

Western Citizen Review Panel  
Friday, December 9, 2005, 10:00 - 1:30  
Minutes

Attending:

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| James A. Vazzana | Ellen Kennedy   |
| Augusta Welch    | Dr. Paula Mazur |

*OCFS Staff:* Richard Nells

*SCAA Staff:* Diane Mastin

***Handouts:*** Commissioner Johnson's letter and response to panel's Annual Report  
New York State Citizen Review Panels' Annual Report  
October 14 Joint Panel Meeting Minutes  
OCFS 2004 CAPTA Accomplishments  
Dr. McCarthy's presentation, Workplace Practices that Support Worker Retention in Child Welfare Systems  
Draft Recommendations for the NYS Citizen Review Panel Annual Report  
Draft letter regarding review of fatality report  
Minutes from the September 30, 2005 meeting  
Minutes from the meeting with Western region Commissioners, May 13, 2005

The meeting began at 10:15 with updates. Panel members reviewed the decisions made at the joint panel meeting in October. They agreed to hold an election for panel chair at their next meeting and will reach out for new panel members by sending a letter to commissioners and community service directors in the Western region asking for recommendations. An update was given on implementation of the permanency bill and ACS testimony against legislation for dual track system. Panel members asked to have ACS testimony from the hearing forwarded to them.

Next, they received a report from the work group reviewing child fatality reports. A draft of a letter to be sent from the panel to the Western New York Hispanics and Friends Civic Association was reviewed. Panel members were reminded about the requirements in the law to maintain confidentiality regarding any specific cases or reports they view.

The fatality work group also reviewed fatality reports covering the previous two years. Committee chair Ellen Kennedy met with the Director of OCFS Regional Office to clarify the content and the process used to complete child fatality reports. A member of the panel who also participates on two area child fatality review teams discussed her experiences as a member of review teams, the variance in participation for each team and how each operates. One of the teams meets within a week or two of the death and has an investigative focus and the other meets after 6 months and does its review with a prevention focus. OCFS does limit funding to reviews conducted for cases that are reported to the State Central Register and to teams who follow their guidelines as to how the report is to be written.

Some changes had resulted in the Western region as a result of fatality teams conducting a broader review. As a result of fatality reviews, training in child abuse was added for emergency

medical service providers in the county. Hospitals now make a decision in the emergency room as to whether or not a report should be filed. Previously, it was not clear if police made the report or the hospital. Often these reviews, collectively, do result in policy change.

One panel member stated her concern regarding the lack of information in the reports reviewed by her work group as to services offered and provided to the family. There is no indication in the reports that would give a reader understanding as to whether or not certain services are more successful for families, if there are enough services in the community, and if certain strategies or capabilities are needed such as bilingual staff and materials. Team members agreed that each community should have a fatality review team and that the team should operate independently. Review Teams should not just address changes within CPS but also address other changes that can be made within communities as well.

SCAA staff provided information regarding a recent Assembly Hearing on Child Fatality Reviews and the possibility of another hearing to be held in Erie County in January. SCAA provided testimony at the hearing in Westchester County. That testimony is available on the SCAA website.

Panel members reviewed the draft recommendations for the annual report with input from the Eastern and New York City panels. The panel agreed to the recommendations and asked that the specific recommendation regarding FBI checks be expanded to include those employees who must have a state check as a part of their employment.

Panel members reviewed suggestions made and options laid out for potential work on the part of the panels. Suggestions were made for their 2006 meetings and a few additions/changes requested to the list of options. They agreed with NYC and Eastern panels to look into child fatality reports, family engagement strategies, workforce issues, and giving input into the CFSR review to be conducted in 2006 by OCFS. Additional thinking included the issue of sexual assault cases and how they are evaluated from county to county, Connections software capabilities, and learning more about services offered in their region.

They agreed to the meeting schedule as presented, though they may decide to meet in February once the governor's budget is released. They stated an interest in holding a joint meeting with the Eastern panel.

The Panel's next meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 10, from 12:30 to 3:00.