the following: most child victims were under four months of age; most incidents occurred in adult beds (where a parent rolled over on a newborn); and income level and race were not factors in cases related to safe sleep. OCFS is working with the DOH to address these issues and they encourage the CRP to participate in this partnership. OCFS is developing a Safe Sleep video that can be shared with pediatricians' offices. Ms. Gordon stated that they are also trying to encourage safe sleep discussions during prenatal discussions. In addition, OCFS is looking into distributing informational kits to WIC centers and attending conferences to distribute safe sleep information.
- Ms. Hallock announced that the Healthy Families home visiting program received additional funding and that an RFP will be going out shortly. Healthy Families is a 15-year program, and while OCFS oversees this program, the Nurse Family Partnership model of home visiting, through the NYS DOH, provides services in NY as well.
- Ms. Gharthey Ogundimu discussed the impact of the opiate epidemic on families, and stated that meetings are scheduled with the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (OASAS) to work on addressing this issue.
- Ms. Hallock discussed the CRPs' recommendation about being data driven, and the ways in which the Practice Model and OCFS' Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) work are promoting a data driven approach in child welfare. Ms. Strohmeier discussed the CQI process as it relates to the Practice Model. The Practice Model calls for the use of CQI

to improve outcomes and uses administrative data, information from stakeholders, and survey results from case workers that are both quantitative and qualitative to better understand underlying factors.

- OCFS is working with a consultant, Public Catalyst, at the home office and regional offices to assess why the federal measures in NY are so poor. This work has been helpful in identifying targeted solutions such as accurate data entry and timeliness with reporting, all of which affects data.
- Ms. Gharthey Ogundimu discussed maltreatment in foster care. This measure includes children abused/neglected by the foster parent/caretaker, and by the birth parent while on home visits, while the child is in foster care. OCFS has also put in place new requirements for data entry regarding the “date of incident” to clarify whether an incident occurred prior to, or after, a child’s admission into foster care.
- Ms. Hallock discussed creative approaches to better support foster parents, such as Fostering Futures NY, where teams of volunteers from the community provide practical support to foster families. This is partially funded by a federal grant. The question was raised about the difference in allowable corporal punishment in family situations and how it differs from foster homes. Ms. Hallock clarified that corporal punishment is not allowed in foster care settings, while the standard in family settings is that “excessive corporal punishment” is considered neglect.
- Ms. Hallock discussed OCFS’s concern about NY’s high rate of recurrence of maltreatment (children who are found to have been abused or neglected within one year of a prior indicated report in which they were found to have been abused or neglected). OCFS is looking at a safety framework called “Signs of Safety” which is used in some other states to support caseworkers in collecting information critical to their safety assessment. Ms. Hallock talked about the prevalence of substance abuse and the correlation in a large percentage of recurrence cases. As a result, OCFS has partnered with OASAS and provided funding to eight counties to hire behavioral health consultants that go into homes with the case worker when there are mental health and/or substance abuse concerns. They assist in conducting screening and make referrals if needed.
- Ms. Hallock discussed educational initiatives with the State Education Department (SED) and reported that the first successful transfer of educational records was recently completed in two pilot sites, Nassau and Westchester counties.
- OCFS continues to work with a steering committee of local districts and stakeholders to revamp the competency based training model for caseworkers and supervisors.

Agenda item: Updates from Panel Chairs:

Ellen Kennedy, Western Panel, provided the following updates from Western Panel meetings held earlier this year:

- The Panel invited and heard from Monroe County Department of Human Services' Commissioner Kelly Reed who provided an overview of the work to address Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR) and poverty in Monroe County.
- The new Erie County Social Service Commissioner, Al Dirschberger, Ph.D. presented his department's implementation of Solution Focused Trauma Informed Care throughout the entire DSS department. It is an enormous undertaking to invest in training all staff at all department levels in trauma informed care. The Panel was impressed with the progress that the department has achieved with this initiative.

Wayne Ho, NYC, provided the following updates from the NYC Panel meetings held earlier this year:

- At the February Panel meeting, First Deputy Commissioner Eric Brettschneider presented information about the 10 work groups formed by ACS. They include representatives from legal aid, service providers, and advocates on subgroups. At the May Panel meeting, Assistant Commissioner Andrew White provided updates on the 10 workgroups.
- The Panel is following the lawsuit brought against ACS and OCFS by the NYC Public Advocate and Marcia Lowry, regarding the NYC foster care system. The State negotiated a settlement with ACS but it has to be approved by the judge before it is final. ACS is not part of that settlement negotiation or proposal.

Mary McCarthy, Eastern, provided the following updates from the Eastern Panel meetings held earlier this year:

- The Eastern Panel heard a presentation by Lisa Gordon, OCFS about the Practice Model, the Principles of Partnership, and revisions to core training.
- The Panel had a tour of the State Central Registry at OCFS. The Panel found it to be an impressive operation. Members also met staff that were in a new staff orientation and the Panel was also able to listen in on a live SCR call.

Agenda Item: Preliminary discussion about proposed Recommendations

There was discussion about the fact that many of the Panels' recommendations require additional funding, and that is determined by the Division of the Budget, the Governor and the Legislature. While the Panels' report and recommendations are written to OCFS, the Panels want to target the

recommendations more specifically to the entities that make the decisions. There was discussion about developing different advocacy strategies and not just issuing another report. The suggestion was raised about Panel representatives meeting with DOB over the summer, as DOB begins preparing the 2017-18 State budget. It was also discussed that the Panel Chairs agreed when they met with OCFS Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez in February that the same group would meet again in the summer to facilitate more regular communication.

The group discussed coordinating the Panels' advocacy agenda with other key stakeholders, and consider holding public hearings and press conferences. The possibility of meeting with Fran Barrett in the Governor's Office was mentioned, as she coordinates the Governor's anti-poverty agenda and work with nonprofits.

The following Calendar of Action was agreed upon:

- August: meet with DOB
- September quarterly Panel meetings: begin discussing recommendations;
- October: Joint meeting to vote on recommendations;
- Mid November: complete the draft annual report;

The group also discussed preliminary recommendations to focus on:

1. More state money for home visiting programs
2. Increase state reimbursement for preventive services and allow new Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) to promote primary prevention programs
3. Safety: Recurrence of maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care

There was also discussion about prioritizing a recommendation to prevent youth from aging out of foster care, and assisting OCFS with their Safe Sleep initiative.

The meeting was adjourned.