

**Western Citizen Review Panel
Meeting Summary
December 16, 2016
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Attendees:

Panel Members: Sarlyn Tate, Paula Mazur, Ellen Kennedy, Dennis Walczyk

Guests: Amanda Darling, OCFS Buffalo Regional Office
Tina Cook, OCFS Buffalo Regional Office
Al Dirschberger Ph.D., Commissioner, Erie County Department of
Social Services
Lisa Gordon, OCFS (by phone)

WRI Staff: Lee Lounsbury, Executive Director, WRI (by phone)
Judy Stanger, Program Specialist and CRP Coordinator
Cindy Alois, WRI (by phone)

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Outline of Recommendations for the Citizen Review Panels' 2016 Annual Report
- Summary of Citizen Review Panel Chairs' Meeting with The Governor's Office and the NYS Division of the Budget on November 2, 2016
- CFSR County-level Data
- 10/18/16 Joint CRP Meeting Minutes
- 9/23/16 CRP Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Welcome and Introductions

Panel Chair, Ellen Kennedy, opened the meeting and introductions took place. Ms. Kennedy informed the Panel of the recent appointment of Ms. Linda Brown to the Panel. Ms. Brown is the former OCFS Assistant Commissioner and, prior to that, the Director of the OCFS Buffalo Regional Office and Assistant Commissioner. Ms. Brown was unable to attend today's meeting on short notice but the Panel looks forward to her future participation.

Agenda Item: Erie County Department of Social Services DMR Initiatives and Updates

Commissioner Al Dirschberger, Ph.D.

The Panel heard a presentation by Commissioner Dirschberger about the Erie County Department of Social Services' initiatives to reduce racial disproportionality in the child welfare system. Commissioner Dirschberger distributed and discussed a handout of data about Erie County's work.

Mr. Dirschberger also updated the Panel on efforts to reduce child welfare caseloads. He distributed a November report detailing the number of caseloads per caseworker. He also described an initiative underway to reduce work-related stress through offering caseworkers the option to work a four day workweek, with 10 hours/day, and then have three days off. He reported there has also been noticeable improvement in communication among the administration, caseworkers and supervisors.

Commissioner Dirschberger concluded his presentation with a brief discussion on the following topics:

- **Racial Equity Group**: This is a cross-agency initiative in Erie County. A planning session will take place on December 19th to determine next steps. In addition, a Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare task force has been created.
- **Meeting with Governor's Office**: Erie County representatives met with staff from the Governor's Office to discuss the need for increased Home Visiting and Prevention programs.
- **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)**: OCFS is meeting with counties, including Erie County, and asking them to look at data to determine the specific areas of child welfare that are strong, those that need improvement, and strategies to strengthen these areas.

Agenda Item: WRI Updates

Lee Lounsbury

Ms. Lounsbury stated reminded Panel members that comments on the draft 2016 Annual Report are due to WRI today. WRI will then incorporate comments and circulate the final draft for a quick, final review before it goes to print. The Report must be submitted to OCFS by January 31, 2017. Hard copies will be delivered to each Legislator, each county Department of Social Services, the Governor's Office and the Division of the Budget. Panel members will receive copies as well.

Agenda Item: OCFS Updates

Lisa Gordon

Ms. Gordon provided several updates to the Panel, as follows:

- **Children with Incarcerated Parents**: Ms. Gordon stated that OCFS will be meeting with the Osborn Association this month to discuss issues related to children with incarcerated parents and how OCFS can support the mission.
- **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)**: OCFS has still not received the final CFSR report from the federal Children's Bureau but continues to work on counties on using data to determine what specific improvements need to be made.
- **OASAS/OCFS Collaboration**: OCFS is working with the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to conduct regional informational sessions about the

opioid epidemic and its effect on children and families. At these regional sessions, the film “Hungry Heart” is shown and discussed.

- Child Welfare Webinar: OCFS recently conducted a statewide presentation describing OCFS’ work in child welfare. The webinar was recorded and is available on the OCFS website.
- County Plan Process: Counties are required to submit plans to OCFS every five years. This program is coming to the end of its five-year cycle, however OCFS is taking a year to work with counties on taking a more data driven approach to the next five-year plan.
- Child Fatality Reports: The writing of OCFS’s reports concerning fatality investigations conducted by counties has been moved from OCFS’ Regional to Home office to provide more consistency to the process.
- KEYS Supervisory Model: OCFS continues to promote implementation of the KEYS model of supervision in counties. An additional KEYS trainer has been hired by an OCFS training partner to support these efforts.
- Safe Sleep Initiative: OCFS is partnering with several hospitals to promote safe sleep education while mothers are in the hospital after giving birth. Safe Sleep Kits, including educational DVDs, are distributed as part of this work and are in high demand.

Agenda Item: Panel Topics for 2017

Group

There was a discussion about the topics Panel members would like to focus on during Panel meetings in 2017, including further discussion about opioid abuse and the Prevent Child Abuse NY’s “Stop Abuse” campaign.

The meeting was adjourned.