

NYC CRP
Minutes of the meeting
February 3, 2009

Attendees:

David Lansner Jocelyn Brown Marion White
Jessica Arker Wayne Ho Jorge Saenz Di Veteri Mathea Rubin

OCFS: Terry Palumbo *SCAA:* Diane Mastin *ACS:* Elysia Carnevale

Guests: Laura Chernick
Mary McCarthy
P.V. Anantharam
Maryanne Schretzman

Handouts:

Agenda

2009 Suggested meeting dates and topics

2009 CRP Grant information

2009-10 chart detailing Executive Budget

2008 Child Welfare Legislation, updated

2009 Child Welfare Legislation

PowerPoint Presentation: National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, Learning, Leading, Changing.

Publications/Articles:

The Experiences of New York City Foster Children in HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials, Executive Summary, Timothy Ross and Anne Lifflander, Vera Institute of Justice, Jan. 2009.

Panel member lists updated

Minutes of the November 4th meeting

Minutes of the December 19th meeting

Dr. Mary McCarthy discussed workforce issues with panel members. She is the Executive Director for the Education Consortium in the School of Social Welfare at SUNY Albany and the Eastern Panel Chair. The concerns raised by panel members include the over-reporting of families to the State Central Register and the outcomes for families who are involved in the child welfare system. Are they helped by the system? Panel members are concerned that the pendulum has swung too far, resulting in more reporting of maltreatment. They have questions about training of workers and that the standard of “some credible evidence” for a finding of indicated is too low.

Dr. McCarthy stated that the issues are complex and that most workers enter the field for the right reasons. There are organizational and structural issues which lead to both strengths and weaknesses in the system. The data is undisputable that Black and Hispanic children are reported to the system more often, their cases are indicated more often, and they are removed and placed into foster care more often than white children. It is a training issue to change the lens through which caseworkers view family situations and to undo institutional racism.

Both Texas and Minnesota are examples of states engaged in progressive practices. There is no state or country that one can turn to as a model in all areas of practice for child welfare. The workforce issues have to be looked at in smaller parts. Across New York State, Commissioner Mattingly has done the best job of recruitment and screening at the front door. He will need another

year to evaluate whether or not there are improvements in the system as a result. Supervision is another critical component. ChildStat is beginning to show results at the bureau level.

She stated that change takes two generations (or two decades) to become institutionalized. Change requires multiple strategies including the use of lawsuits in the most egregious cases. The elimination of the Amy Watkins scholarships will hurt efforts to increase critical thinking skills and education levels of workers. She stated that nurturing families can not take place with any kind of investigation system. How the child welfare system is structured determines the results achieved. New York State's CFSR has resulted in the formation of several workgroups. One area for attention is the workforce. Public perception needs to change to make the desired improvements.

Dr. McCarthy recommended two publications for panel members to read.

- 1) Child Welfare League of America special issue of its journal, Vol. 7 #2, Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare edited by Belanger, Bullard, and Green.
- 2) Kristin Nelson's 1977 book regarding child welfare as a political response to a medical problem.

PV Anantharam, Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget and Maryanne Schretzman, newly appointed Family Services Coordinator in Health and Human Services, Deputy Mayor's office, joined the meeting to discuss the Mayor's budget and the NYC Panel Specific recommendations. Panel members discussed programmatic recommendations that would lead to cost savings both in the short-term and long-term. Elimination of SCR screenings, elimination of anonymous reporting, and investment into prevention services were all discussed.

The Mayor's Budget protects social services as much as possible. Further, Commissioner Mattingly has made cuts to ACS' budget while preserving front line workers both inside and outside the agency. Panel members stated their interest in strengthening investments in prevention by reducing funding for investigations. Mr. Anantharam stated his division's interest in maximizing resources and would need data to understand cost savings related to the panel's recommendations. Prevention services were not cut in the ACS budget. Positions eliminated included those in administration, child care, 315 positions in the Office of Contract Management related to ACS reforms, and 280 Supervisor I positions that were approved two years ago but never enacted. Caseloads at ACS are now 14 per worker. Since Nixzmary, the resources provided to ACS and workers have been significant. The Budget Division is now seeing many more cases entering preventive services instead of foster care.

Panel members received a report regarding the advocacy visits in January delivering the 2008 report and recommendations to state leaders. Possible action steps were suggested including: holding a press event with the report, meetings with Regents regarding Education Neglect recommendation, and advocacy with individual elected Senators and Assembly members, especially Montgomery and Scarborough in New York City. Panel members agreed to plan a number of these action steps. They asked that Jane Waldfogel and Senator Montgomery be invited to their next meeting. They recommended that the June Joint Panel meeting be held on Tuesday, June 2nd in order to include advocacy visits as part of the agenda.