

NYS CRP Joint Panel Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting
October 2, 2009

Attendees:

David Lansner	Dianne Meckler	Julia Smead Bielawski	Elba Montalvo
Carrie Smith	Edward Blatt	Jorge Saenz De Viteri	Mathea Rubin
Wayne Ho	Jocelyn Brown	Lourdes Iglesias	

Guest: Hector Ramirez

OCFS staff: Commissioner Carrión Bill Gettman Laura Velez Renee Hallock

SCAA Staff: Karen Schimke Diane Mastin

Handouts:

Agenda

Survey Highlights

Survey Results

Attendance list

CDC web page with links to reports on maltreatment

Side-by-side comparison on Home Visiting Provision of Health Reform Proposals.

Article from The Future of Children, Preventing Child Maltreatment Volume 19, Number 2 Fall 2009: *Introducing the Issue* by Christina Paxson and Ron Haskins

The meeting began with a welcome and introductions. OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrión, Executive Deputy Commissioner Bill Gettman, and Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez gave an overview of the state's current fiscal crisis and what is being asked of state agencies. They also provided an update on work related to panels' past recommendations.

The budget deficit is likely to climb to \$3 billion for the current budget year. The state also faces a deficit in the 2010-2011 budget. The Governor has proposed a \$5 billion cut for the current fiscal year. The Department of Budget (DOB) has asked state agencies to submit a zero growth budget for next year. OCFS is reviewing funding for programs and services through the lens of their core mission. What is not essential will be on the chopping block. They will look closely at 65/35 and preventive funding and try to preserve their priorities in the negotiations with DOB. It will be difficult to try anything new in this climate; cost savings has to be immediate, not long-term.

OCFS has staffing issues due to a hiring freeze, 40 staff leaving OCFS for OTDA, and 60 staff to the retirement incentive. Altogether they are down 500 staff. Out of 3,900 staff in the agency, 79% work in direct care. Others provide training and contract monitoring. In some cases they have lost entire units and have serious vacancies at their juvenile justice facilities. There see no relief in the near future. They are working with counties to relieve some of the burden of mandates at the local level and are trying to use technology to reduce costs.

One of the issues that demands their attention is the federal report on juvenile justice in the state. They are currently negotiating with the federal government on terms and conditions. The state has three months to respond to the settlement terms and conditions. Legal Aid plans to file a class action lawsuit. The concern has to do with funding any settlement and reforms. OCFS will require an infusion of dollars to remedy the situation. The Governor's Task Force will release its recommendations in November. They expect to close more facilities next year.

Regarding child welfare reform, OCFS has moved forward with a number of changes. Commissioner would like to start with work towards a shared vision and philosophy for child welfare practice. Currently there is no political will to make some of the changes recommended by the panels. OCFS will examine their oversight role, the collection of data, and various means of influencing practice on the front-lines. Commissioner Carrion has met with the new State Education Commissioner and will continue talking to him about issues related to child welfare and juvenile justice. They have held conversations at White Eagle on education neglect, SCR clearances, and anonymous reporting. They are also looking at Court Ordered Investigations (COIs) which often relate to custody disputes. COIs have increased and are placing a burden on caseworkers. VERA Institute will release the second report on education neglect in November. OCFS is interested in offering legislation to move forward some of these reforms. Eric Brettschneider is working on a report that will detail ten issues for 2010.

Family Assessment Response (FAR) will be the cornerstone of OCFS reform efforts. OCFS now has more counties interested in offering a FAR response than they have capacity to support. They are talking with Casey Family Programs about additional resources and have applied for a federal grant for funding to conduct an evaluation.

The PIP strategies include using data in new ways to highlight disproportionate minority representation in child welfare. Several counties with high rates of DMR are asked to address it in their performance improvement plans. They continue to emphasize family engagement strategies and more transparency with data.

Improvements to Connections continue and a new interface for caseworkers will be rolled out next year, part of a three year project to bring improvements to the system. OCFS staff presented an overview of the new Connections. Panel members engaged in an exercise of listening to SCR calls and discussing whether or not the call should be accepted for investigation. Mr. Gettman reviewed child welfare data having to do with reports both accepted and unfounded, by caller, by reporter, by allegation type, and standards for the SCR.

The afternoon was devoted to a discussion leading to the selection of three recommendations having to do with reducing foster care, investing in prevention, and redefining education neglect. Panel members are interested in doing more in terms of publicity and advocacy when the report is released.