

New York City Panel meeting
Minutes of the meeting, March 2, 2006

Attendance:

David Lansner Jocelyn Brown Eric Brettschneider
Mathea Rubin Gerard Papa

ACS staff: John Mattingly, Zeinab Chahine, Jennifer Marino Rojas, Jennifer Martinez Mulhern

Guest: Vivian Farmery

OCFS staff: Dick Nells

SCAA staff: Diane Mastin, Karen Schimke (by phone)

Handouts:

Data Analysis for New York State prepared by Hornby Zeller

Draft agenda, letter, and invite list for May 19th meeting

Draft letter in support of home visiting, Children and Family Trust Fund, CAC's and Multi-Disciplinary Teams.

Spano/Meier 12 Point Plan

Bills: S05534 on FBI checks, S06481 – Nixzmary's Law, S06535 on Dual Track, S06703A and A10023 on Child Fatality Teams

Feb. 21st edition of the Legislative Gazette with special insert from Prevent Child Abuse NY
NYPWA Policy Platform 2006

Article: Richard Wexler's *Don't Turn Back*

Testimony by Eric Brettschneider presented at the February 9th Assembly hearing on child welfare.

Joint panel 30 day amendment letter to Governor Pataki

Vera Institute of Justice: Clinical Trials Project: Progress Report 2

Joint Panel meeting Survey

Minutes from the January 26 meeting

Meeting opened with introductions. An update by and conversation with ACS staff followed regarding reforms and activities that are in place or soon to be in place since Nixzmary's death. ACS has experienced a 70-80% spike in the number of reports since her death when compared to the number of cases reported during the same time period last year. ACS staff believe that these new reports are ones that should have been reported to ACS over time. The challenge has been to keep up with the new investigations and with the number of children who are entering care while, at the same time, hiring 500 new staff. OCFS has helped tremendously with the trainings that are needed to bring these new staff on board. ACS has also redeployed 270 workers who are child protective specialists from other areas. They will soon have family services units available at district offices to follow through with families receiving services, relieving some of the workload pressures on CPS caseworkers.

Their review has included looking at policies, procedures and practices at all levels. This includes reviewing work load levels, increased supervisory training, developing shared decision-making processes on cases, developing implementation strategies to assure that policies are implemented at all levels, and provision of needed resources and technology support. ACS staff expressed a particular frustration with Connections and its implementation in NYC. It now takes

caseworkers 2-3 hours to enter a case record. OCFS is providing considerable tech support to ACS but there are some capacity issues that have come about with bringing ACS's 6,000 people into the system.

In addition, they are working at the interagency level with the police department, medical community, and educational institutions to review memoranda of understanding and develop new protocols where needed. This work will result in better collaborations.

On March 10th, ACS will release a plan for strengthening their child protection efforts.

ACS is not backing away from commitments to reforms previously announced. The Family Services units will fill a gap. Although some cases may remain open longer, keeping a case open will be used as a tool to require and keep families in needed services. ACS plans to strengthen the foster care system. Their goal is to have a solid group of families in any given neighborhood who are ready and willing to take in children when needed. They want to plan for such an event in case a removal might be needed down the road instead of allowing cases to reach a crisis point and then looking for a foster care placement. They have now completed a safety review of the children in foster care. By June they will know if the foster care agencies with whom they contract have met performance goals. They are looking for positive changes in practice that result in a 10% reduction in care days.

Commissioner Mattingly stated his appreciation for the panel's interest and ongoing support and involvement. He welcomes support from the panel for the big picture state level items. Panel members asked that ACS keep them informed on educational issues in particular.

SCAA staff asked that the panel make clear how they would like to respond in support or opposition to upcoming legislative issues in a timely manner. Panel members indicated that they were not ready to take a position on many items that are already before the legislature regarding child welfare changes. They do support funding and progress towards the realization of their recommendations. Panel chairs will make themselves immediately available by cell phone for any approvals needed quickly. In general, their position is that additional funds to child welfare services are needed and something they support. Panel approved a draft letter stating their support for increased funds for CAC's, Multi-disciplinary Teams, Home Visiting, and the Child and Family Trust Fund.

SCAA staff introduced plans for the May 19th meeting with OCFS. Panel members are asked to make their suggestions for any changes by March 11th to SCAA. An overview was provided for the Hornby Zeller data report. Panel members are asked to review the information for discussion at a later meeting. In addition, 2004 MAPS data is available online at OCFS website. Foster Care and Adoption numbers are given in that report.

Panel members made a request to OCFS staff for a copy of the NYS Child Fatality Report.

Next panel meeting: Friday, May 19th, 10:00 to 2:00 at ACS offices, 150 William St., 8th floor, 8A-1 conference room.