

Eastern Citizen Review Panel  
Minutes of the Meeting  
September 14, 2007

*Attendees:*

Stacy Alvord                                      Lance Jackson                                      Julia Smead Bielawski  
Dianne Meckler                                      JoAnn Merriman  
*OCFS Staff:* Renee Rider                                      Gail Hallenbeek  
*SCAA Staff:* Karen Schimke                                      Diane Mastin  
*Guest:* Jim Brustman, Project Coordinator, CDHS

*Handouts:*

Meeting Agenda  
2007 Commissioner's Survey Report  
Chart: Child Fatality Reports  
Chart: 2007 Child Welfare Legislation  
Kentucky CRP Evaluation Report  
Press Release: Governor Spitzer Announces First Program in Nation To Provide Supportive Services Exclusively to Children in Foster Care with Serious Disabilities.  
2008-09 Executive Budget Call Letter  
Articles:  
*Creating a Village to Foster a Child*, The New York Times, 8/16/07

Joint Panel meeting materials:

Draft Agenda  
Timeline and Draft Content Suggestions  
Working Document for 2007 Recommendations  
Articles:  
*Creating a Village to Foster a Child*, The New York Times, 8/16/07  
*Examining the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the Child Welfare System*  
*The Race + Child Welfare Project*, Center for the Study of Social Policy  
*Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare: An Update*, Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System.  
*Places to Watch, Promising Practices to Address Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare*, The Center for the Study of Social Policy.

The meeting began with Gail Hallenbeek and Jim Brustman giving an overview of the Teaming Approach Pilot that was launched in March, 2007. Six counties have expressed interest in participating in the pilot: Westchester, Albany, Tompkins, Onondaga, Erie and Chautauqua. OCFS is providing funding for one team for each county. OCFS modified the model piloted in Massachusetts for use in New York State's supervised, county administered system. The goals for this pilot are to improve the quality of work life for child welfare workers, improve decision making, and increase staff retention. Massachusetts has reported anecdotally that teaming has improved client satisfaction and outcomes.

OCFS formed a state leadership team which meets weekly to manage the pilot. There is tremendous variation from county to county in the pilot including motivation to be part of the team, understanding of the approach, and the supervisors and regional office staff involved. Their work began by helping team members to understand each others styles and approach so that they could work better as a team. They wrote operating agreements to give them a structure to use to work out differences. They are also required to have an advisory group. Each county has constituted this advisory group differently. Some used internal personnel only. Others are using a mixed composition. Some teams will be working with preventive cases. Another will do both CPS and preventive. One plans on working with recurrent cases only.

The teams are now at various stages of development. One has started working with the most difficult family situations. Others are still working on the concept for their team and how it will operate in written form.

In Massachusetts, they found that this approach does take more time than the traditional approach and the team therefore carries a smaller caseload. Over the course of a year, however, they have addressed the same number of cases as the rest of staff. The question has to be raised as to whether or not this can work in New York where the workload and turnover are high.

Some of the difficulties they have encountered during this start-up phase include relocating staff on the team so that they are in close proximity to each other, staff turnover, and scheduling meetings. They have found that a communication strategy is needed for each county to help explain the work of the team. An evaluation covering a three year time period is planned.

Panel members turned their attention to the child fatality reports the panel received. Discussion followed regarding the prevalence of co-sleeping deaths and the need to address these deaths further.

Panel members reviewed OCFS Response to the panel's recommendations. Panel members received an update on Differential Response legislation. Six counties in the state have expressed interest in offering what OCFS will now call a Family Assessment Response. They include: Erie, Chautauqua, Westchester, Onondaga, Tompkins, and Albany. Sheila Poole and Jamie Greenberg are taking the lead with interested counties for OCFS. OCFS may send a state team to a November conference on Differential Response. OCFS also plans to contract with David Thompson a national expert on the issue.

SCAA staff gave an overview of the Commissioner's Survey Report for the panel, directing the panel to the last two pages of the report for specific comments from Commissioners with input towards this year's recommendations. Suggestion was made that the panel should personally reach out to commissioners, thank them and assure them their comments will be taken into consideration. They acknowledge that this is difficult due to the scarcity of resources on the panel, in particular, the number of panel vacancies.

Panel members were then given information and reading materials for the Joint Panel meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup>.