

**Joint Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Meeting**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**June 8, 2017**

**Attendees:**

*Panel Members:* Eastern: Nadia Allen, Ed Blatt, Maureen McLoughlin, Joann Merriman  
NYC: Stanley Capela, David Lansner, Mathea Rubin  
Western: Linda C. Brown, Ellen Kennedy, Karl Wiggins

*Guests:* Kari Siddiqui, SCAA  
Laura Velez, OCFS  
Stephanie Gendell, CCC  
Tonya Krupat, Osborne Association  
Allison Monihan, Osborne Association

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

**Handouts:**

- Agenda
- Evidence Based and Promising Interventions
- Revised Confidentiality Agreement
- Status of Child Welfare Bills
- Summary of Citizen Review Panel Activities

**Agenda Item: Welcome and introductions**

Ed Blatt welcomed and asked meeting participants to introduce themselves.

**Agenda Item: OCFS Presentation and Discussion – Laura Velez, Deputy Commissioner**

Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez joined the meeting to provide updates from OCFS. She began the discussion by informing panel members that OCFS' full response to the 2016 Annual report will be available in several weeks.

Deputy Commissioner Velez then proceeded to address points within the 2016 Annual Report. In regards to the recommendation to develop a 5 year plan with measurable outcomes and goals, Deputy Commissioner Velez shared that OCFS has incorporated a five year cycle for county improvement plans as part of a larger strategic plan, driven by New York's Child and Family Service Review results. In support of the "county up" improvement strategy, OCFS is working on statewide data dashboard that will get refreshed daily.

Deputy Commissioner then focused her update on addressing the ongoing issue of staff turnover. OCFS is revising the core training for child welfare workers so that the training offerings will be

more nimble and be able to better respond to the needs of the field as they arise, such as responding to the opioid epidemic.

Deputy Commissioner Velez shared that OCFS is continuously interested in investing in the expansion of home visiting services as funds are available.

### **Agenda Item: Updates from Panel Chairs**

The Chair from each panel provided a brief synopsis of the activities of each panel from December 2016 through May 2017.

#### NYC

In December 2016, the NYC Panel invited Stephanie Gendell from the Citizens' Committee for Children to discuss meeting to discuss bills recently passed by the New York City council related to foster care, including a homeless youth housing bill; and Dr. Stuart Gitlow was invited to a meeting to discuss the impact of the opioid epidemic in child welfare in NYC.

In March 2017, ACS briefed panel members on various ACS initiatives. David Lansner was elected Panel Chair, and Stanley Capela was elected Vice Chair.

At the May 2017 meeting, Brian Clapier, ACS Associate Commissioner, returned to further discuss the use of predictive analytics; Dr. Angel Mendoza, incoming ACS medical director, talked about issues related to tracking health indicators for children in foster care; and advocate guests and the First Deputy Commissioner of ACS, Eric Brettschneider, discussed ongoing lawsuits and work done through advocacy workgroups.

#### Eastern

In December 2016, staff from the Justice Center discussed the Center's responsibilities, jurisdiction and types of investigations; Ryan Johnson presented information on NYS Kinship Navigator Program; and Jeanette Feingold, Director of Child Protective Services at Nassau County Department of Social Services provided an update on the outcome data from blind removals.

At the March 2017 meeting, advocacy partners from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Citizens' Committee for Children, and the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies joined the meeting to provide updates on the budgetary and legislative advocacy focuses for 2017; and Mary McCarthy was elected Vice Chair.

In May 2017, John Befus, Deputy Commission from Westchester County, provided an update of the state of child welfare in Westchester County including county planning, budget, caseload and workforce; Allison Behan, from OCFS, provided an update on the implementation of health homes; and Greg Owens and Barbara Green-Flood provided updates on race equity initiatives at OCFS.

## Western

In December 2016, Erie County Commissioner Al Dirschberger provided updates on Erie County's work to reduce disproportionate minority representation in the child welfare system.

In March 2017, Tim Hathaway, Executive Directors of Prevent Child Abuse New York, joined the meeting to describe the current work of the organization including a community based initiative to reduce sexual abuse; and Sharon Rochelle, 1st Deputy Commissioner of Erie County Department of Social Services, provided updates on key initiatives in Erie County including disproportionate minority representation, court improvement and workforce development.

At the May 2017 meeting, Allison Behan, OCFS, provided an update on home health implementation; and Carol Henderson, Niagara County, discussed current initiatives and issues in the county including rampant drug use, reducing the time to permanency and improving cross systems work with other agencies such as the police department.

WRI and OCFS provided updates at all meetings.

### **Agenda item: Planning for 2017 Recommendations**

Panel members discussed how to best promote the upcoming 2017 recommendations, including identifying appropriate partners and increasing advocacy with the legislature and Governor's office. Panel members are discussed the extent to which they would like to include the results of the most recent federal Child and Family Service Review.

### **Agenda Item: Discussion with Partners – SCAA and CCC**

Kari Siddiqui, Schuyler Center for Advocacy and Analysis (SCAA), and Stephanie Gendell, Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC), joined the meeting to discuss how the Panels, SCAA and CCC can increase collaboration to improve child welfare in NYS. The partners and CRP members discussed different advocacy strategies, including the most effective timeline for activities, and agreed to focus efforts in 2017 on expanding and improving home visiting services across the State.

### **Agenda Item: Update from NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Staff from the Osborne Association provided updates on the NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, the statewide reform initiative to improve the well-being of children of incarcerated parents. The Osborne Association staff discussed three pending bills related to the proximity of parents' placements in relation to the location of their children, with the hopes that incarcerated parents, who meet certain criteria, can be placed closer to their children to enhance opportunities for visitation. They also share that September is Children of Incarcerated Parents

Awareness month. The panel acknowledged the importance of the initiative, as it was an identified recommendation in the 2016 Annual Report.

The meeting was adjourned.