

Eastern Citizen Review Panel
Minutes of the meeting
June 15, 2007

Attendees:

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| Stacy Alvord | Lance Jackson | Adam Shaw |
| JoAnn Merriman | Mary McCarthy | Anita Welborn |
| Julia Bielawski | | |

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| <i>OCFS Staff:</i> | Terry Palumbo | Tom Hess |
| | Joanne Ruppel | Sue Mitchell Herzfeld |
| <i>SCAA Staff:</i> | Karen Schimke | Diane Mastin |

Handouts:

Agenda

Information regarding the panels' recommendations and the 2007-8 Budget

Research Findings on Recurrence of Child Abuse and Neglect in NYS, Susan Mitchell-Herzfeld, Joanne Ruppel

Budget language: Outcome-Based Provisions for Preventive Services
TANF funding
Child Advocacy Centers Demonstration Project

A6610b/S4009b Differential Response Legislation

A8741/S4098 Home Visiting programs

Governor's Press Release: 4/20/2007 Children's Cabinet and Children's Agenda

Draft Panel Survey for Commissioners' Input

Chart detailing information found in 2006 Child Fatality Reports

Dangerous Mistakes: Analysis of ACS Corrective Actions Involving Child Fatalities in 2005,
Public Advocate for the City of New York, May 2007

Mandating Multidisciplinary Review of Serious Child Maltreatment Cases, an Overview of Law and Policy Issues, Howard Davidson, J.D.

People First Listening Tour

Minutes of the March 16th meeting

Panel members received updates on the final 2007-2008 New York State budget, Differential Response Legislation, Governor Spitzer's plans for the Children's Cabinet, the Governor's Children's Agenda, and plans for the Joint Panel meeting. In addition, the panel received a report on child protective practice in Suffolk County obtained from staff at the OCFS Regional office in response to a query about recent changes in the local district and possible concerns as those changes relate to children's safety. Panel members asked for more information about the legislation proposing an Office of the Child Advocate. They asked to conduct an email exchange to discuss and decide whether or not to write a letter in opposition of this legislation. They are interested in giving the new Ombudsmen time to effectively investigate and correct problems which exist within OCFS run facilities. Members were to give their suggestions for changes to the Commissioner's Survey by email or fax. They asked to have a phone conference call set up to discuss the child fatality reports the panel has been receiving. Each member took three to read.

OCFS staff presented their findings from OCFS 2002 Risk Assessment Profile Development Study, WebRap 2003, Connections RAP 2005, and Focus Groups 2006 on recurrence rates in New York State social services districts. They discussed the issues that emerged and possible implications. The federal government has set a standard of 6% recurrence within 6 months of a report to the SCR. OCFS is interested in a broader view of family and a longer term (up to 2 years) for recurrence than that used by the federal government. By the federal standard, New York has a 12% recurrence rate. (NYC = 9.7%, ROS = 13.2%)

The WebRap 2003 work involved a review of risk assessments for indicated cases in five pilot counties. This work was immediately rolled out across the state with the launch of Connections. Comparisons were made with an in depth look at two districts: Bronx and Monroe County. Their findings suggest that recurrence increases over time and is greatly influenced by inadequate housing, mental health issues, financial problems, and substance abuse. Recurrence more than doubles where an abusive or threatening environment exists.

The Connections Rap 2005 study involved a review of the Risk Assessments completed in 2005 using a sample of 51,622. They followed-up the review with focus groups of CPS supervisors to delve further into items of concern in those assessments. They found a high number of indicated cases assigned a low level of risk. They found variability among trainers and regional offices. From comments entered on WebRAP, they found that some caseworkers do not read the prior reports on a family either because they do not want to prejudice themselves or for lack of time. Some completed the Risk Assessment at the end of 48 hours or within two weeks of the report to the SCR which could explain the low risk levels. Others did not take into consideration any risks associated with a secondary caregiver. Financial difficulties seemed to be overlooked as a risk factor. The study revealed confusion on the part of workers regarding the risk assessment and the safety assessment. Some personal bias enters into the assessment. Some were applying a higher standard of proof than necessary.

The studies have led to several recommendations including the rewording of RAP questions, revisions to training offered to supervisors and caseworkers. Changes to the RAP questions will be entered into Connections this fall. Training should address common problems and hidden biases and practice using the RAP on real cases. There is some resistance to addressing bias as part of the training for supervisors

Panel members suggested that the transference of complex skills is not easy. Though OCFS is working towards continuous quality improvements, a culture change is needed. New Hampshire has implemented a solution to the difficulty of transferring skills that seems to be working well, that of monthly case reviews scored by supervisors and discussed with others. The same is done with caseworkers with no supervisors present. Another concern raised was that of child development and if anyone on casework teams has an expertise in this area. CPS has seen an increase in the number of reports for children ages 0-6 and 13 and over. Concern was expressed that sexual abuse cases continue to be under reported.