

Summary of Joint Citizen Review Panels' Meeting on June 11, 2015

Persons Present (by video)

NYC: Wayne Ho & Mathea Rubin

Western: Ellen Kennedy, Melissa Cavagnaro, Sarlyn Tate, Karl Wiggins, Paula Mazur

Eastern: Mary McCarthy, Lance Jackson, Carrie Jefferson-Smith, Sharon Chesna, and Maureen McLaughlin

WRI: Lee Lounsbury-Executive Director, Shawntell Mills-Sánchez-Project Associate

OCFS: Laura Velez-OCFS Deputy Commissioner

Agenda Item #1: Updates from OCFS

Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez attended the meeting and provided updates about child welfare work across New York State, and OCFS' response to the Panels' 2014 report and recommendations. Acting Commissioner Sheila Poole was invited but unable to attend.

Ms. Velez began her remarks by reporting that the on-site component of the federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) will be held in NYS in 2016. Prior to the on-site review, OCFS is required to write a Statewide Assessment. OCFS received its CFSR outcome data from the federal government and it is, overall, not positive; NYS ranks among the lowest states on most outcome measures. OCFS has broken the data down to the county level and has found variation across counties. OCFS will look at not only areas of need, but areas where good outcomes are being achieved to identify strategies for replication.

OCFS has been looking closely at permanency outcomes in recent months and intends to begin a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) prior to the on-site review. OCFS may convene a Permanency Summit in the fall of 2015 to further this work, and to ask all partners, including the courts, to improve performance. Among the issues are a lack of available families for youth in foster care, slow processes within the court system with contributing factors from both the courts and the districts/agencies, "paperwork" demands, and "red tape." For example, it was discovered that in NYC, caseworkers must obtain several original birth certificates for a child when the child is being freed for adoption. This process was taking too long within the vital records office, so to remedy the situation, a worker who understands the urgency of the request is assigned to do this task more quickly.

OCFS will soon issue its written response to the Panels' 2014 report and recommendations. Ms. Velez discussed the Panels' recommendations:

- **Public Health Approach to CPS:** OCFS supports a public health approach, and is getting ready to issue an annual Fatality Report that identifies child fatalities as a public health problem. Monroe Co. has reduced child deaths due to co-sleeping significantly through an educational campaign where mothers watch videos around safe sleep while still in the hospital, and packets of information are distributed.
- **Workforce Issues:** There is not an appetite in the Legislature to put workload standards in place. OCFS is looking at what supervisors can do to make workers more effective and invest in good supervisory training.

- Children of Incarcerated Parents: This issue is under consideration at OCFS. Ms. Velez discussed the new Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families federal legislation that passed last year. Among its requirements are for children in foster care to have normative experiences, similar to those children not in foster care experience. OCFS is going to put significant effort into dealing with youth that go AWOL because they are at higher risk of being trafficked.
- Preventive Services Funding: The percent of state reimbursement was again not increased this year.
- Family Assessment Response (FAR): FAR has had its successes and its challenges. FAR is being expanded in NYC and OCFS is encouraging upstate FAR counties to move more cases into the FAR track, with a goal of about 30% of a county's cases moved to the FAR track. Rensselaer, Essex and Livingston Counties withdrew from FAR in the last 12-18 months. It's not that FAR doesn't work, but rather that there was tension between the FAR and CPS investigative staff. OCFS' research bureau will soon issue a report on FAR that shows that children are not unsafe in FAR. OCFS will work to include the principles of FAR, and principles of partnership, into CPS training curricula.

Ms. Velez provided an update on the transition of children in foster care into Medicaid Managed Care., which is a major, systemic change. Eligible children can be referred to health homes starting in October 2015, where a "care manager" will manage the child's physical and behavioral health care. Counties and agencies together decide which children to refer to health homes. Care managers can be hired by the foster care agency where the child is placed, and must coordinate with the child's case manager and case planner. Care management follows the child, so there will be continuity of provider after the child is discharged from foster care.

Starting in 2017, children in foster care can begin receiving services similar to the current Bridges to Health (B2H) waiver services. There will no longer be a fixed number of "slots" for these services, but rather they will be available for all eligible children. The care manager will manage these services for as well. This approach aligns well with the Panels' recommendations for a public health approach to child welfare. It will take time for all of the foster care agencies to be ready; OCFS is working with the agencies now and there's \$18 million in the state budget to help the agencies prepare. This money is being distributed by the NYS Department of Health.

This is a major systemic change. It may be that five years from now, child welfare will not look the same, with fewer children in foster care because they will be able to get services at home.

Ms. Velez will send a slide deck to WRI for distribution to the Panel members.

Agenda Item #2: Impact Assessment Workgroup

Mary McCarthy shared work done by the Impact Assessment Workgroup with panel members. The plan is to look back to 2009 at the Panels' recommendations and assess OCFS' response. WRI will do I will do

a preliminary rating of a couple of recommendations and send it to the Impact Assessment workgroup for review.

All members agreed with the categories identified to evaluate OCFS response to recommendations.

Levels of Achievement Ratings:

The workgroup will compare the recommendations to the written responses from OCFS and steps OCFS has taken to implement the recommendations, and categorize them according to the following scale:

1. OCFS fully implemented the recommendation.
2. OCFS partially implemented the recommendation.
3. OCFS agreed with the recommendation but did not implement it.
4. OCFS was initially supportive of the recommendation but is no longer supporting/taking action.
5. OCFS didn't respond to the recommendation.
6. OCFS disagreed with the recommendation.

Agenda Item #3: Report on the National Citizen Review Panel Conference

Shawntell Mills-Sánchez provided the workgroup with information from the NCRP conference. Shared some similarities and differences between States. Provided an overview of workshops attended (Surveys & Concept Mapping).

Agenda Item #4: Preliminary 2015 Report Development

There was agreement that the 2015 report will be framed around the outcome of the Impact Assessment. There was a discussion about any new issues that may be emerging that have not been included in previous years' reports. WRI will ask OCFS to discuss how the practice changes are being implemented statewide. The Panels want to discuss with OCFS the role they can play in the upcoming federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).