

WCRP Meeting Notes
September 9, 2011

Attendees:

Augusta Walsh
Paula Mazur

Ellen Kennedy
Sarlyn Tate

Danny Sklarski

OCFS Staff: Renee Hallock

SCAA Staff: Diane Mastin

Guest: Carol Dankert, Commissioner of Social Services, Erie County

Handouts:

Agenda

NYS Office of Children and Family Services Response to the NYS Citizen Review Panels 2010 Annual Report and Recommendation

2011 Report Timeline

2011 Child Welfare Legislation Chart updated

11-OCFS-INF-03 Parent Notification of a Child's Foster Care Placement Change

10-OCFS-ADM-16 Notice of Placement Change to Attorneys for Children

Child Welfare Financing Law 153-K Summary of Provisions
153-K

OCFS statewide data on recurrence

NYS OCFS budget items for 2007-2011

May 17, 2011 Minutes

NYS CRP Joint Panel minutes for June 10, 2011 meeting

Reports/Articles:

- GAO Highlights and Summary: Child Maltreatment Strengthening National Data on Child Fatalities Could Aid in Prevention
- Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4) Report to Congress
- Supplemental Analyses of Race Differences in Child Maltreatment Rates in the NIS-4
- The Harvard-Chapin Hall Conference on Race and Child Welfare: A Dissenting View by Dorothy Roberts

Carol Dankert, Erie County Commissioner of Social Services, met with panel members to discuss her county's efforts to reduce Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR), expansion of Family Assessment Response (FAR) and the impact of budget cuts on local services. Erie County's DMR work began in 2004 with a data review. Their efforts have focused on training and building cultural competence. They also collaborated with the courts to imbed culturally sensitive practices. Although there is a direct correlation between poverty and involvement with the child welfare system, there are other influences that effect the over-representation of African-American children in the system.

Commissioner Dankert expressed concern over the six child fatalities in the county in 2011 and the recently drafted administrative directive from OCFS about sleeping arrangements. In response, the local department has targeted safe sleeping education efforts to specific zip codes.

Erie County was one of the pilot FAR counties, beginning the response with educational neglect allegations. Originally, the department contracted out this work to a community-based organization, New Directions. Now, they have expanded to additional allegations and have two internal FAR teams. In addition, the family engagement practices in FAR are being used by investigation teams. She expressed concerns over the frequency of American Humane Association's FAR training schedule, the expiration of Casey Family Programs flexible funding for FAR, and the chapter amendment to FAR legislation allowing some access to FAR records by the courts.

Commissioner Dankert discussed the various federal and state funding cuts and increased costs the local district absorbed over the past year inhibiting what her department can do to help and support families. Erie County received cuts and/or cost increases with Medicaid, HEAP, TANF, and child care. In addition, a larger share of child welfare costs was shifted to localities and drastic cuts were made to important programs. She stressed the need for stable, predictable funding. Erie County will experience layoffs of staff. She is evaluating contracting out foster care to community-based agencies.

Renee Hallock, OCFS Director, Child and Family Services Review provided an overview of the agency's Response to the CRP 2010 Annual Report and Recommendations. She discussed the importance of preventive funding and that each county will be asked to choose a family engagement or other preventive strategy as part of their next performance and county improvement plans. Child Welfare Financing Law Reauthorization is a priority for OCFS going into 2012. They continue to address safe sleeping and expansion of FAR. They plan to continue conversations about educational neglect allegations and offer support for implementation of Kinship Guardianship Assistance.

Panel members discussed which issues to bring to the October Joint Panel meeting for discussion as possible recommendations for inclusion in the panels' 2011 annual report. They agreed to identify potential panel members and to forward names to appointment offices. They stated their interest in hosting a meeting with representatives from the 17 county region in the western area in 2012. They asked for follow-up to their request for specialized cross-systems training to OCFS region 1 office. Their November meeting will focus on child fatality reviews.