

**NYC Citizens Review Panel
Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2014
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

Attendees:

Panel Members

Wayne Ho, Panel Co-Chair and Chief Program and Policy Officer, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

Jocelyn Brown, MD. Director, Child Advocacy Center of New York

David J. Lansner, Esq. Partner, Lansner & Kubitschek

Jorge Saenz De Viteri, CEO, ECE Management NY, Inc.

Guests

Lisa Gordon, OCFS (by phone)

Grace Thompson, OCFS (by phone)

Chris Cargain, OCFS (by phone)

Greg Owens, OCFS (by phone)

WRI Staff

Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director

Handouts:

- Meeting Agenda
- Child Welfare Practice Model
- Administration for Children and Families Information Memorandum, October 23, 2014
- New York State OCFS Local Commissioners Memorandum, June 12, 2014
- Child Protective Services Program Manual, June 2009
- NYC Citizen Review Panel Meeting Minutes, September 9, 2014
- KEYS – Keys to Excellence in Your Supervision

WELCOME (Panel Co-Chairs) – Introductions took place

OCFS UPDATES (OCFS, Lisa Gordon)

Overview of new Child Welfare Practice Model (handout) – Ms. Gordon reviewed the Practice Model handout, and provided background about its development. There are a lot of child welfare initiatives underway across the state that various districts and OCFS are working on. There was an identified need for this framework to create a roadmap to help OCFS and the field organize work in the same direction in order to improve our outcomes. This Model helps align resources, policies, etc. and provides a common framework from which to make decisions about work going forward.

Panelists emphasized the importance of well-being and Ms. Gordon agreed. The principles in the Practice Model are not ranked; all are important. The federal government has not provided a measure

of well being but are putting a lot of emphasis on it. OCFS has developed a white paper regarding well-being and Ms. Gordon will provide it to Panel members. Panelists raised the issue of inadequate housing in child welfare cases and the need to attack that problem. Supporting well being takes more than one agency or system. Panelists also raised the need for an expansion of Home Visiting and referenced Senator Squadron's recent proposal that home visiting be offered to all parents of newborns covered by Medicaid.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR): The federal review will be conducted in New York in 2016. In advance of that, OCFS received statewide data on the federal measures and NY does not look good in comparison to other states. The data will be broken down to the county level and released in the near future. OCFS is working to determine whether to focus on improving in all seven areas, focus more specifically on a couple, etc.

KEYS Supervision Initiative (CDHS/OCFS, Grace Thompson, Project Coordinator)

Ms. Thompson reviewed the KEYS handouts and described the model as an important organizational development model and support system for local district supervisors. It is a model for the 21st century workforce that is more responsive to teamwork than taking orders. This model supports supervisors in their role of helping staff develop their skills through support and education. The focus is on modeling behavior and practicing and receiving feedback.

Eight counties have fully implemented KEYS to date and OCFS is pleased with the results. Four more counties will implement KEYS in 2015. Implementation involves a year-long organizational development process that implements the KEYS model of supervision with leadership support from a Local Implementation Team (LIT). The LIT includes staff from all levels, from administrative to clerical support, to strengthen teamwork, partnerships and shared values about the agency's mission.

Unaccompanied Minors (OCFS, Chris Cargain)

The UAC program is designed to provide for the care and placement of unaccompanied refugee minors who are apprehended in the United States and are taken into care pending resolution of their claims for relief under U.S. immigration law or release to adult family members or responsible guardians.

Since January 2014, 100,000 unaccompanied refugee children have crossed the border mainly from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. The minor has no lawful immigration status, is under the age of 18 and has no parent present. The minor population consists of adolescents 12-17 years of age and the highest percentage represented by males. These unaccompanied refugee children are in the legal custody of the federal government. OCFS certifies nearly 1,000 beds in voluntary agencies, located primarily downstate and on Long Island.

The length of stay in ORR custody is between 30-35 days, but it can vary. There have been over 6,000 unaccompanied minors that have been discharged to sponsors in New York (2/3 reside in Nassau and Suffolk Counties). Temporary custody, health and education services have to be provided. Ninety two percent of the transfers to sponsors are with immediate family members. The issue with downstate is enrollment in public schools. DOE issued guidance document that schools have to enroll these children.

OCFS is currently waiting for approval of a \$360 million RFP award by the federal government, including sites in New York State. The results are expected within the next couple of weeks.

OCFS' Work to Reduce Disproportionality and Increase Racial Equity (OCFS, Greg Owens)

Mr. Owens provided an overview of OCFS' work in recent years to reduce disproportionality and disparity. Counties with the highest rates of racial disparity in foster care were identified and OCFS is working with them to reduce this. Planning grants were provided with an emphasis on a data-driven process. OCFS is working toward looking at DMR data by zip code. Reductions in disparity are being seen in at least two counties, Onondaga and Nassau Counties. Participating counties are meeting next week for a forum/strategy session to discuss their work and future directions.

Mr. Owens referenced the work of Dr. Robert Hills, including *Race Matters in Child Welfare*. There is also interesting information about how doctors look at families of different races differently and there is not a lot of training on the impact of bias. Mr. Owens referenced the Implicit Aptitude Test (IAT) available on Harvard University's website. According to the website, the IAT "measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows you have an implicit attitude you did not know about." The IAT is available to self-administer at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

OCFS is also working with the schools of social work to infuse content about racial equity into the curricula.

The Panel offered their assistance going forward with this work.

Nassau County's Work to Reduce DMR (Nassau County Department of Social Services, Maria Lauria, Director of Services, and Jeanette Feingold, Director of Child Protective Services)

Ms. Lauria and Ms. Feingold joined the meeting by phone and described the "blind removals" initiative to reduce disproportionality in decision making regarding removal of children in CPS cases. This is a pilot program that recognizes we all have bias and to try to reduce that, and increase objectivity, when making decisions whether a child needs to be removed from his/her home for safety reasons.

When a caseworker is recommending removal of a child, they present their case to a committee of administrators at Nassau Co. DSS, often on very short notice. The caseworker and supervisor redact the referral information so the committee does not know the family members' names, address or any other information that might provide clues to the family's race or ethnicity. The committee process is not new; the "only" new process is redacting that information.

Nassau Co. DSS is seeing fewer African American children come into foster care and disparity is being reduced. Similar improvements (reduction) in disparity are being seen for Hispanic children. Nassau Co. DSS recently did a webinar on this topic for other counties statewide. Casey Family Services has expressed interest in expansion of the model.

Planning for 2015

Status of Annual Report: There was a discussion about some changes to language in the report, and these will be made before the report is printed.

Review of Proposed Meeting Dates: There was a discussion of the proposed meeting dates for 2015 and the dates were then finalized. WRI will circulate these dates again.

Wrap Up

At the next meeting we will discuss the impact assessment and possible approaches to this work in 2015. WRI announced that it has received the award to coordinate the Panels' work for the next five years and looks forward to working with panelists.

There was interest in inviting ACS Commissioner Carrion to the next meeting as she was unable to attend the fall meeting. There was also interest in hearing more about the NYC Committee's work to reduce disproportionality in child welfare.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.