

NYC CRP
Minutes of the Meeting
September 8, 2009

Attendees:

David Lansner

Elba Montalvo

Jocelyn Brown

Wayne Ho

Jorge Saenz De Viteri

Marion White

OCFS Staff: Commissioner Carrion Deputy Commissioner Laura Velez

SCAA Staff: Karen Schimke

Diane Mastin

Handouts:

Agenda

NYS OCFS Response to the 2008 Report and Recommendations of NYS Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

Opinion piece on the response to the report

Advocacy Discussion Questions

Chart: Recommendations and Results 2005-2009

2009 Report Timeline

2009 CRP Report Outline

Data on CPS Reports

Meeting Minutes July 14, 2009

The meeting began with introductions and an announcement that Chancellor Tisch was unable to attend the meeting but plans to attend in December. She sent her regrets.

Commissioner Carrion discussed the panel's recommendations and OCFS response, concentrating on the NYC specific recommendations. Her leadership at OCFS is redefining the role of the agency to one that influences practice on the ground by providing guidance and oversight. She stated that sharing data is an important piece of any change. Therefore, starting late fall, data will be available on OCFS's website which will allow county comparisons. In addition, she is developing accountability measures and is specifically looking at New York City's EQUIP for use at the state level. The Connections upgrade and modernization is well underway; next year Connections will be a greatly improved tool for caseworkers to use. She stated that real progress has been made and there exists pockets of excellence. She has contracted with Vera Institute to research educational neglect cases and is interested in moving recommendations from that work forward. Some have made progress through the use of truancy courts (Erie County and Redhook School District).

New York's political and fiscal realities must be taken into consideration when considering any change. Regarding last year's recommendation to eliminate anonymous reporting, there is no political will to make that change. Current thinking is that if it protects one child then the

resources are well worth it. OCFS is a proponent of subsidized guardianship and will be offering legislation for consideration next year. However, the fiscal implications are presenting a challenge. Few are convinced that offering subsidized guardianship will be cost effective. OCFS is supportive of the restoration of the termination of parental rights in certain cases however the needed legislative support is not there. In response to other panel recommendations, she stated that she does not have the authority or power to make the changes asked by the panels.

New York State offers some challenges when considering broad-based reform due to its state-supervised and locally administered child welfare system. She will be working towards a common vision of what the state should be doing, what reform would look like, and an action agenda that will align all in moving forward. There is a need for agreed-upon principles and values. To bring about fundamental change, advocates must unite with a common agenda to generate an understanding and will to make those changes. Advocates need to reach out to DOB, the governor's office, and the legislature.

In response to a question about the need for more data, she stated that Connections does not give them that level of information. She is currently working with four state agencies on a mapping project to identify where need exists and where state resources are spent. Imbalances exist. The goal for this work is to strategically target dollars more effectively. Accountability is needed to understand if all the changes made after Nixzmary have achieved their intended purpose.

OCFS staff provided an update on the implementation of Family Assessment Response (FAR) in New York State. Currently six counties have begun implementation. In the second year, an additional eight counties will implement FAR and at least six others the third year. OCFS has had success by offering incentives, funding by the Marguerite Casey Foundation to provide additional flexible funding for services for families. American Humane Association has provided technical assistance, training, and coaching. Anecdotal reports indicate that families are very receptive to this approach. The work is more individualized and is done in partnership with families. To date, very few cases have switched tracks after assignment to FAR, an initial concern in the drafting of legislation. OCFS data will be skewed for these counties because FAR cases will not be included in their indication/unfounded rates.

Panel members discussed their interest in the panels' report and recommendations and agreed that the report should contain fewer recommendations but emphasize the need for overall reform in the system. The model used today across the country is not the right model for helping children and families and cedes the first incident of abuse or neglect to a child.

Ideas for future meetings included extending an invitation to the Redhook School District to meet with the panel and to ask for a report from ACS regarding changes in the system made since Nixzmary's death.