

NYC CRP
Draft Minutes of the Meeting
July 12, 2007

Attendees:

David Lansner
Marion White

Jocelyn Brown
Mathea Rubin

Eric Brettschneider

OCFS: Renee Rider

SCAA Staff: Karen Schimke Diane Mastin

Handouts:

Agenda

Draft letter to Commissioner Mattingly

Summaries from case reviews with possible recommendations

Chart compiling information from child fatality reports

Report: *Dangerous Mistakes: Analysis of ACS Corrective Actions Involving Child Fatalities in 2006*

2007 Child Welfare Legislation information

Presentation: *Civic Engagement or Token Participation? Perceived Impact of the Citizen Review Panel Initiative in Kentucky*, Bryan, V. and Jones, B.L.

Articles:

Mandating Multidisciplinary Review of Serious Child Maltreatment Cases, An Overview of Law and Policy Issues, Howard Davidson

Kids in RX Test Furor, Numbers Soar, Maggie Haberman, New York Post, 6/12/07

Minutes of the April 3, 2007 and May 3, 2007 meetings

Panel members approved the minutes from the April 3rd and May 3rd meetings and the draft letter to Commissioner Mattingly by a vote of 5 to 0. Panel members agreed by a vote of 5 to 0 to send a letter of support for differential response legislation to the Executive Chamber.

This panel meeting was devoted to a discussion of the case review process, the learning gained from those cases, and possible recommendations. The panel will meet with ACS leadership at its September meeting. Panel members prepared questions for the discussion to take place at that meeting.

Panel members reiterated that their ability to learn from the cases reviewed was greatly hampered by the condition of the records forwarded to the panel. They stated their interest in receiving summaries on cases to accompany case records for review. The process has to be doable within a reasonable amount of time for the panel's citizen volunteers.

Panel members praised ACS top leadership's reforms and efforts to make needed changes but believe that more is needed. Panel members stated that the administration's policies are good but they are concerned about implementation at the ground level. There seems to be a disconnect between policy and practice. Lack of accountability is an overarching issue. Some expressed the belief that supervisors and caseworkers do not always follow directives made by management.

Panel members stated their concern that ACS staff and management continue to make the same mistakes and have not institutionalized systemic changes based on patterns that emerge over time from the agency's review of cases, fatality reports, and suits brought against the agency. ACS should conduct an analysis of those reports for scenarios which lead to harm and implement changes in policies, training,

and practices to prevent such situations from happening again. Gaps do seem to be addressed after a fatality.

Workforce issues were mentioned as a priority for the panel's concern. The culture that exists is difficult to change. Supervisors have an important role in changing this culture. How can the system improve their skills? Personnel do not seem to have the knowledge of law that is needed to perform their jobs given the power and authority they have over families. ACS experiences only limited financial liability for situations when something does go wrong. While the city has paid out millions in settlements for cases brought to court, the dollars do not come out of the agency's budget. ACS has not dealt appropriately with problematic employees who continue to make mistakes.

Currently, there is no appeal process especially during an investigation or service delivery when someone believes they have been treated unfairly. There needs to be an interim appeal process for those situations.

Panel members discussed their interest in learning more about the Satterwhite Academy and its training. Is there a gate that keeps new caseworkers from going out into the field when they are not ready? Is there a skills test that must be passed? Should there be yearly testing? Perhaps by a panel after oral interviews. Should caseworkers have an MSW degree? How does the Academy address decision making in its training?

North Dakota was mentioned as a state that has eliminated CPS investigations as we know them. They have instituted a universal assessment track and have put their resources into prevention services. The question was asked, "Is it time to recommend wholesale changes to the Child Welfare law passed in 1973?" Are there political realities that keep reform from taking place?

Larger practice issues include the lack of services available and the lack of resources for implementation of requirements in a manner that leads to successful outcomes (Shaken Baby education provided by hospitals is one example. Hospitals often meet this requirement by giving new parents a brochure. Further education is often needed)

Panel members stated their interest in discussing the following with ACS leadership at the September meeting:

- 1) Workforce Issues: Caseworker qualifications, training, skill/knowledge testing before going out into the field, screening out those who should not be caseworkers, follow-up with new workers, supervisory skills.
- 2) Improving supervision.
- 3) Instituting an interim appeal process.

The following topics will be discussed further when the panel formulates its 2007 panel recommendations:

- Reforms needed in child welfare legislation
- improving supervision of workers
- testing caseworkers for competencies
- academy training and screening
- problem workers
- chronic neglect cases: the numbers of these cases remain unchanged.