

NYC Citizen Review Panel for Child Protective Services

Meeting Summary

March 2, 2021 • 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Attendees

Eastern Panel Members

Carrie Smith

Western Panel Members

Todd Sage

Guests

Eric Brettschneider, ACS

Tyler James, ACS

Phoebe Rubenstein, ACS

David Haase, OCFS

John Thompson, OCFS

Dave Bach, OCFS

NYC Panel Members

Stanley Capela

David Lansner

Wayne Ho

Mathea Rubin

Jorge Saenz de Viteri

Marion White

Welfare Research, Inc.

Jennifer Goldman

Darlene Ward

Handouts

NYC Meeting Agenda 3.2.21

NYC Racial Equity Letter 2.16.21

CRP Annual Report One-Pager

Welcome – Stanley Capela, Panel Chair

Updates from NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

First Deputy Commissioner Eric Brettschneider shared his appreciation for the work of the Panels and for the Annual Report recommendations. Panel members also thanked Mr. Brettschneider for his many years of work in child welfare as he is set to retire in the near future. He then reviewed ACS' implementation of the revised RFP for Preventive Services, which will provide greater access to existing services. Mr. Brettschneider shared that ACS would like to expand the highly successful Family Enrichment Centers.

Tyler James provided an overview of some of the many race equity initiatives taking place at ACS, including ACS' Equity Action Plan. The Child and Family Well-Being pilot program is working with communities to inform them about available community-based resources. ACS provided technical assistance to provider agencies, helping to connect youth with their communities. The ACS Division of Youth and Family Justice has made hiring staff that reflect the diversity of the youth they serve a priority. ACS is partnering with national organizations to examine how they can become a more racially and culturally aware organization. They will jointly look at policies and practices to see if they are in alignment with this goal, including creating opportunities for staff to talk about racial inequities in the workplace. Through various initiatives, ACS is also making significant efforts to invite youth in foster care, foster care alumni, and parents to share their experiences of how racism impacted their involvement with the child welfare system.

ACS staff also provided updates on the implementation of blind removals, current data on children in care, and work with the Department of Education to address the increase in cases with an educational neglect allegation as a result of the Pandemic.

Updates from OCFS

Associate Commissioner David Bach provided an overview of the effects of COVID-19 on child welfare operations over the past year. Regional Offices were key in delivering personal protection equipment to voluntary agencies and other partners. OCFS worked with other State partners in opening quarantine shared spaces and expediting operating certificates to accommodate COVID-19 related needs in residential settings. OCFS continues to work with voluntary agencies on staff ratios and being creative in hiring staff quickly when needed.

John Thompson provided an update on the Kinship Firewall and Blind Removal initiatives. Kinship Firewall requires that districts must first attempt to identify kin as placement resources for children that have been removed from their home prior to placing them in a home with non-kin foster parents. The Governor has identified the implementation of the Kinship Firewall as a child welfare priority for the entire State.

The Governor has also recognized the statewide implementation of blind removals as a child welfare priority with the goal of reducing racial disparity in the child welfare system. When a blind removal occurs, all identifying information related to the child such as race and zip code are removed prior to a team reviewing the case to determine if it is necessary to remove the child from their home. The intent of a blind removal is to eliminate the potential for implicit or explicit bias in the decision making process. To support the blind removal initiative, OCFS is convening trainings and town halls. Districts will continue to meet quarterly to keep the momentum going. OCFS Regional Offices are being trained so they can engage in oversight and monitoring. OCFS will continue to provide districts with data to assess implementation and track progress towards eliminating racial disparity in decision making.

OCFS convened two Signs of Safety Learning Labs (Tompkins, Seneca/Glove House). Signs of Safety is an international approach to child welfare that examines ways to get expedited, concrete supports to families. It provides mutual assessment, building a network around the child. OCFS hopes the initiative will contribute to the reduction of maltreatment and will be included in the State plan.

Debrief and Next Steps

WRI contracted with Topsy Social, a certified minority-owned business, to manage the CRP social media accounts. They will be posting several times per week on Facebook/Twitter.

All hard and electronic copies of the Annual Report were distributed.

During the February planning meeting, there was a request to create videos to promote the Panels' recommendations and inform others on the work of the Panels. WRI has contracted with a consultant to make both videos.

After reading the Annual Report, Prevent Child Abuse NY (PCANY) reached out to WRI with an interest in working collaboratively to promote some of the recommendations, including the statewide expansion of FAR and examining the use of educational neglect as an allegation type. Joint meetings with PCANY will be scheduled to determine how to best work together.

Future meeting times may be extended by a half hour depending on the agenda. Panel stated it may be time to discuss recruitment status and also what the Panel wants to work on this year

Next meeting - May 4, 2021. Meeting adjourned 11:12 a.m.