

**Western Citizens Review Panel
Meeting Summary
May 12, 2017
9:00 a.m.-12 noon**

Attendees:

Panel Members: Linda C. Brown, Ellen Kennedy (Chair), Sarlyn Tate (Vice Chair), Dennis Walczyk, Karl Wiggins (by phone)

Guests: Allison Behan, OCFS (by phone)
Lisa Gordon, OCFS (by phone)
Carol Henderson, Niagara County

WRI Staff: Jennifer Goldman, Citizen Review Panel Coordinator
Ellen Unruh, Associate Executive Director (by phone)

Handouts:

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

Welcome and Introductions

Ellen Kennedy, Panel Chair

Ms. Kennedy opened the meeting and introductions took place.

AGENDA ITEM: Update on Health Home Implementation

Allison Behan, OCFS

Allison Behan joined the meeting via phone 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 with the coordination of the complex services of eligible children on Medicaid. Mrs. Behan then explained the organization of health homes, how they receive referrals, where health homes fit in the continuum of care, and data on the utilization of health homes thus far. Panel members asked Mrs. Behan about the eligibility criteria for complex trauma, and she offered to share screening information at a later date. The panel also asked Mrs. Behan about the potential to have duplication of existing services to which Mrs. Behan responded that a case manager focused specifically on a child's health related issues allowing the child welfare case manager to focus on other tasks such as

engagement of the child's family and permanency. The panel also asked Mrs. Behan to discuss the qualifications to be a health home case manager. Mrs. Behan answered that a health home case manager must have a Bachelor's degree with two years of experience or a Master's degree with one year of experience in a related field. Panel Chair Ellen Kennedy thanked Mrs. Behan for her time.

AGENDA ITEM: Debrief /Provider Experiences with Health Homes

Ellen Kennedy/Karl Wiggins

Panel members discussed the implementation of health homes including case manager qualifications, potential duplication of resources, pace of enrollment, and service availability in the western part of the State.

AGENDA ITEM: Niagara County Department of Social Services (DSS) Updates

Carol Henderson, Niagara County DSS

Carol Henderson, from Niagara County DSS, joined the meeting to provide updates on initiatives and challenges in Niagara County. She shared that the county is working in conjunction with OCFS and contract agencies to create effective strategies to address some of the prevailing issues in the county including substance abuse, shortening time to permanency, strengthening relationships with school districts and working with law enforcement to improve the effectiveness of investigations of sexual abuse. Ms. Henderson described some initiatives going on in Niagara County to address these issues such as a cross-systems workgroup to address the substance abuse crisis, specifically the significantly high amount of infants born in Niagara County addicted to drugs, working with the court system to examine the process of discharging children from foster care, meeting with school superintendents to improve policies and protocols to reduce truancy and educational neglect, and working with child advocacy centers to improve law enforcement training on investigating sexual abuse allegations including increasing the speed of assessment during these investigations.

Panel members asked Ms. Henderson if Niagara County is doing any specific work to address the disproportionate minority representation (DMR) in the child welfare system. Ms. Henderson responded that there is no current initiative specific to DMR; however, all child welfare caseworkers attend racial bias training and training on working with youth who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender.

Panel members asked if Niagara County utilizes the Family Assessment Response track during child protective investigations. Ms. Henderson replied yes, but caseworkers are finding it challenging to manage mixed caseloads.

Ms. Henderson and panel members also discussed caseworker turnover and challenges with establishing legal paternity for visitation rights. Panel Chair Ellen Kennedy thanked Ms. Henderson for her time.

AGENDA ITEM: Debrief from discussion

Ellen Kennedy

Panel members discussed the number of challenges facing Niagara County in relation to the limited amount of financial resources available to Niagara County DSS. In addition, poverty is a significant issue facing some families in Niagara County.

Panel members then discussed focusing the attention of the Panels on fewer issues in hopes of impacting more change. In addition, the panel talked about making more recommendations directly to the legislature.

AGENDA ITEM: OCFS Updates

Lisa Gordon

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

OCFS submitted the first draft of the CFRS/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. Panel members asked about Niagara County concerns related to FAR implementation. Ms. Gordon replied that the OCFS Buffalo Regional Office is working directly with Niagara County to address some of those concerns.

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.

Opioid Abuse

Ms. Gordon shared that OCFS and OASAS are jointly working at the regional level to develop strategies to address this issue. OCFS is also working on an amendment to legislation that requires a safety plan for children born addicted to substances.

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.

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.

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.

Fatality Update

Ms. Gordon provided an update on the status of a fatality that was requested by panel members.

AGENDA ITEM: WRI Updates

Jennifer Goldman

Ms. Goldman shared updates from the most recent Home Visiting workgroup meeting, reviewed the NYS budget summary and reminded panel members of the next Joint CRP meeting on June 8, 2017.

AGENDA ITEM: Closing Business

Ellen Kennedy

Chair and Vice chair elections were postponed until the next Western CRP meeting.

Ms. Kennedy reminded panel members of upcoming meeting dates:

Joint CRP meeting – June 8, 2017

Western CRP meeting – September 29, 2017

Meeting was adjourned by the Panel Chair.