

NYC Citizens Review Panel
Meeting Summary
May 3, 2016
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Panel Members

Wayne Ho, Panel Chair
Mathea Rubin (by phone)
David Lansner

Guests

Lisa Gordon, OCFS (by phone)
Stanley Capela, Prospective Panel Member
Yamile Marti, Ph.D., Prospective Panel Member

WRI Staff

Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director (by phone)
Judy Stanger, Program Specialist and Citizen Review Panel Coordinator
Cindy Alois, Administrative Support Specialist (by phone)

Handouts

- Meeting Agenda
- 2/5/16 NYC CRP Meeting 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 Re: Phillips v. Orange County— Considerations for Child Protective Investigations
- OCFS Administrative Directive (ADM) Directive Re: Sharing Child Protective Services Information with Law Enforcement When a Child is Missing

WELCOME

Wayne Ho, Panel Chair

The meeting was called to order and introductions took place. Mr. Ho informed panel members that two potential new members, Stanley Capela and Yamile Marti, PhD are guests at the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Updates from ACS

Andrew White, ACS Assistant Commissioner

Assistant Commissioner White began his presentation describing the ten workgroups that were created by ACS, in partnership with advocates, representatives from Legal Aid, and service providers. Each workgroup is chaired by an ACS staff and an individual from outside ACS and includes six to eight members. Each workgroup is focusing on a particular area of foster care, with a goal of identifying 10-15 recommendations for improvements in their focus areas. The 10 workgroups are as follows: 1) Keeping children safely at home; 2) Improving case conferencing; 3) Strengthening reunification efforts; 4) Strengthening the role of ACS' legal services; 5) Improving coordination of housing assistance; 6) Improving placement stability; 7) Improving educational outcomes of youth in foster care; 8) Improving services for older youth; 9) Reducing delays in achieving permanency; and 10) Mitigate broken adoptions and improve post permanency.

The next steps are for workgroups to prioritize their recommendations and work with ACS to develop action plans for implementation, with goals that can be achieved in one year. Mr. White emphasized one of the main goals of developing these tasks is to keep children safe at home.

AGENDA ITEM: Queens FAR Presentation

Dorett Graham, ACS Queens Field Office, Deputy Director
Keshia Clark, Queens Field Office, Child Protective Manager

Deputy Director Graham began her presentation describing how Family Assessment Response (FAR) implementation began in ACS' Queens office during January 2013 with 4 Units of FAR staff. They have gone through many changes, including adding two new community districts (CD's) to increase the number of intakes. In February 2015, FAR criteria were expanded to allow more cases to be on the FAR track. Staff performance in preventive is strong, and several in-house practices have been enhanced to incorporate FAR principles in both FAR and investigative tracks. During February of 2015, FAR was implemented in parts of Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Ms. Clark stated that case workers have embraced FAR. The expansion was a slow transition, but it was appropriate. The overall pace of expansion allowed FAR workers to better understand how to meet the needs of individual families.

There was a discussion about expungement of FAR records. FAR cases are not expunged, but they are not recorded as "indicated" or "unfounded." There was a discussion regarding how much time is spent with a family so that they understand the role of FAR. The emphasis is on creating a partnership with FAR and the family, and FAR encourages the support of a family advocate.

The question was asked about how success with FAR is measured. These measures include the number of families who receive services, improved in the issues the family is experiencing (e.g. family relationships, child's school attendance, etc.), cases that don't need to be referred to Family Court, and aren't re-reported to the State Central Register ("hotline").

Child safety is the first consideration in FAR as it is with cases being investigated. FAR training focuses on engagement and how to approach family members. Staff members receive a toolkit that includes a series of engagement questions. There was a discussion regarding how abusive family members are dealt with in FAR cases and examples were provided.

AGENDA ITEM: OCFS updates on work related Panel recommendations

Lisa Gordon, OCFS

Ms. Gordon began her presentation focusing on several Panel recommendations.

Safe Sleep Initiative: OCFS met with the NYS Department of Health and jointly reviewed 75 child fatality cases related to unsafe sleep practices. The collected data revealed that: most children who died from unsafe sleep practices were under four months of age; most of the incidents occurred in adult beds; and there was not abuse found in the home. Incidents primarily occurred in urban areas. Income level and race were not factors in cases related to these fatalities.

OCFS is working on developing a Safe Sleep video that can be shared with pediatricians' offices for viewing by expectant or new parents and to encourage discussions about safe sleep habits during prenatal visits. In addition, OCFS is looking into distributing informational kits to WIC centers and attending conferences to distribute safe sleep information.

Opiate Epidemic: OCFS is working with the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (OASAS) to identify joint strategies in this area.

Data Analysis: OCFS is continuing to train Regional office staff in analyzing and using data to drive performance improvement work as they work with counties. OCFS is working with a consultant, Public Catalyst, to look more deeply into maltreatment and foster care data in two counties.

Training: OCFS is transforming their child welfare training system and moving toward a competency-based system. There was a discussion regarding what is OCFS doing in the area of trauma-informed care. OCFS would like to incorporate trauma informed care into all training.

AGENDA ITEM: Agenda Items for next meeting:

The following items were identified for as possible topics at the next Panel meeting:

- Guest speaker to discuss home visiting.
- Older adolescents in foster care and helping them prepare for discharge and after.

The meeting was adjourned by the Panel Chair.