

NYC Citizens Review Panel
Minutes of the Meeting
November 1, 2007

Attendees:

David Lansner Marion White Yvonne Hutchins Plummer
Jocelyn Brown

OCFS Staff: Theresa Palumbo

SCAA Staff: Diane Mastin

Handouts:

Agenda

Draft Introduction for annual report

Edited Op-Ed piece for annual report

Draft 2008 meeting schedule

2007 Survey Report by Eastern and Western panels

Information regarding CSFR review for panel input

Commissioner Carrion's testimony on Agency Priorities and Budget Request

Minutes from the Oct. 18th Joint Panel, September 7th, and July 12th meetings

Disproportionality in Child Welfare event information

PowerPoint presentations used at the Community Prevention of Child Maltreatment Conference at Duke Center for Child and Family Policy

The meeting began with the introduction of Terry Palumbo who will represent OCFS at the panel meetings as part of responsibilities in her new role within the Office of Children and Family Services.

Panel members reviewed the draft introduction for the panel's 2007 report and the revised version of the opinion piece to go into the report. Minor edits were suggested for both. Panel members asked that any statements in the report be backed by research and/or data. The specific point raised in relationship to their concern has to do with professionals not reporting suspicions of maltreatment. Research points to professionals' belief that making such a report will not help. Another difficulty is with the lack of a uniform definition of suspicion.

They agreed that no individual pieces in the report should be attributed to its author. Rather, the entire report should reflect the view of all three panels and, therefore, will be more effective.

A question was asked about anonymous reporting and 90% of those cases determined to be "unfounded." How many of those cases come back into the system at a later time? What are the characteristics of those reports? OCFS does not collect that data at this time. If you take out those cases made by non-mandated reporters, you find that the indicated rate is about the same, about 50%. Also mentioned was the increased number of child deaths in New York State, up from 30 to 46 in the New York City alone. The relationship to media exposure is not one of cause/effect but it seems to be correlated. Another example cited: when more children are removed from homes and placed into foster care, the quality of those foster care homes goes down.

Discussion turned to the issue of mandated reporters and the training that has been conducted based on recommendations from the Mayor's Interagency Task Force. The evaluation of that training shows that the intended outcomes have not been achieved and the training was ineffective.

The draft recommendations were discussed and comments offered. Specifically mentioned was the implementation of Family Assessment Response and caseworkers acquiring the skills necessary to make the complex decisions needed to implement this response effectively. Florida and Chicago were mentioned as two places with effective models using medical personnel. Home visiting was discussed and questioned as to whether or not these programs are effective with high risk families and those involved with domestic violence situations. An existing ACS workgroup on disproportionality was also mentioned in relationship to the recommendation on that topic.

Panel members were asked to offer any further comments or suggestions for changes to SCAA staff. Changes will be incorporated and revised documents will be circulated to all three panels.

The discussion turned to system reform and the panel members' interest in moving forward with the work necessary. Mentioned were several white papers and/or reports made over 20 years ago after Lisa Steinberg's death which addressed some of the panel's questions, one written by Dennis Zimmer commenting on practice in NYC and another by Dennis Vacco on statewide systems issues. Panel members expressed interest in moving this piece forward but realize that funding will be needed to do so. Pursuing a grant opportunity was mentioned. If obtained, the panel would contract the work to be done to another organization. Concern was expressed that the topic is too large to take on and can not be done without adequate funding.

Panel meetings in 2008 will be held on Tuesday mornings from 10 to 12. They agreed to devote their January meeting to a discussion about Child Stat and continue to discuss their 2008 agenda at that time. They agree that their recommendations are more focused over the last couple of years and that they would like their meetings to be used to move those recommendations forward. They may decide to bring interested parties into their meetings to support work on system reform or to hold a public hearing next year.

OCFS staff reported that the Child and Family Service Review for New York State will be held in May, 2008 and that preparation for the review is underway. OCFS is now soliciting input from the public. Panel members received information as to how they can provide their input. The timeframe is short and will not allow the panel to discuss such input at their January meeting.

SCAA staff agreed to ask Blake Jones of the National CRP Community about system reform and examples from other states. Panel members will be sent the recurrence information presented at an Eastern panel meeting.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, January 8th from 10 to 12.