

Joint Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

Meeting Summary
June 10, 2021 • 10:00-12:00 p.m.

Attendees

Eastern Panel Members

Mary McCarthy
KellyAnn Kostyal-Larrier
Eunju Lee
Kathy Halas
JoAnn Merriman

NYC Panel Members

Stanley Capela
David Lansner
Mathea Rubin
Jorge Saenz de Viteri
Marion White

Western Panel Members

Linda Brown
Deb Rosen
Ellen Kennedy
Sarlyn Tate

Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI)

Darlene Ward
Jennifer Goldman
Ellen Unruh
Amanda Maloney

Guests

Commissioner Sheila Poole, NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)
Deputy Commissioner Lisa Ghartey Ogundimu, OCFS
David Haase, OCFS
Associate Commissioner David Bach, OCFS
Erasma Beras-Monticciolo, Power of Two
Christine Gottlieb, NYU School of Law Family Defense Clinic
Pat O'Brien, Adoption and Foster Family Coalition of New York

Handouts

Meeting Agenda 6.10.21
Anonymous vs. Confidential – article
Anti-Harassment in Reporting Bill
Anti-Harassment in Reporting Bill Memo
Children's Rights 2021/Call to Action

Welcome & Regional Report Outs

NYC Panel Chair Stanley Capela started the meeting.

The Eastern Panel reported that Westchester County Legislator Christopher Johnson joined the May meeting to discuss potentially adding an additional Panel or sub-committee to better address localized concerns related to child welfare. The current Eastern Panel covers 40 counties. A Westchester County constituent brought this matter to the Legislator's attention.

The Western Panel is working on numerous priorities including services and support for children of incarcerated parents, addressing the impact of COVID on children in the child welfare system, and racial equity. The Western Panel continues to work on filling vacancies and engaging with local districts to understand the challenges they are facing.

The NYC Panel is working on gathering data on performance improvements, reducing educational neglect referrals, and racial equity issues related to child welfare in NYC.

Discussion Panel: Anonymous vs. Confidential Reporting

Panel Coordinator Jennifer Goldman introduced the guest panel members, Erasma Beras-Monticciolo and Christine Gottlieb. Ms. Beras-Monticciolo, from Power of Two, provided an overview of the mission at Power of Two -- to nurture the potential in every child and family and strengthen their communities. She then describe the negative impact that anonymous and malicious reporting has on families. Families that are victims of malicious reporting are most often families of color. Ms. Beras-Monticciolo also discussed community-based strategies to support families and avoid entering the child welfare system entirely.

Christine Gottlieb, from the NYU School of Law Family Defense Clinic, discussed legislation, both enacted and proposed, related to the reporting of child abuse and/or neglect. A coalition of advocacy groups are working on potential legislative steps that are viable in the short term such as requiring workers to tell people their rights (Family Miranda Warning Bill) at the time of an investigation; replacing anonymous with confidential reporting (for the reasons already spoken about); and instituting greater penalties for malicious reporting.

Panel members and panelist discussed information shared and the Panel members agreed to support legislative efforts to reduce/eliminate anonymous and malicious reporting.

Updates from the NYS Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS)

Deputy Commissioner Ghartey Ogundimu provided an update on current OCFS initiatives. OCFS is working with other State agencies on various projects to address child poverty. OCFS is also collaborating with other State agencies to improve data sharing across agencies to better outcomes for children and families. OCFS is working jointly with the New York Stated Education Department to provide educational supports to families and reduce the number of investigations related to educational neglect.

Commissioner Poole and other OCFS staff are working closely with federal partners to improve child welfare services and better support children and families, including the flexibility to use federal funding in more innovative ways.

Commissioner Poole also spoke about several racial equity initiatives including training, examination of current policies/regulations, and workforce diversity. OCFS is convening a workforce committee, with representatives from the Department of Civil Services among other stakeholder groups, to implement more diversity in the child welfare workforce.

Regarding Anonymous vs. Confidential Reporting - the State Central Registry is looking at creating a revised script for intake workers to emphasize that information collected will be kept confidential with the goal that callers will be encouraged to leave contact information and reduce the number of anonymous or malicious calls.

Debrief and Next Steps

Stan Capela provided observations from the National Citizen Review Panels Virtual Conference.

Jennifer Goldman provided updates on the next CRP promotional video, discussions with Assemblymember Hevesi on the statewide expansion of Family Assessment Response, and meetings with Executive Chamber staff.

Panel members agreed to continue to support the reduction/elimination of anonymous and malicious reports.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:57a.m.

**Next CRP Meetings: NYC – September 14, 2021
Eastern – September 16, 2021
Western – September 24, 2021**