

Western Citizen Review Panel  
Friday, September 30, 2005, 12:30 - 2:30  
Minutes

Attending:

James A. Vazzana	Ellen Kennedy	Augusta Welch
Christine Schnars	Dennis Wittman	

*OCFS Staff:* Richard Nells

*SCAA Staff:* Diane Mastin

*Guest Presenter:* Mary McCarthy

*Handouts:* Joint Panel Meeting agenda

Commissioner Johnson's response to the Panel's Annual Report

PowerPoint Presentation: Workplace Practices that Support Worker Retention in  
Child Welfare Systems

Governor's Dual Track Veto Message

Bills: S5534A and S5834

Adapting Services to be Culturally & Linguistically Responsive

Publication: Strengthening California Families Through Differential Response

Articles: Wright Legislation to Require National Background Checks on Prospective  
Adoptive and Foster Parents Passes Senate

State: County to blame for allowing convicted rapist to become foster parent

Use safe, proven ways to keep families intact

CWLA Endorses Child Welfare Reform Bill

Children's Bureau Express: September 2005 Edition Alert

Minutes from the May 13, 2005 meeting

The meeting began at 12:40 with updates. A status report on the following legislative bills was presented: Dual Track: passed in both the Assembly and Senate but vetoed by the Governor. Discussion followed regarding the concerns raised by the New York City panel and Administration for Children's Services about the bills and their opposition to the legislation. Information was given on the Permanency Bill which must be implemented by December 21<sup>st</sup>. A PowerPoint presentation with information on implementation of the bill's requirements is available on OCFS's website. Local Departments of Social Services are busy changing their procedures and software to meet the demands of this legislation. Bills S5534A and S5834 were proposed in the legislative session in response to a particular case in Jefferson County involving a foster parent who had a prior record for sexual abuse. These bills, if passed, would allow for FBI checks to be conducted on prospective foster care and adoptive parents. Funding, capacity, and communications have been raised as concerns with these bills. Access to FBI checks for those who are mentors is an emerging concern with some of the same problems. Panel members were urged to attend the upcoming joint panel meeting on Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>.

The notes from the meeting with Commissioners in the Western Region were reviewed. Since that meeting, OCFS has issued an RFP for programs which would allow for co-location of substance abuse, CPS and domestic violence services and greater collaboration amongst

providers. Applications are being reviewed and close to \$15,000,000 will be awarded. The need for these services had been raised by the commissioners present. Panel members discussed their interest in communicating with the commissioner's and need to formulate a response to their concerns. Panel members should discuss a potential role for themselves as advocates on issues of importance to CPS. Concerns raised by the Commissioners will be incorporated into the panel's annual report.

The sub-group to review the request for a fatality review gave its report. They recommend that a letter be sent from the panel to the Western New York Hispanics and Friends Civic Association emphasizing their careful review of the fatality report and their acceptance of the report's conclusions. The draft will be circulated to the entire panel. OCFS will receive a copy of the final letter. In addition, a meeting has been scheduled with Linda Brown of the Buffalo regional office to discuss some follow-up questions about the review. In addition, the sub-group will continue its work by reviewing the 35 fatality reports for the Western Region covered by the panel for the past 24 months and make comments and/or recommendations based on their review.

Panel members discussed the response to their annual report by Commissioner Johnson to their specific recommendations. Dick Nells reported that the OCFS team responsible for response time has made tremendous improvements since the panel's report was made and the team had been honored by OCFS in August. Lag times have been reduced.

Panel members were then given a presentation by Dr. Mary McCarthy, Director, Social Work Education Consortium, SUNY Albany on Workplace factors that support worker retention in child welfare in New York State. (see attached presentation) There was some discussion regarding the value of education levels in promoting quality in CPS services. Ontario County was mentioned as a progressive model. That county was able to create a lift through progressive personnel practices. One practice which has been found to be successful involves creating a two-tier system which awards value to social work degrees.

The Panel's next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 9, from 10:00 to 2:00.