

Western Citizen Review Panel
Minutes of the Meeting
November 17, 2006

Attendees:

James A. Vazzana
Ellen Kennedy

Augusta Welsh
Stephan Perkowski

Christine Schnars

OCFS Staff: Tom Hess, Charles Carson (by phone)

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

Handouts:

Meeting Agenda

2006 Child Welfare Legislation Chart

S8344/A11852a Warrant Bill

Working to Develop a Home Visiting System in New York

Draft Eastern/Western CRP Recommendations

Eastern/Western CRP Panels – 2006 Recommendations Working Draft

NYS CRP Recommendations and the 2006-7 New York State Budget

NYS CRP Activities February, 2007 to January, 2008

Growing Up In New York, Child Welfare Chapter, SCAA publication

NYPWA: *Key Policy Issues for the Next Phase of Welfare Reform*

Ensuring Child Safety

Article: *The Definition of Insanity*, NCCPR Child Welfare Blog, Richard Wexler

Minutes of the October 13th Eastern/Western Panel meeting

Meeting began with a review of the October 13th meeting in Syracuse. Due to an unexpected snow storm, Western Panel members were unable to attend. Linda Kurtz, OCFS Regional Director, has agreed to attend the panel's next meeting to talk about OCFS work on family engagement strategies.

Charles Carson, OCFS Legal Counsel, joined the panel by phone to go over the child welfare legislation that was passed during the 2006 legislative session. He highlighted the following bills:

- Chapter 494: The new law requires more categories of cases to be referred to multi-disciplinary teams. He referenced a recent court decision in the Wilhelm case which will have to be given consideration. The legal decision in that case raises the question as to when a CPS worker is functioning as an agent of the police. OCFS will be distributing information to local districts about the court decision and how it affects practice. An RFP in the amount of \$1.7 million for MDTs and CACs will soon be released.
- Chapter 517: gives statutory authority for Child Advocacy Centers. He expressed concern regarding the August 12th date for CACs to meet the new requirements. A question was raised about auditing. Both OCFS and the National Children's Alliance now require audits but are not aligned.

- Chapter 485: Legislation addressing Child Fatality Review Teams added open child protection cases and open preventive cases and will allow local districts to look at unexplained or unexpected child deaths (with no reporting requirements). The law also expands membership on the teams (allowing flexibility depending on which case is being reviewed) and provides for immunity, increased access to records, and confidentiality. Question was raised as to dissemination of information about this bill to the legal and medical communities. The Citizen Review Panels will have access to any report produced by a local fatality review team.
- Chapter 543: OCFS will post practice models for the reporting of educational neglect cases on their web site. Locals must submit plans by January 1st, 2008 for protocols/relationships between local Departments of Social Services and school districts. These plans will be difficult because the two have different geographical boundaries. OCFS may have to seek an extension of the time period set in the law.
- Chapter 740: Sets up a procedure similar to that used by law enforcement to seek a search warrant, allowing a caseworker access to a home or child. OCFS is working with family court to assure that judges are available at all hours. CPS workers will also need access to faxes or email to receive the warrant.
- Chapter 525: Establishes minimum qualifications and training for supervisors and asks that all workers complete 6 hours of training yearly. The bill reaffirms the training OCFS already has in place.
- Chapter 632: Hospitals must develop protocols for child deaths that occur at hospitals or while being transported to hospitals. OCFS has offered assistance to the State Health Department. A workgroup with representatives of the two agencies has already been established to discuss child deaths.

Karen Schimke joined the panel by phone to give an overview of the work SCAA is doing on home visiting. SCAA has been convening a group over the past year with members from the State Health Department, Council on Children and Families, OCFS, advocates, practitioners, and others to discuss gaps in service, eligibility, etc. with the various models for home visiting programs in NYS. The discussion has led to a broader focus on prenatal and post natal care, early intervention, and universal screening. The group has several workgroups at this point, looking at a variety of issues. Many questions are unanswered at this time, but the commitment and enthusiasm for this work is great.

The panel reviewed the draft of 2006 recommendations and offered revisions. In a discussion regarding their 2007 work plan, they asked that the following topics be addressed: Educational neglect/school districts, child fatality reports, workforce study, CPS and law enforcement. Panel members reviewed draft operating guidelines for the panels and offered suggestions for changes. Interest was expressed in having copy of Robert's Rule of Order. The panel approved sending a congratulatory letter to the governor elect.