

NYC Citizen Review Panel Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2014
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Panel Members

Dr. Jocelyn Brown, M.D., MPH
Jorge Saenz De Viteri (by phone)
Wayne Ho, Panel Co-Chair
David J. Lansner, Esq.
Sania Andrea Metzger, Esq.
Elba I. Montalvo, Panel Co-Chair
Mathea C. Rubin
Marion White

Guests

Raymond Toomer, NYC Regional Office Director, OCFS
4 international interns from Lansner & Kubitschek

Welfare Research, Inc. (staffing to Panels)

Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director, Welfare Research, Inc.

Handouts:

Agenda
Minutes of May 13, 2014 NYC CRP Meeting
Minutes of June 13, 2014 Joint Panel Meeting
Outline of Discussion at June 13, 2014 Joint Panel Meeting
OCFS Response to 2013 CPR Report and Recommendations
Review of NYS CRP Recommendations from the Past 7 Years, Working Draft
Fact Sheet: "Child Welfare and Children of Incarcerated Parents"
Fact Sheet: "A Public Health Approach to Child Welfare"
Fact Sheet: "Child Welfare Workforce"
Letter from U.S. Dept. Of Education and HHS concerning educational stability for children in foster care
NASW Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Welfare
GAO: HHS Needs to Improve Oversight of Fostering Connections Act Implementation (May 2014)
Article: "Heroin epidemic sending more kids to foster care," *Plattsburgh Press-Republican*, 6/22/14
Article: "Number of homeless children explodes in state, Albany," *Albany Times Union*, 6/23/14

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. Elba Montalvo announced that she will be retiring as President and CEO of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, but will continue her role as Panel member and Co-chair.

1. OCFS Response to the 2013 Annual CRP Report

Raymond Toomer summarized OCFS's response to recommendations in the 2013 report.

Essential Child Welfare Services: The state share of child welfare services, including preventive services, continues at 62%.

Family Assessment Response (FAR): OCFS continues to support implementation of FAR through coaching, training, and funding. OCFS is sponsoring a FAR symposium in October for staff from the counties in which FAR has been implemented. OCFS continues to support the 22 counties with FAR and is seeking to support expansion, including encouraging ACS to expand FAR from the pilots in Queens to the entire borough, and then into additional boroughs. Non-FAR counties are invited to attend trainings and OCFS continues to assess counties for readiness.

Racial Equity: OCFS is supporting counties in dealing with racial equity, and is specifically working with 13 counties. ACS has a task force looking into the factors that lead to racial disparity and OCFS has been invited to join. The solution to the removal of children is to strengthen families. Disparity is based on the attitudes of people who make the decisions.

The panel discussed local practices for dealing with this issue and related workforce issues. Workforce training on overcoming racial bias was suggested, and there was interest in the "blind removal" work being done in Nassau County. Additional information and discussion of this topic at a future meeting was recommended by Panel members.

Educational Neglect: OCFS views educational neglect as an entry point into supporting child well-being. One positive aspect of FAR is that it addresses this issue. Assessing schools and the services they are providing requires a combined effort, with child welfare and the public education system working together. There was a discussion about the sometimes misplaced blame on parents when the issues are within the schools and not the home. Panelists would like to hear more about the coordination between ACS and the Department of Education at a future meeting.

There was a general discussion about the efforts being made by OCFS and ACS to achieve the recommendations of Citizen Review Panels. Panel members expressed ongoing concerns about children being removed from their homes without reasonable efforts to keep them with their families. There was also a discussion of OCFS's oversight of practices in ACS and other counties. The Panel invited Mr. Toomer to return to a subsequent meeting to discuss how OCFS oversees and supervises ACS.

2. 2014 Recommendations

The panel reviewed the summary of the June 13, 2014 meeting. In addition, a chart was distributed depicting the outcomes of Citizen Review Panel recommendations over the past seven years, organized by topic area. There was discussion about issuing a "report card" as part of the 2014 recommendations to hold the state and all agencies accountable for addressing the recommendations. This will be discussed further with the other two panels at the joint panel meeting on October 2.