

ECRP
Minutes of the meeting
November 21, 2008

Attendees:

Lance Jackson
Julia Bielawski

Ed Blatt

Mary McCarthy

OCFS Staff: Terry Palumbo

SCAA staff: Diane Mastin, Karen Schimke

Guest: Eric Brettschneider, Jack Klump, OCFS Regional Director

Handouts:

Agenda

Child Welfare Financing presentation

Voices for America's Children outline of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R. 6893)

Two sets of draft recommendations, one by SCAA and one by panel co-chair

2009 Proposed meeting dates and topics

Articles:

- o *Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families*, Center for New York City Affairs, The New School, by Kim Nauer, Andrew White, and Rajeev Yerneni, Executive Summary and section on Reporting Cases of Abuse or Neglect

Minutes from the September 19th meeting

Minutes from the October 10th Joint panel meeting

Eric Brettschneider, former co-chair of the NYC panel, met with panel members to give an overview of his work to identify areas for reform in child welfare for OCFS. Over the past two months, he has developed an inventory of recommendations and concepts which he will present to the Commissioner. This work could lead to the formation of a Task Force or Commission to look at child welfare reforms. His inventory includes the following categories: infrastructure and key components of child welfare; human resources including training, hiring and retention, and standard setting; reports made to the SCR including educational neglect and anonymous reports; Connections; and young people aging out of the system. He talked about the opportunities for change, eliminating what is not working and investing in what does work. He also solicited panel members' input. Discussion centered on organizational, system, and culture changes that are needed. Panel members focused their comments on the fundamental shift that would occur if the child welfare system incorporated child development principles throughout.

A fertile environment for change could be created by reducing workloads so that time exists for cross-team collaborations. There are international models for cross-system collaborations. Service Canada and Cross Roads Bank in Belgium are two such models. In New York, HIXNY is a model for human services case management network.

Panel members reviewed draft recommendations for their 2008 panel report as well as a list presented for review by the NYC panel co-chair. Discussion followed. They decided that there should be no additions to the list of recommendations in the report.

Panel members received updates regarding discussions related to the Governor's Executive Budget due to be released on December 16th. Panel members expressed concern related to potential cuts in Preventive, COPS, and home visiting services in particular. The three panels sent a letter to the Governor in October listing their budget priorities.

A review of the new federal legislation, Fostering Connections to Success and Adoption Act, was provided and discussed, particularly the opportunity contained in that legislation to offer subsidized guardianship. Panel members are interested in understanding how the state currently draws down Title IV-E funding.

Panel leaders reported on advocacy visits with state leaders on behalf of the three panels to encourage preservation of funding for preventive services in the state.

Jack Klump, OCFS Regional Director, joined panel members for a discussion regarding OCFS Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) strategies. He stated that the report from the federal government was expected in December or early January. Work has already begun on a response and strategy to improve. He and Mary Miller, Regional Director in Rochester, are co-chairs for the PIP strategy to reduce recurrence in child welfare. They are concentrating their efforts on those children already known to the system. Permanency is another area identified in the federal review as needing improvement. Mr. Klump suggested a change in risk assessments that would move away from a specific allegation and toward identifying needs of the child and family and engage family members. He referred to the stresses on caseworkers when caseloads increase.

His comments also addressed the statute changes in child fatality reviews over the last few years and the review of these deaths and reports that OCFS is conducting. Only 13 or 15 Child Fatality Review Teams exist in the state. The fatality reports that result from these reviews highlight public health and preventive concerns which have led to various public and child safety campaigns such as Babies Sleep Safest Alone and those related to water safety. OCFS and the Health Department are working together to reduce these risks as many are public health concerns. OCFS staff will soon receive a demonstration of a data base, the use of which would allow a new level of analysis on child fatalities.

Mr. Klump stated some of his concerns related to the child fatality legislation. He believes it is too broad, has no time limit for reviewing past involvement with the system when the review should look at current practice, and that deaths should be categorized and reviewed to the extent needed. He ended his remarks by stating that the work has not lead to an increased ability to predict fatalities; they can only predict risk. 34% of the fatalities had no prior contact with D.S.S.

Panel members will continue the discussion at their March meeting and will add a discussion of the shadowing experience by SCAA staff to the same meeting.