

**Eastern Citizen Review Panel**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**March 18, 2016**  
**10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**Attendees:**

*Panel Members*

Angela Baris, Edward Blatt, PhD, Sharon Chesna (by phone), Lance Jackson,  
JoAnn Merriman, M.S., PA-C, Erin Christopher-Sisk, PhD

*Guests*

Lisa Gordon (OCFS)  
Lisa Gharthey Ogundimu (OCFS)  
John Birtwistle IT (OCFS)  
Renee Hallock (OCFS)

*WRI Staff*

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

**Handouts:**

- Agenda
- 2015 Annual Report
- OCFS Child Welfare Practice Model
- NCRP: Communicating with External Groups
- The Osborne Association: NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents
- OCFS Administrative Directive
- 12-11-15 Eastern CRP Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Panel Member Edward Blatt, filling in for the Panel Chair.

**AGENDA ITEM: Prospects for new Panel Members**

Edward Blatt

Group discussion began addressing current number of vacancies that need to be filled. Following the March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, there will be a total of four vacancies (Assembly, 3; Senate, 1). It was decided the Panel members would be proactive about looking for replacement members.

**Agenda Item: OCFS Practice Model**

Lisa Gordon, OCFS

Ms. Gordon began her presentation describing the Practice Model as “road map for the Regional office”. She noted that this Principles of Partnership has become the core value system for OCFS. They are currently training every person in child welfare on a two day overview of Principles of Partnership. Once staff has been trained, OCFS will make the training available to local districts. In the area of core competencies, OCFS is working toward developing a training center model.

**Agenda Item: Use of mobile technology for caseworkers**

John Birtwistle, IT

Mr. Birtwistle began his discussion stating that there are several issues surrounding caseworkers' use of mobile technology. Most problems are centered on security and what should be done so that data is not lost. He noted that his office is working on encryption software. A prototype has been developed and they are currently working with a vendor. Currently, they are trying to work through governance of mobile technology. In the area of human services, there exists a connection with the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the NYS Department of Health, and the NYS Division of Human Rights.

**Agenda Item: Move from SACWIS to CCWIS**

John Birtwistle, IT

The federal Children's Bureau issued draft rules for the transition for states from a State Automated Child Welfare System (SACWIS) to a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). The final federal rules should come out in the summer of 2016. Overall, it is expected there will not be significant changes to New York's system. The transition will be a two year process; any new development will be funded 50% by the federal government.

**Agenda Item: State Ed & OCFS MOU for data sharing**

Lisa Gharthey Ogundimu, OCFS

The process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to allow for sharing of data between the New York State Education Department (SED) and OCFS began seven years ago, and was recently completed. Once the agreement was finalized, educational data for K-12 students was sent to OCFS by SED. This data is 'refreshed' twice per year. The focus of this data sharing is to make sure this information is available to, and becomes a priority of, child welfare caseworkers. There is a need to for caseworkers to assess how children perform in high school and these youth need to have a support system in place to ensure that they graduate. In the summer of 2016, OCFS will give a presentation at the New York Public Welfare Association (NWPWA) statewide conference comparing data of students in foster care with those not in foster care. Ms. Gharthey Ogundimu also stated that it was discovered that students who are homeless are actually doing better academically than children in foster care.

OCFS is working on allowing access to this data for the nonprofit child welfare service providers; they are working on an amendment to the MOU in order to provide this access.

Another goal in this process it to try to reduce the number of school moves for children in foster care. Data collected will allow a closer look at how many changes of schools children in foster care are experiencing. OCFS is also working with the City University of New York (CUNY) and the State University of New York (SUNY) to collect data to determine the type of support that can be offered to children in foster care when they are at the college level.

**Agenda Item: OCFS Joint Court Improvement Project**

Lisa Gharthey Ogundimu, OCFS

This a federal program that funds and supports collaboration between child welfare agencies and the court systems to improve outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system. In New York, OCFS and the NYS Office of Court Administration (OCA) collaborate regularly, including a workgroup that meets regularly and includes additional stakeholders. Toward the goal of collaborating to improve

outcomes, this project involves trying to establish best practice for families involved with the child welfare system based on the drug treatment court model. These practices include: individuals need to be seen more frequently by judges; and individuals have to continue with services. OCFS developed a bench card that has been shared with the courts. Another part of the OCFS/CIP joint project focuses on caseworkers asking whether or not a child is Native American. If so, the caseworker is required to follow the requirements of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

**Agenda Item: OCFS Updates: Continuous Quality Improvement**

Lisa Gordon, OCFS

Ms. Gordon described OCFS' application of a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process in child welfare. The first step is to look at the performance outcome measures and identify the characteristics of the children that are included in the areas of strengths and areas of concern. For example, when looking at performance results for time to permanency, they need to determine which children are in foster care the longest and the reasons for this.

Discussion continued about whether caseworkers can get an automated prompt about the length of time a child has been in foster care. Ms. Gordon said that the CONNECTIONS system does not have this functionality, but instead OCFS is trying to get caseworkers to look at this data closely and make decisions based on this information.

**Agenda Item: OCFS Update on the Safe Sleep Initiative**

Renee Hallock, OCFS

OCFS would like to partner with the Citizen Review Panels on the Safe Sleep initiative. This is an initiative to reduce the number of infant fatalities due to unsafe sleep practices (e.g. co-sleeping, blankets/pillows in a crib, etc.) There was a group discussion about steps the Panels could help OCFS take, including: determine local businesses that sell cribs and develop an education program for them to share with their customers; support the drafting of legislation about the need to ban crib bumpers; and distribute informational kits about safe sleep practices. OCFS is working toward replicating informational kits that have been used in Monroe County. The discussion also included the identified need for a public service announcement focusing on adults not sleeping with infants and very young children due to the risk for suffocation of the child. This could be presented as public health crisis.

**Agenda Item: Recognition for service/contributions of Lance Jackson**

Renee Hallock, OCFS

On behalf of OCFS, Ms. Hallock thanked long-time and retiring Panel member Lance Jackson for his many years of participation and service. Mr. Jackson was presented with a certificate of appreciation.

**Agenda Item: Updates from WRI**

Ms. Stanger provided an overview of a meeting of the three Panel chairs, WRI, OCFS Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez, and Lisa Gordon (OCFS) in February. The discussion included the Panels' Annual Report and ways in which OCFS and the Panels could work together more effectively. Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez will attend the joint Panels' meeting in June to provide updates about OCFS' work to strengthen child welfare. OCFS will work to have staff at every Panel meeting so they are aware of the recommendations that will be included in the Annual Report each year.

Ms. Stanger also mentioned that she has been attending meetings regarding the issue of Children with Incarcerated Parents, hosted by the Osborne Association since this is an area of interest to the Panels. Ms. Stanger will share pertinent information from these meetings with the Panels.

**Agenda Item: Meeting Adjourned**