

Western Panel Meeting
Minutes of the meeting, March 10, 2006

Attendees:

James A. Vazzana
Stefan Perkowski
Augusta Welsh

Dr. Paula Mazur
Dennis Wittman

Ellen Kennedy
Kathleen Crowley

OCFS Staff: Dick Nells

SCAA Staff: Diane Mastin

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Handouts:

- OCFS Testimony on Child Fatality Review Teams
- Commissioner Weiner's testimony, Feb. 16, 2006 Assembly Hearing on Child Welfare
- Instructions to access members only web page
- Western New York Hispanics and Friends Civic Association letter to panel
- Data Analysis for the NYS CRPs 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 on Child Fatality Teams
- Joint panel letter to legislators
- Joint Panel meeting Survey
- Executive Summary: *Retention Planning to Reduce Workforce Turnover in New York State's Child Welfare Systems*
- Article: Richard Wexler's *Don't Turn Back*
- Feb. 21st edition of the Legislative Gazette with special insert from Prevent Child Abuse NY
- Healthy Families New York: Early Findings from the Second Year of Evaluation
- NYPWA Policy Platform 2006
- Minutes from the December 9, 2005 meeting

Meeting began at 12:40 with an expression of appreciation to SCAA staff for their work on the Panels' annual report. Panel members then discussed the request by the Western New York Hispanics and Friends Civic Association to meet with panel members with their questions/concerns regarding a child fatality report that the Western CRP reviewed. Panel members agreed to write the authors of the letter stating that while the panel appreciates their additional questions and concerns, the information they seek is confidential and that panel members can not comment any further. Members were given information regarding the recent Assembly Child Welfare Hearings in NYC, Syracuse, and Buffalo. Assembly Member Sam Hoyt was present at the hearing in Buffalo and expressed support for making improvements in child welfare practices in New York State. SCAA staff gave an overview of the Governor's

proposed budget. James Vazzana was reelected panel chair. Ellen Kennedy was reelected as panel vice chair.

Panel members reviewed plans for the May 15th meeting with OCFS staff, Eastern Citizen Review Panel, and invited guests. Additional names were suggested and added to the invite list.

OCFS staff provided an update on their work in New York City in the aftermath of the recent child deaths. OCFS has provided staff to review 8,000 – 10,000 ACS cases, brought in CPS experts to review policies and practices, and provided 35 staff to improve technical support. OCFS also conducted its own intense review of 800 cases. ACS is struggling to meet the increased demands due to a spike in reports, hiring additional staff, and providing training for that staff. In addition, Nassau County and Suffolk County child welfare systems are particularly stressed due to increases in reports they are experiencing.

OCFS completed and passed their first Program Improvement Plan (PIP) in April, 2005. Another statewide review will be conducted by the federal government in 2007 with the state formulating a PIP in response. New York State sees this process as a continual improvement process and is continuing with work groups that have been established to address 13 strategies. These work groups are comprised of legislative officials, advocates, and court personnel. OCFS role now is to support local districts in reaching outcomes. The IV-e review will be the next challenge. Penalties can be assigned if the state is found to be deficient in the review. Healthy Families has been designated as a proven practice by the RAND Corp. in California.

Panel members reviewed a number of proposed pieces of legislation addressing changes in child welfare policies. Panel members indicated their interest in S6703A (child fatality reviews/teams) and S05534 (FBI checks) in particular. They also reviewed the Meier/Spano 12 Point Plan. They indicated their support for the letter sent to legislative leaders in support of the recommendations listed in the panels' annual report.

SCAA staff reviewed the Hornby Zeller data report, stating that panel members should review the report and use the data to raise questions and as a point of further inquiry. They plan to review the data at a future meeting.