

Eastern Citizen Review Panel
Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2008

Attendees:

Stacy Alvord	Lance Jackson	Ed Blatt
Carrie Smith	Julia Bielawski	Mary McCarthy
JoAnn Merriman		

OCFS: Terry Palumbo

SCAA: Karen Schimke, Diane Mastin

Office of Court Administration Guests: Kathleen DeCataldo, Karen Carroll

Handouts:

Meeting Agenda

Bios for new panel members

Eastern panel member contact information

Eastern Panel Proposed Meeting Dates and Topics

NYS Model Policy on Educational Neglect

2007 Panel Recommendations

Chart: CRP Recommendations and the 2008-09 Executive Budget

NYS CRP Operating Guidelines

Minutes of the December 7, 2007 meeting

National CRP Conference information

Letter inviting support for legislation for a White House Conference on Children and Youth

CMS Regulations Impacting Child Welfare Services

Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States, Wang and Holton, for Prevent Child Abuse America, Sept. 2007.

Report to Congress, Evaluating the Effectiveness of Citizen Review Panels: A Feasibility Study

Letter of support: Changes Needed in Federal Child Welfare Law to Better Protect Children and Ensure Them Nurturing Families

Communications from families regarding three cases: Jefferson County, Tioga County, and Rockland County

Chart: 14 Components to Support an Effective Child Welfare Workforce

Articles:

Brother & wife testify against Marie Manos, Phelps, www.news10now.com, 1/30/08

Anonymous 'hot line' system used to persecute father, Higgins, Times Union, Albany, 3/9/08

Child Welfare Supervisor Suspended in L.I. Case of 3 Dead Children, Kilgannon and Jones, The New York Times, 2/27/08

After 3 Die, Questions on Why Erratic Mother Kept Custody, Jones and Kilgannon, The New York Times, 2/26/08

Accomplishments: 15 Year Report, Executive Summary of the New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children

An Examination of Oversight and Review in the child Welfare System: The Many Watch the Few Serve the Many, Wendy Whiting Blome and Sue Steib, Journal of Public Child Welfare, Vol. 1(3) 2007.

Promoting Child Welfare Workforce Improvements Through Federal Policy Changes, prepared by Children's Defense Fund and Children's Rights, Inc., 2007, Cornerstones for Kids

The meeting began with Kathleen DeCataldo and Karen Carroll providing an overview of the Permanent Judicial Commission on Children and the Court Improvement Project. New York State was the first state to establish a Commission on Children. Now, each state has a commission. In New York the work of the commission began by streamlining the process for getting children into early intervention services and establishing Children's Centers in courts across the state. ASFA funds have been used for collaborative efforts such as alternatives to dispute resolution, mediation, mental health, and education. The Commission works by providing information to the courts and thereby improving court outcomes. Sites are located in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Nassau, and NYC. In 2006 the Court Improvement Project was transferred to the commission. Now the commission serves as a think tank with the Court Improvement Project staff in charge of implementation.

The courts have to consider children's age level, well-being, and special needs when children come before the court. An example is the age at which children can appear in court and speak for themselves in court. 38 states consider children a party to the child protective proceedings. Eighteen states give children a right to appear. Only 14 states send children a notice of the proceedings. Law guardians are now referred to as attorneys for the child to reinforce the fact that they represent the child in the proceedings. Last year, their workloads were capped at 150 cases. The Commission continues its work educating judges on issues that are important to achieving better outcomes for children such as the placement of children within their school district.

The Court Improvement Project works to bring together representatives from interdependent systems to work towards improvements. One example of collaborative work is taking place in Erie County where the commitment has been made to hold hearings during out of school time and to debrief each child after the proceedings. The Benchmark Hearing Program out of Chicago serves as the model for this work.

The Sharing Success conferences, sponsored by the Court Improvement Project, are a means to bring teams together from across the state to educate child welfare professionals on practice and child well-being issues. The topics for these events have included permanency, adolescence, and substance abuse, among others. The Court Improvement staff also offer training for judges, best practice bulletins, and technical assistance. They issue a series of fact sheets "Ten things you need to know" on topics of interest. An example: 10 things foster parents would like to see asked in court. Data drives these programs and topics. The Sharing Success session on adolescence highlighted the higher rate of use of residential treatment in upstate and the higher rate of kids aging out of foster care in the city without a permanent placement. Other topics of interest: McKinney Vento project and conflict with the Federal Rights and Privacy Act on maintenance of educational records and keeping children within their school districts.

Legislation of interest to the Commission: S7342 Safety Net legislation which allows for a trial discharge from foster care and youth to continue receiving services and to return to foster care up to age 23. Local districts do not support this legislation due to the costs involved. The Commission will issue a report shortly on raising the jurisdictional age for juvenile court.

In answer to a question regarding proposed Restoration of Parental Rights legislation, Ms. DeCataldo stated her general support that it could help some older children. This legislation is very new and only two states have it at this time. The legislation offers a way to tighten what is happening already by offering support to a child who would be walking away on their own.

Mary McCarthy gave an update on child welfare workforce research and talked about the 14 components necessary to have a competent workforce. The one missing component has to do with respect for the worker. With such respect, workers can give their clients respect and achieve better outcomes. Attention is being paid to workforce recruitment and retention. For a beginning worker, pay ranges from \$26,000 to \$42,000. Local districts typically spend an average of \$26,000 per worker to recruit and train a new person when someone leaves. ChildStat is a model that uses data to drive focus on specific cases. ChildStat can become the model for this work with appropriate development of a training tape and materials for use by others.

Panel members reviewed the budget process and anticipated cuts. The joint panel meeting will be held on October 10th of this year. Eastern Panel voted and approved the operating guidelines for use by NYS CRPs. Panel members reviewed case concerns in Rockland, Jefferson, and Tioga counties brought to their attention through communications by interested parties. The panel members agreed they could not support the Restoration of Parental Rights legislation as it is currently drafted. They asked that they have an update on OCFS' work on disproportionality and disparities and hear from frontline workers directly at their next meeting.