

New York City CRP
Minutes of the meeting, January 8, 2008

Attendees:

David Lansner Eric Brettschneider Jocelyn Brown
Yvonne Plummer Mathea Rubin Wayne Ho
Marion White (by phone)

ACS Staff: Jan Flory, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child Protection
Michael Bosnick, Associate Commissioner for Child Protection

OCFS Staff: Theresa Palumbo

SCAA Staff: Karen Schimke (by phone) Diane Mastin

Handouts:

Agenda

ChildStat Presentation

Suggestions for Meeting Dates and Topics

Draft Operating Guidelines

Panel Member Contact Information

OCFS Testimony to the Assembly Standing Committee on Children and Families

Research findings on Recurrence in Child Abuse and Neglect in NYS

Analysis of Child Fatalities in the New York City Shelter System

Articles:

Child Deaths in Shelters Rising, Leslie Kaufman, The New York Times, November 29, 2007

Agencies seek clarity in abuse ruling, Cathleen Crowley, Times Union, December 8, 2007

Bad News, Nonprofits Criticize New York Times Series, Fred Scaglione, New York Nonprofit Press, December 07

November 1, 2007 Meeting Minutes

The meeting began with a welcome and introductions. Panel members were introduced to Wayne Ho, Executive Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children & Families. Panel members received an update on the printing of the panels' annual report and plans for distribution. Panel members were asked to submit names of those they wish to receive a report. They will each receive copies for distribution and a version which can be sent by email.

Jan Flory and Michael Bosnick gave panel members an overview of ChildStat, an accountability tool modeled after NYPD's CompStat. Over the past year and a half, ACS' leadership has been holding weekly ChildStat meetings at Child Protective Field offices to look at practice through a review of data and case reviews in order to learn what areas should be targeted for strengthening and to hold leaders accountable for changes. ChildStat puts ACS managerial staff at all levels in regular communication regarding CPS work on the frontlines. Supervisors and caseworkers are invited to attend but can not be mandated to do so.

ACS has now reviewed 120 cases using ChildStat. These reviews of data and randomly selected cases have led to the identification of practice and systemic issues for further attention and monitoring and new or additional resources applied to address a specific issue. In addition the Quality Assurance Unit reviews an additional 100 cases per month.

When first implemented, staff were worried that the process was designed to discipline staff. And they were intimidated by the process. The process has changed over time. Now caseworkers receive the name of the case to be reviewed at the Thursday meeting on Monday. The Quality Assurance Team now presents a summary of that case. Staff presents an overview and their analysis and plans for closing the case. Questions come from the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners. At times, ACS leaders want to be kept posted regarding the progress of a specific case. Other times the review of a specific case helps to identify trends or an emerging issue that requires further attention. Staff has become astute at looking at the data comparing boroughs, information over time, digging deeper into practice, and looking at outcomes.

This process is having an effect on practice. When ChildStat started, about 40% of indicated cases were being closed without any services. Now that number is down to 12%. Some of these families did indeed receive services. For some cases, they found coding errors. For others the case was not tracked when the family moved out of state. The focus and attention placed on this topic has resulted in change. Another theme they have identified through ChildStat includes the minimizing of family circumstances in educational neglect cases. Many of the borough managers have taken the ChildStat process back to their units and are conducting mini-assessments of their own.

Over the next year to three years, ACS will use ChildStat to focus on repeat maltreatment. ACS plans to hire an outside consultant to do a review of case records in order to understand the dynamics that impact recurrence. In the future, ACS leadership wants to involve preventive and foster care agencies in these reviews.

Panel members expressed their appreciation to ACS staff for taking their time to talk about ACS at the panel's meeting and for their work on this self-assessment process. They expressed their interest in attending one of the ChildStat meetings to understand it more fully. Panel members suggested a number of questions that could be asked at each case presentation that would lead to understanding of the larger systems issues in CPS: 1) How did this family become known to us? Was bias involved? 2) To what extent did lack of cultural competence or language differences effect this case? 3) To what extent did staff turnover effect this case?

Panel members suggested the need for standards of practice to hold out to staff as a gold standard. In effect, this process provides all staff with the best thinking and decision making skills of top caseworkers in the field. ACS' leadership has provided OCFS with suggestions for changes to Connections that will support caseworkers in making improved decisions on their cases. Currently Connections leads supervisors and caseworkers to focus on completing a checklist. The average length of stay for an ACS caseworker is 1.1 years, of which four months is spent in training. ACS has developed plans to recruit caseworkers who are more suited to the position and have hopes that the new recruits will be less inclined to leave. A recruiting campaign will be launched in March. ACS currently hires between 50 and 75 people per month.

Draft operating guidelines were approved by the panel with one change. The change will result in the election of panel chairs for two year terms without any term limit. Panel members approved minutes from the July, September, and November meetings of the panel. The panel's March meeting will be devoted to a discussion of reforms with invited guests. The discussion will serve to guide the panel's next steps to move their recommendations forward.