

WCRP
Minutes of the Meeting
September 18, 2009

Attendees:

Ellen Kennedy Lourdes Iglesias Stefan Perkowski
Danny Sklarski Dennis Walczyk

OCFS Staff: Jamie Greenberg, phone

SCAA: Diane Mastin

Guests: Commissioner Wickmark Roshelle Lewis Sarah Taylor
 Robert Deisz Sarlyn Tate

Handouts:

Agenda

NYS Office of Children and Family Services' Response to the 2008 Report and
Recommendations of NYS Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

David Lansner's comments to the response

Panel Advocacy Discussion: Effective Strategies

Chart: NYS CRP Recommendations and Results: 2005-2009

Regents Policy Statement on Improving Student Achievement and School Performance through
parent and Family Partnerships

2009 Report Timeline

2009 CRP Report

OCFS FAR data 9/3/09

Information on FAR in Erie County

March 13, 2009 Minutes

Joint Panel meeting minutes, June 2, 2009

The meeting began with introductions and Chautauqua County Department of Social Services Commissioner Wickmark's review of implementation of Family Assessment Response or FAR in his county. He stated that Chautauqua County has six teams at two offices in the county and one person assigned to FAR. He stated his belief in family engagement, solution-focused practice and FAR. The implementation of FAR in Chautauqua County helped them identify other challenges that must be addressed before moving forward. They have several pilot projects at this time and must decide which model of practice to use and imbed FAR into that practice. His experience with alternative response in Washington State leads him to believe that within four or five years caseloads will be reduced on the back end of the system with this response. The challenge is the requirement for increased resources on the front end of the system for those 4-5 years before seeing savings. To date, 70 cases have been assigned to FAR. A number of those cases were closed without services which raises the question whether or not those cases would have been brought into the system at all without FAR. His concern is that reports may be assigned to FAR as a means of managing high caseloads.

Second Deputy Commissioner Roshelle Lewis presented Erie County's implementation of FAR using selected education neglect cases. They have contracted with New Directions, a community-based agency, to work with FAR families. This contract has resulted in the union filing an improper practice claim against the county. They have targeted 100 reports out of 10,000 received for the FAR response. To date, Erie County has had 31 cases assigned to the FAR track. They have expanded from education neglect reports to include low-level neglect cases with no safety issues. They are using the Westchester County assessment tool.

New Directions has three workers dedicated to work with FAR families. They conduct the first assessment with the family jointly with the cps worker and another modeled after the wrap-around model. They take more time to work with each family during the course of a visit and are limited to 90 days on each case. Families have been very responsive to this approach.

Some families have turned down involvement in FAR. This approach is bringing into the child welfare system cases which would normally be "unfounded" through the investigative approach. Therefore, Erie County officials reported increased workload with the implementation of FAR. The training and technical assistance provided by American Humane Association has been extremely important.

Jamie Greenberg, OCFS Director of the Bureau of Policy, presented statewide information on the implementation of FAR. Over 2,000 reports have been assigned to a FAR track, 80% of which are in three counties. Two counties have just begun offering the FAR track and six others are approved to start. Other counties have expressed interest. In the Western region, Monroe and Montgomery Counties will implement FAR within the next few months. Gates and Cattaraugus Counties have expressed interest. He referenced the rigorous evaluation conducted in Minnesota, a state that also provides state-supervised, locally-administered child welfare services. OCFS will conduct an evaluation and provide a report to the legislature in January, 2011. Onondaga County is conducting its own evaluation. Flex funds to provide needed services to families are available through a Marguerite Casey Foundation grant. The most frequent request from families is for economic assistance.

Panel members discussed the OCFS Response to the panel report, the Board of Regents Family engagement policy and the upcoming Joint Panel Meeting to formulate their 2009 recommendations. Important to panel members is the formation of a reform task force, improved cooperation and collaboration between SED and state agencies, and increased flexibility at the local level. They are interested in moving previous recommendations forward.

Possibilities for 2010 meeting space include the Child Advocacy Center, Catholic Charities, and United Way of Buffalo.