

Eastern Citizen Review Panel
Minutes of the meeting, September 15, 2006

Attendees:

Lance Jackson	Steve Weber	Stacy Alvord
Julia Bielawski	Dianne Meckler	

OCFS Staff: Nancy Martinez, Dick Nells, Tom Hess

SCAA Staff: Karen Schimke, Diane Mastin

Handouts:

OCFS Response to Panels 2006 Annual Report and Recommendations

Letter from Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies

2006 Child Welfare Legislation Chart

S6703B/A10023

2006 Recommendations Working Document

Howard Davidson's PowerPoint presentation from the 2006 National CRP meeting

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

New HHS Regulations Focus Medicaid Documentation Requirement on U.S. Citizen Families

Children in Foster Care May Have to Delay Health Care Because of Federal Regulations on Citizenship Requirement

Information on Child Welfare Information Gateway

Fact Sheet: The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006

Article: State: Cortland DSS had chances to help 15-pound, 5 year old boy, *The Post-Standard*, 8/5/06

Minutes from the meeting, May 15, 2006

Meeting began with a welcome and introductions. The panel has received word regarding two resignations from the panel: Lori Currier Woods and Mary Felasko. Panel members expressed concern over the lack of new appointees to the panel. The Eastern Panel now has 4 openings, 2 Executive and 2 Assembly. Panel members agreed to send a letter to the appointment offices asking for the status on those names that have been forwarded for consideration.

Updates were given by SCAA and OCFS staff. Panel members were directed to a copy of Howard Davidson's presentation given at the national Citizen Review Panel meeting in which he makes several recommendations for panels' exploration and evaluation. Panel members were offered the opportunity to represent the panel through attendance at a conference on child welfare. Panel members should contact SCAA staff if interested.

Information was given on the new Medicaid regulations, OCFS Foster Care Waiver application, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, and the CSFR review and continuous improvement work. If approved, the Foster Care Waiver will allow the state to serve up to 3,300 children after the three year roll out period. The roll out will begin the first year with those communities that are most ready: Rochester, Albany, and New York City. The plan will help more children remain in their communities with their foster care families.

Panel members asked for copies of a new data book on foster care which highlights both child welfare and court data. SCAA staff provided an update on the work to revise the “rights letter”. OCFS will provide the panel with a list of the other letters that are sent out to families.

Panel members discussed the upcoming transition period in state government with the election of a new governor in November and the importance of having a commissioner and other appointees who have an expertise in the field and who can provide the leadership needed to move forward. They suggested reaching out to the new governor, once elected, to offer suggestions regarding his appointees and the qualifications needed to provide that leadership. They asked that this item be placed on the agenda for the other panel meetings for discussion.

Panel members appreciated the OCFS response to the panels’ annual report and commented that 2006 was an unusual year for child welfare, both in terms of the additional money included in the budget and the amount of legislation proposed and passed into law. Much of the legislation served to place emphases on the most serious child abuse reports called into the state central registry. OCFS staff and local departments of social services are extremely busy implementing the changes. Time will be needed to understand the impact of all the changes before assessing what else might be needed.

In a review of the legislation passed, panel members focused their comments on two areas, educational neglect and the relationship between child advocacy centers, multi-disciplinary response teams, and child fatality review teams. SCAA was asked to come back to the panel with some recommendations regarding the child fatality reports the panel will receive starting in 2007.

Panel members then discussed various issues and concerns for possible 2006 recommendations. They began by reviewing the recommendations made in the 2005 report. Panel members reiterated their ongoing support for several of those recommendations. For others, such as concerns regarding caseworker workload, information needed won’t be available in time for this year’s recommendations. The Walter R. MacDonald & Associates study commissioned by OCFS won’t be completed until December. Work towards the panels’ recommendations for 2006 will continue at the joint meeting in October and at the panel’s next meeting in November.

Panel members expressed interest in having someone from the State Central Register (SCR) speak at one of their meetings. They are also interested in having the following topics as part of a work plan for next year: disproportionality, child death reviews, and SCR.

The 2006 report was also discussed. Suggested topics for the report include highlighting the new money and legislation that was passed in 2006 in response to the terrible tragedies that occurred, introduction of the concept of family development, and family strengthening strategies.

Next Meeting: Friday, October 13 in Syracuse New York.