

**Eastern Citizen Review Panel
Meeting Summary
March 10, 2017
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

Attendees:

Panel Members: Edward Blatt, Kathy Halas, Mary McCarthy, Angela Baris, JoAnn Merriman (by phone), Sharon Chesna (by phone), Nadia Allen (by phone)

Guests: Kari Siddiqui, SCAA
Kathleen Brady-Stepien, COFCCA
Stephanie Gendell, Citizens' Committee for Children
Lisa Gordon, OCFS

WRI Staff: Jennifer Goldman, CRP Coordinator and Program Specialist
Ellen Unruh, Associate Executive Director
Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director
Cindy Alois, Administrative Support Specialist

Handouts:

- Agenda
- SCAA: Supporting Immigrant Families Impacted by Immigration Detention or Deportation
- COFCCA Cares 4 Kids: 2017-2018 Budget Recommendations
- State Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Child Budget Recommendations
- Budget Recommendations to the Governor and NYS Legislature Fiscal Year 2017-2018
- Child and Family Coverage: Federal Health Update
- New York State Child and Family Services Review Opportunities for Improvement
- 12/9/16 CRP Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Welcome and Introductions

Edward Blatt

Mr. Blatt opened the meeting and introductions took place, including the introduction of a new panel member, new Welfare Research, Inc. staff, and guest partners.

Agenda Item: 2017 Priorities for Partners

*Kari Siddiqui, SCAA
Kathleen Brady-Stepien, COFCCA
Stephanie Gendell, Citizens Committee for Children*

Mr. Blatt asked each guest partner to discuss budget and legislative priorities for their organizations, as well as any challenges, and suggestions for how the Citizen Review Panels can align advocacy efforts.

Ms. Kathleen Brady-Stepien shared the budget and legislative priorities of the Council of Family and Child Care Agencies (COFCCA). COFCCA, a statewide organization that represents the interests of child welfare workers in voluntary agencies, is focusing budgetary and legislative priorities on the identified needs of the child welfare workforce including: high turnover rates, lack of government funding resulting in lower wages and additional training and higher education. COFCCA is requesting funds for capital improvements for voluntary agency facilities, a child welfare higher education opportunity program and an increase in the reimbursement rate for services.

Ms. Kari Siddiqui, from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA), discussed that SCAA and the Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) have aligned priorities in the "Child Welfare Call to Action," and thanked panel members for choosing to sign on to the document. Panel members discussed factors that are deterring workers from entering or remaining in the field including minimal compensation and the increasing stress of the job with fewer support resources. Panel members discussed enlisting the help of business leaders to support advocacy efforts and using New York's performance on the federal Child and Family Services Review as a tool to educate and engage legislators. Ms. Siddiqui then asked Ms. Stephanie Gendell from CCC described the shared priorities in the Child Welfare Call to Action.

Ms. Gendell described the issues related to child welfare in the Executive Budget Proposal that are also priorities listed in the Child Welfare Call to Action including: preventing cuts to the foster care block grant, restoring the reimbursement rate for preventive services to its previous higher level, including Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program in the foster care block grant (rather than creating a separate funding stream), providing additional funding to expand home visiting programs and preventing cuts specific to New York City. Panel members and presenters discussed the impact of the opiate addiction epidemic on the child welfare system in New York, attributing the abuse of the drug to a recent increase in foster care placements.

Panel members asked how the Panel can best contribute to efforts to positively influence the child welfare budget and legislative priorities. Presenters suggested that more attention must be placed on child welfare issues since most attention has been diverted to advocacy efforts at the federal level. Panel members then discussed funneling the priorities under one "umbrella issue" that all advocacy partners can focus on – the crumbling infrastructure of the child welfare system in New York. Panel member and guests also discussed that the human services sector needs to be seen as a constituency that votes and has influence in elections, spurring a discussion of a "get out and vote" campaign for child welfare workers.

The partners and panel members agreed to have ongoing discussions about priorities and aligning advocacy efforts.

Agenda Item: Lunch and Debrief from morning presentations

Edward Blatt

Panel members discussed tactics to promote real positive change in the child welfare system including: registering and promoting voting in state legislator elections, incorporating interests of

business leaders into advocacy efforts and increasing Citizen Review Panel presence on social media. Panel members then decided to utilize the joint Citizen Review Panel in June as more of a strategizing session.

Agenda Item: Debrief meeting with OCFS and Legislators

Edward Blatt

Mr. Blatt summarized the Panel Chairs' meetings with state legislators and OCFS Executive Staff on May 6, 2017. He shared that OCFS would like to maintain a partnership with the panels, keep an open dialogue and meet with panel chairs biannually. Mr. Blatt also summarized meetings with several state legislators and shared that the legislators were interested in the CFSR results and also the Citizen Review Panels' identified budget and legislative priorities.

Agenda Item: WRI Updates

Jennifer Goldman

Mrs. Goldman provided updates from Welfare Research, Inc. She distributed a handout from the Home Visiting Workgroup meeting detailing the impact of the potential repeal of the Affordable Care Act on children and families. Mrs. Goldman also shared the distribution plan for the CRP 2016 Annual Report.

Agenda Item: OCFS Updates

Lisa Gordon

Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) /Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

Ms. Gordon shared that NYS' PIP is due to the federal government at the end of March 2017. OCFS examined data and brought a group of stakeholders together to determine the best improvement strategies. Strategies include:

- Improving training,
- Reducing time to permanency,
- Improving the quality of data in CONNECTIONS,
- Improving the county CQI process,
- Increasing service array, including the use of the home health model, and
- Improving technical assistance and monitoring of foster care.

Family Assessment Response (FAR)

Ms. Gordon then discussed the use of FAR. Currently, 23 counties are using FAR. NYC is expanding the use to Brooklyn and expects to go citywide by the end of 2018. Technical support work for FAR is being transferred to CDHS. Last year, one county dropped the use of FAR, but legislation has since been changed so that workers can be assigned both FAR and traditional CPS cases to offer counties flexibility. OCFS is also doing some "marketing" to increase the use of FAR.

Home Visiting Programs

Ms. Gordon shared that OCFS is working to expand home visiting programs across the state. Last June, OCFS issued a RFP, expanding six current programs and adding one new program. OCFS is using adoption de-linking money to further expand home visiting.

Workload Study

Ms. Gordon did not have any updates to share on the Workload Study.

Status of CWIS – Replacement for current SACWIS computer system

Ms. Gordon shared that OCFS committed to an analysis of CWIS and if OCFS will pursue the new system. Implementation is still several years away. CWIS allows more sharing between data systems.

Opioid Crisis

Ms. Gordon described OCFS' work to address the opioid crisis in child welfare. OCFS and the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services regional offices are meeting quarterly to develop joint strategies. OCFS has been showing a documentary called "The Hungry Heart" during trainings to raise awareness. OCFS does not have any specific data available related to the opioid crisis but knows anecdotally that it is having an impact on the families that are served by the child welfare system.

Progress on Implementation of the OCFS Practice Model

Ms. Gordon invited Claire Strohmeier, from OCFS, to speak about the implementation of the practice model. Ms. Strohmeier shared that the Statewide Implementation Team meets monthly and includes representatives from across the child welfare field. These members serve as "ambassadors" to others in the field. County plans address safety, permanency and well-being; focus on evidence and data; and address organizational effectiveness. OCFS is also looking to improve the Practice Model/County Plan implementation by potentially making it web-based, and increasing OCFS support. OCFS is providing counties with child-level data and asking them to do a six-month assessment to pinpoint underlying causes for poor performance. The county then develops a continuous quality improvement plan that takes ten to twelve months to evaluate. OCFS has enlisted Public Catalyst to assist with this work. OCFS is offering support through data leaders at regional offices, regular support calls and kick off events to bolster enthusiasm.

Panel members asked what data is being collected to measure performance on well-being. Ms. Strohmeier responded that it is challenging to get direct data; however, OCFS is collecting education-related measures and now has an MOU with New York State Education Department to access educational records when a child enters foster care.

Item: Closing Business

Edward Blatt

Election of Vice Chair

Mr. Blatt motioned, it was seconded and then unanimously approved that Mary McCarthy would be the Eastern Panel Vice-Chair until November 2017. Upon that time, a new Vice-Chair will be elected.

The meeting was adjourned.