

**Eastern Citizen Review Panel**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**May 5, 2017**  
**10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

**Attendees:**

*Panel Members:* Edward Blatt, Kathy Halas (by phone), Sharon Chesna (by phone), Joann Merriman (by phone)

*Guests:* John Befus, Deputy Commissioner Westchester County (by phone)  
Allison Behan, OCFS  
Jane Brennan-Gilmore, OCFS  
Lisa Gordon, OCFS  
Greg Owens, OCFS  
Barbara Green-Flood, OCFS

*WRI Staff:* Jennifer Goldman, CRP Coordinator and Program Specialist  
Ellen Unruh, Associate Executive Director (by phone)

**Handouts:**

- Agenda
- Children's Bureau Child Maltreatment 2015: Summary of Key Findings
- Children's Bureau Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities 2015: Statistics and Intervention
- Cost Savings from Reasonable Child Welfare Workloads
- Center on the Developing Child: Applying the Science of Child Development in Child Welfare Systems
- Health Homes Serving Children: Fact Sheet (rev 5/4/17)
- SCAA: Schuyler Center's Last Look at the NYS 2017-18 Final Budget as it Intersects with our Policy Priorities
- Veto Message on Caseload Bill
- March 10, 2017 CRP Meeting Minutes

**Agenda Item: Welcome and Introductions**

*Edward Blatt, Panel Chair*

Panel Chair Edward Blatt convened meeting and asked panel members and guests to introduce themselves.

**Agenda Item: CQI/PIP Implementation** *John Befus, Deputy Commissioner Westchester Co.*

Mr. Befus began his discussion by providing an overview of the state of child welfare in Westchester County including budget, caseload and workforce. Mr. Befus then highlighted recent successes in Westchester County such as implementing a system of standards and qualitative measures as well as forming a unit designated for case review and quality assurance. In addition, Westchester County is focusing on several areas for practice improvement: using analytics to understand needs and shifting resources, reducing infant fatalities caused by unsafe

sleeping arrangements, and reducing the time to permanency. Additional Westchester County priorities include growing a cross-systems child welfare unit, increasing the use of KinGAP, reducing the use of congregate care and expanding home visiting programs.

Panel members asked Mr. Befus how he would characterize the children in foster care today – are they more challenging to serve? Mr. Befus responded that due to improvements in service array, children with less intense needs can now be better served outside of foster care. Cases where children require services from different agencies present a particular challenge for the county as it can be difficult to navigate how to qualify a child for different types of services. Mr. Befus then shared that Westchester County has received a federal grant to tackle the needs of the children aging out of care.

Panel Chair Ed Blatt thanked Mr. Befus for participating in the meeting.

### **Agenda Item: OCFS Updates**

*Lisa Gordon*

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

OCFS submitted the first draft of the CFSR/PIP to the federal Administration for Children and Families on March 27, 2017. OCFS is still waiting for comments or official approval but is moving forward with implementing the strategies described in the plan.

#### Family Assessment Response (FAR)

Ms. Gordon shared that OCFS established the goal of 30% of cases tracked to FAR as that percentage reflected the data presented by counties that were well established in the use of FAR. OCFS is constantly examining the use of FAR to determine how to overcome barriers to usage. Through the Center for Development of Human Services, OCFS has hired a coordinator to focus on expanding the use of FAR. Additional counties have indicated interest.

#### Home Visiting

OCFS recently received federal funds to expand and establish new home visiting programs across the State, including one site in Brooklyn. SUNY Albany Center for Human Services Research will be completing a study in 2019 to determine the impact of home visiting on the reduction of child abuse and maltreatment.

#### Workload Study

Ms. Gordon shared that OCFS is working to implement requests made by the Governor in his Caseload Bill veto message and will share information as it comes.

#### Raise the Age Bill

The bill to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 (A4935, S4121) passed both the NYS Assembly and Senate and was signed into law by the Governor. OCFS is just in the initial planning stages of how to begin implementing the law.

#### County planning

In addition to continuing work on the data dashboard, OCFS presented Child and Family Service Review data in “bright spot packages” to counties at the quarterly county planning meetings.

## CWIS

Ms. Gordon shared with the panel members that OCFS has several years to make a decision regarding transitioning into the new federal CWIS data system.

## Children with Incarcerated Parents

As a result of recommendations in the CRP annual report, OCFS has been meeting with the Osborne Association to create trainings on issues related to children with incarcerated parents.

## Safe Sleeping

Due to an increase in sleep-related fatalities, OCFS is re-focusing on safe sleep initiatives. Panel members discussed the importance of the distribution of safe sleep materials and cribs.

## Training Pilot

A training pilot where workers and supervisors jointly work through on-the-job learning scenarios is starting July 7, 2017. OCFS plans on getting feedback from the pilot and revising the training accordingly, before rolling out the training across the State.

## **Agenda Item: WRI Updates**

*Jennifer Goldman*

Mrs. Goldman shared updates from the Home Visiting workgroup, including topics covered at the most recent meeting. She then referred panel members to the NYS Budget Summary from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and updated the panel regarding additional bills proposed by the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents that would aim to increase the proximity of placement between incarcerated parents and their children. Mrs. Goldman then reminded panel members of the joint panel meeting in June and the next Eastern meeting in September.

## **Agenda Item: Update on Health Home Implementation**

*Allison Behan*

Allison Behan and Jane Brennan-Gilmore from OCFS joined the meeting to discuss the implementation of health homes. Mrs. Behan began by distributing and reviewing a handout describing health homes, rules of eligibility, and how they serve children in foster care. Health homes are case management entities, created through the Affordable Care Act, responsible for the coordination of the complex services of eligible children on Medicaid. Mrs. Behan then explained the organization of health homes, how they receive referrals and where health homes fit in the continuum of care. Panel members asked Mrs. Behan several questions regarding eligibility and challenges for the program in relation to recent efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Mr. Blatt asked Mrs. Behan to join the panel at a later meeting once more information is available. Mrs. Behan agreed. Mr. Blatt thanked Mrs. Behan and Ms. Brennan-Gilmore for their time.

## **Agenda Item: Update on OCFS Race Equity Initiative** *Greg Owens, Barbara Green-Flood*

Mr. Greg Owens and Ms. Barbara Green-Flood joined the meeting to update panel members on OCFS Race Equity and Cultural Competency Initiatives. OCFS recently organized a conference on “Mindfulness and the Mind Science of Bias.” OCFS is also working with counties with

identified disparity issues to use data to “dive deeper,” and potentially identify causes for the disparity, as well as resolutions. Panel members asked why more counties are not doing blind removals. Mr. Owens responded that a county must first buy-in that they have racial disparity issues and then be invested to address the causes of these issues. Panel members then asked if OCFS requires counties with identified racial disparity issues to address it in their county plans. Mr. Owens responded that there is no requirement and counties self-identify areas of improvement in county plans. Mr. Owens then described additional initiatives such as the racial equity learning exchange, imbedding racial equity issues into new caseworker training, and racial equity learning communities. Panel members asked Mr. Owens to share the OCFS annual report on race equity initiatives. Mr. Blatt thanked Mr. Owens and Ms. Green-Flood for their time.

**Agenda Item: Closing Business**

*Edward Blatt*

Panel members discussed focus areas for the CRP joint meeting on June 8, 2017 as well as additional topics for the next Eastern CRP meeting in September. Mr. Blatt then adjourned the meeting.