



20 Years and 2020

Time for Meaningful Change in Child Welfare

New York State Citizen Review Panels 2020 Annual Report



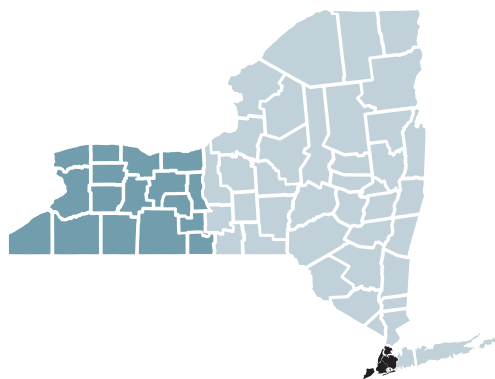
20 Years and 2020 Time for Meaningful Change in Child Welfare

NYS Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services




The New York State (NYS) Citizen Review Panels (the Panels) for Child Protective Services (CPS) are important conduits for public sentiment and offer an informed, external perspective on the efficacy of New York State's child protective policies, practices, programs, and fiscal priorities. Panel members, appointed by the Governor or the NYS Legislature, are volunteers with a breadth of experience and knowledge in child welfare practice and law, social work, education, and technology, among other areas. Each of the three Panels has up to 13 members. Of those members, the Governor appoints seven, and the Senate Temporary President and Speaker of the Assembly appoint three each.

The Western Panel covers the 17 counties in the western region of the State. The New York City Panel covers the five boroughs of New York City. The Eastern Panel covers the remaining 40 counties.

The Panels are authorized by both State and Federal law to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of the State and local departments of social services and, where appropriate, the outcome of specific cases. The Panels are authorized to hold public hearings and to evaluate the extent to which the agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panels have reasonable access to public and private facilities receiving public funds to provide child welfare services within the Panel's jurisdiction. In addition, the Panels advocate for important legislation that can have a positive impact on child welfare services in NYS. (See the inside back cover for more information on the Panels' roles and authority.) The Panels are active on social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, to raise awareness of the issues. For summaries of Panel activities and a list of Panel members, refer to the Appendices.



Panel Jurisdictions by County

-  Western counties
-  Eastern counties
-  New York City boroughs

Racism in Child Welfare

Since its inception, racial inequities have plagued this country. Recent violent interactions between law enforcement and people of color focused the attention of Americans on this injustice. As is true in other institutions across the United States, racism affects the child welfare system, emanating from policies as well as practices embedded in an organization's management practices and service approaches, in ways that may not appear to stem from bias. Examples include:

- Preventing parents of color from making decisions such as expenditures with government stipends, assuming the funds will not be spent appropriately;
- Using intrusive investigative practices with children of color; or
- Placing children of color in foster care rather than exploring kin placement options.

Reforming the child welfare system is a daunting challenge, but child welfare professionals can begin today to effect change in small ways, in everyday work. They can:

- Call out practices that are contrary to the stated values of family engagement and empowerment;
- Examine ways that practices can better reflect these values and support workers to do the work with this focus;
- Consider the ways privilege has influenced personal perspectives of families in need; or
- Be more open to listening to a family's stories while making case-related decisions.

"[M]any members of our society ... view parents as solely responsible for their challenges and deserving of the punitive impact These attitudes and beliefs are a barrier to serving families and children. These views are not only a product of white supremacy culture, but evidence of how grossly uneducated we are as a discipline in human trauma, systemic racism, disabilities, and cultural humility."¹

The transition to family engagement has been very challenging and it is layered by the impact of a history of white supremacy values and beliefs on laws, policies, practices, and cultural norms.

"White Supremacy Culture refers to the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. These standards may be seen as mainstream, dominant cultural practices; they have evolved from the United States' history of white supremacy. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold."³³

The Panels' Statement on Racial Inequity

It is now a time of racial inequity reckoning. The Panels denounce human rights violations in every form, especially those against people of color. We stand in support of a basic sense of justice and join the fight against any violations of civil rights. The impact of racial injustice and continued disparity in services to minority communities shreds the fabric and stability of families. We honor this moment in history by prioritizing anti-racism advocacy, highlighting bias within the child welfare system, and working with our partners and families to ensure safe, humane, and effective responses to child abuse and neglect.

In addition, we acknowledge the historical legacy of unjust treatment of people of color in numerous systems, including both law enforcement and child welfare. We want to use our collective voices to demand transparency and fairness in examining the recent and unnecessary deaths of Black citizens at the hands of law enforcement, as well as the unnecessary detention of Black children in foster care and the trauma or racism in child welfare investigations.

Their lives mattered! Black Lives Matter! Black Families Matter!

To comment on bias in child welfare, visit <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/contact-us/index.php>

Panel Membership Recruitment

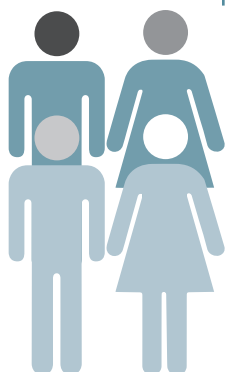
The Panels are *actively* seeking new members to apply for appointment.

Potential members may self-nominate; seek recommendation from a current panel member or other community leader; or be nominated directly by the NYS Senate, NYS Assembly or the Office of the Governor. Prior to seeking nomination, refer to the Panels' website for current vacancies, <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/recruitment/>. A letter of interest and resume must be submitted to a State Senator, State Assemblymember, or the Office of Governor. If applying for appointment through the New York State Legislature, the appointment will need to be approved by the Temporary President of the Senate or the Speaker of the Assembly.

Diversity

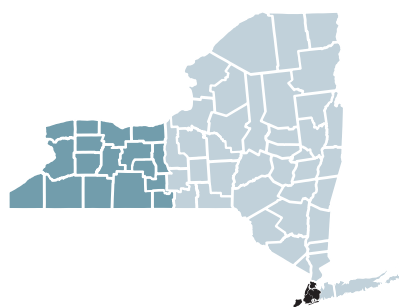
The Panels continually strive to attract a diverse pool of potential new members. Desired Panel diversity includes:

- Race and ethnicity, age, gender/gender identification, disability, and sexual orientation;
- Geographic location within New York State including rural, suburban, and urban areas of the State;
- Experience related to the child welfare system including professional experience or lived experience (birth parent, foster parent, relative, or former youth in care); and
- Knowledge base such as advocacy, technology, education, law, program development and evaluation, among others.



While the Panels strive for volunteer members who broadly represent the communities in which the Panels are established, no person currently employed by Federal, State, County or Municipal agencies which directly deliver child welfare services may be a panel member.

For more detailed information on the appointment process, a sample letter of interest, and description of member responsibilities, visit <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/recruitment/>.



Panel Jurisdictions by County

- Western counties
- Eastern counties
- New York City boroughs

Western: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates

Eastern: Albany, Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Montgomery, Nassau, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Oswego, Otsego, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rockland, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, St. Lawrence, Suffolk, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins, Ulster, Warren, Washington, Westchester

New York City: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn (Kings County), Queens, Staten Island (Richmond County)

Executive Summary

This Annual Report from the Citizen Review Panels was influenced not only by the historic events of 2020, but also culminates two decades of advocacy on behalf of the State's children and families. This year marks the 20th year that the Panels have been in operation. Over the past 20 years, the Panels have made numerous recommendations to improve the child welfare system in New York State. The Panels would like to extend their gratitude for the service of all past and present members, as well as guests who provided important information at Panel meetings. The Panels remain committed to improving child welfare and the lives of children in families in NYS.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for significant and extensive systemic change to better support the most vulnerable children and families in the State. While all Americans have felt the effects of COVID-19, this pandemic has been especially challenging for families living in poverty or for families of color.² Anticipated government budget shortfalls will no doubt impact services that help children and families in need, further exacerbating the effect of the pandemic. New York is not immune from this dire financial situation, with an expected \$63 billion deficit next year.³

All of the events of 2020 contribute to both an urgency and an opportunity to reimagine child welfare, to prevent punitive practices toward families in need. At the same time, New York is preparing to implement the federal Family First Prevention Services Act in 2021, landmark legislation that offers states the opportunity to transform state child welfare system by providing substance abuse, mental health, and other prevention and treatment services to prevent children's entry into foster care. The law also seeks to reduce states' reliance on group and residential treatment homes and instead prioritize family-based care.

Now is the time for action. New York's underserved families are in crisis, and they are depending on us. The New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services are ready to be a part of this seismic shift to better serve New York's most vulnerable children and families. The Panels proudly join a growing number of child welfare advocates and professionals calling for an end to the use of the child welfare system as the front door for families in need.

Family Assessment Response (FAR) is "an alternative approach to providing protection to children by engaging families in an assessment of child safety and of family needs, in finding solutions to family problems and in identifying informal and formal supports to meet their needs and increase their ability to care for their children."³⁴

The Panels urge Governor Cuomo and the NYS Legislature to:

- **Revise child maltreatment definitions to differentiate poverty-related neglect from child endangerment/abuse. Fully implement Family Assessment Response (FAR) in all counties and in all poverty-related neglect cases.**
- **Remove educational neglect as an allegation type.**
- **Increase preventive services and community-based supports for families in need through coordination of housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid and Child Health Plus, disability services, educational services, and mental health services along with the full range of funding options under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.**
- **Reduce racial inequities in the child welfare system through targeted policy and practice innovations.**
- **Support efforts from elected officials and other stakeholders to purposefully address child poverty.**

2020 Annual Report

Twenty Years of Recommendations to Improve Child Welfare in NYS



This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the formation of the Panels in State Legislation [Chapter 136 of the Laws of 1999]. For the past 20 years, the Panels have honored their commitment by consistently meeting to examine and discuss prevailing issues, and by issuing an Annual Report, including recommendations to the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the NYS Legislature, the NYS Division of Budget (DOB), and the Office of the Governor.

The Panels would like to thank all the past and present members for devoting their time and energy to improving the lives of the children and families served by child welfare in NYS. The Panels would also like to thank all the partners, OCFS staff, local district and voluntary agency staff, and other guests that have participated in presenting information at Panel meetings or contributed to Annual Reports. Open dialogue has been essential for putting forth meaningful and impactful recommendations to improve child welfare across the State.

The Panels have issued and continue to provide recommendations based on child welfare knowledge, presentations and discussions at Panel meetings, research and analysis, case reviews, and meetings with other stakeholders.

The Panels remain committed to previous recommendations for State implementation and action, including but not limited to:

- Increasing focus on and investment in preventive services and community supports for families in need;
- Increasing funding and support for home visiting, an evidence-based preventive strategy for strengthening families with younger children and preventing maltreatment;
- Re-purposing Title IV-E funding to expand opportunities for scholarships and loan repayment for students in bachelor and master social work degree programs;
- Reducing disproportionate minority representation and promoting race equity in the child welfare system;
- Improving outcomes for children of incarcerated parents; and
- Creating strategic partnerships with universities and investing sufficient funds to support a strong, dedicated, diverse, well-trained and stable child welfare workforce.

CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE CRISIS



The average human service worker is living at or below the poverty line

Prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, NYS was already in a child welfare workforce crisis. Diminishing applicant pools, extremely high rates of staff turnover, numerous vacancies, and unacceptably high caseloads continue to jeopardize the morale of the child welfare workforce and positive outcomes for the children and families that they serve.⁴ “Positive outcomes for children and families involved with the child welfare system are often due to the strong commitment of a dedicated child welfare workforce. The child welfare system is only as good as the people who provide services to children and families and those who manage service delivery.”⁵ New York’s workers are overworked, underpaid, and undervalued. The average human service worker is living at or below the poverty line, with more than half qualifying for some form of public assistance.⁶

A healthy workforce is so crucial to adequately helping children and families, the Panels devoted their 2019 recommendations to improving the child welfare workforce.⁷ Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the Panels and many others in the field, the child welfare workforce continues to be under-supported and under-funded.

Over the years, the Panels' recommendations have been implemented to varying degrees. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the need for **significant, systemic change to better support the most vulnerable children and families in the State** with even more urgency than before. Nothing less than the safety and well-being of children and families is at stake: New York State must rise to this challenge.

To review past Panel reports, visit <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/annual-report/>.

The Catastrophic Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the workforce crisis, in addition to spotlighting previously existing and significant challenges experienced by children and families in historically underserved communities in New York State, as well as across the country. Findings from a recent national survey show the following:⁸

- ➔ Almost 11% of adults in the country reported having difficulty getting enough food to eat for their household, far above the pre-pandemic rate of 3.7%. Black and Latino adults were two times more likely than White adults to report food insufficiencies. Between 7 and 11 million children are living in a household where they don't have enough to eat.
- ➔ Approximately 1 in 6 adults living in a rental property were not current with rent payments as of October 2020. Renters of color were more likely to report not being caught up on rent: 1 in 4 Black renters compared to 1 in 10 White renters. Even more concerning, renters living with children were twice as likely to not be caught up on rent.
- ➔ The unemployment rate has been stagnant since April 2020 at 6.9%—a rate not seen since the 1930's. The rate was demonstrably higher for Black and Latino workers. The majority of jobs lost during the pandemic have been in industries with lower wages, which could include child welfare workers.

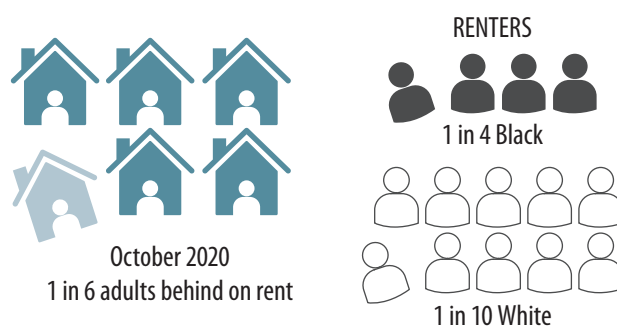
In addition, according to survey results from the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York, one in three foster families in NY have lost jobs or sources of income as a result of the pandemic.⁹

Prior to the pandemic, New York led the country in economic disparity with the top 1% of earners making 44 times more than bottom 99%.¹⁰ One thing is certain—the harshest impacts of the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 have disproportionately impacted people of color and children living in poverty.¹¹ This crisis has exacerbated racial inequities and the suffering of children living in poverty to a level that can no longer be minimized or ignored.

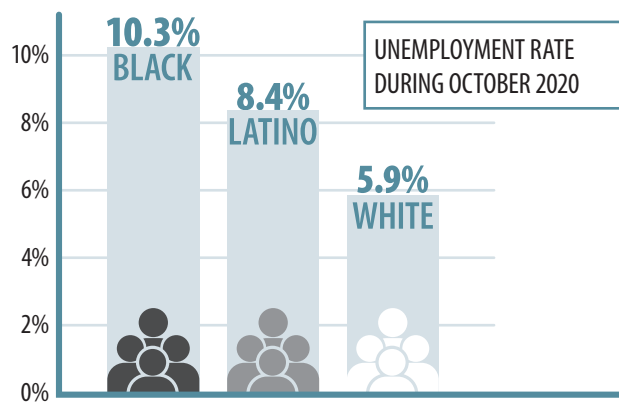
FOOD CRISIS



HOUSING CRISIS



UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2020, November). Tracking the COVID-19 recession's effects on food, housing, and employment hardships. *Special Series COVID Hardship Watch*.

FOSTER FAMILIES IN CRISIS



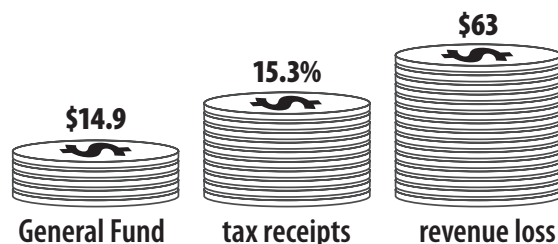
BUDGET CRISIS

OCTOBER 2020 PROJECTION

\$14.9 billion decline

15.3% decline

\$63 billion loss



The NYS Budget Crisis

New York is not immune to this financial crisis. In the October 30, 2020 press release, NYS DOB projects a \$14.9 billion General Fund revenue decline and a 15.3% decline in tax receipts, totaling a loss of almost \$63 billion dollars.¹² Although NYS has taken cost-saving measures such as freezes on hiring, raises, and new contracts, this funding shortfall is further compounded by a loss in revenue from the federal government. Robert Mujica, New York State Budget Director, said, “The federal government must live up to promises that funding will be provided to states. The only alternatives to federal funding are spending reductions—a devastating impact on schools, hospitals, police and fire departments, along with other critical services . . .”¹³ Child welfare—including preventive services—falls under the category of “other critical services.” While child welfare funding shortfalls previously existed, this crisis-level funding shortfall is a direct result of COVID-19. The services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers are on the financial cutting block.

At the same time, New York is on the cusp of implementing the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), legislation designed to strengthen families, reduce the use of congregate care for children, and expand access to evidence-based prevention services. Given the current fiscal climate, New York will benefit from continuing to vigorously pursue and maximize child welfare financing available through FFPSA.

Support for Children and Families in Need

If preventive and supportive services for children and families are cut or reduced, how do they get the help that they need? The current answer, unfortunately, is by entering the child welfare system. Moreover, the families most likely to receive interventions this way are families of color, families living in poverty, or both.¹⁴

Reported neglect is by far the most common type of maltreatment report to state child welfare agencies. Federal statistics show that approximately 75% of “reported maltreated children” come to the attention of the system due to concerns about neglect.¹⁵ While negligence may produce negative impacts on children such as insecurity, attachment issues, social withdrawal, learning disabilities, poor performance in school (among others), neglect is not equivalent to poverty. Yet, poverty-related child maltreatment allegations are often captured under the category of neglect. In New York, this can be defined as a failure to provide adequate:¹⁶

- Food, clothing, or shelter
- Education
- Medical, dental, optometrical or surgical care
- Guardianship
- Supervision
- Emotional support

REPORTED NEGLECT



Nationwide, 75% of cases before child welfare come to the attention of the system due to concerns about neglect

The Child Welfare League of America estimates that neglect is identified in 95% of indicated cases in New York.¹⁷ This is significant as many of these issues can be addressed through preventive services and/or community-based supports. “While lack of supervision, food, clothing, or shelter can surely jeopardize the safety of children, addressing these directly through concrete supports may be more efficient and effective than initiating a child welfare case that punishes families for living in poverty.”¹⁸ “Poverty can make it more challenging for parents to meet certain of their children’s needs. The presence of poverty alone does not mean a child is unsafe, unloved, or that a parent lacks the capacity to care for his or her child.”¹⁹

Many studies conclude that children of color are over-represented in the child welfare system compared to representation in the general population. Nationally, while children of color represent 13.8% of the total child population, they represent 22.6% percent of children identified as victims of child abuse.²⁰ This disparity is even more profound if children progress into foster care placement. According to OCFS, in 2019, while Black children made up 16% of the general child population in New York, they represented 46% of children placed in foster care.²¹

“Many factors may explain the evidence of disproportionality and disparity surrounding racial groups and families with low-income in the child welfare system:

- ➔ Correlation between poverty and maltreatment;
- ➔ Visibility or exposure bias;
- ➔ Limited access to services;
- ➔ Geographic restrictions; and
- ➔ Child welfare professionals knowingly or unknowingly letting personal biases impact their actions or decisions.”²²

“Poverty is disproportionately present in communities of color and that this fact carries direct implications for child welfare.”²³ Knowing these disparities exist, what is New York going to do to eliminate them?

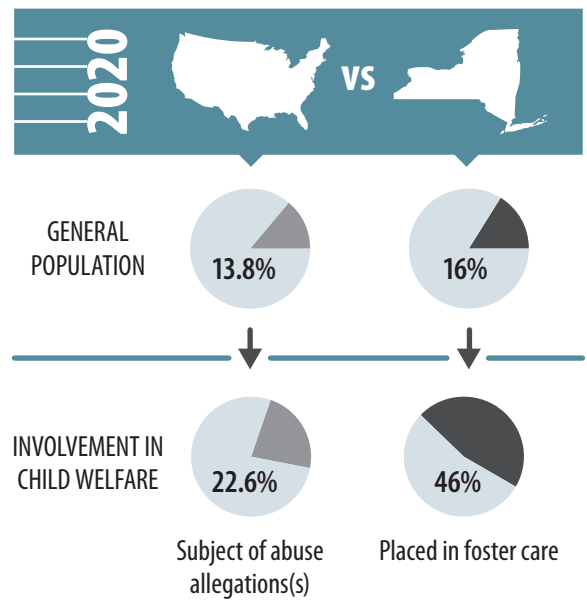
Educational Neglect, Virtual Learning, and the Socio-Economic Divide

As a result of the pandemic, students across the State are experiencing at-home virtual learning to maintain safe, social distancing. For students in upper to middle-class families with dual incomes and school districts with services, there are few barriers to participation; however, for students in families with lower socio-economic status and in school districts with fewer resources, virtual learning presents more of a challenge. Barriers to participation and learning could include:

- ➔ Inadequate access to reliable internet;
- ➔ Inadequate equipment such as a faulty Chromebook;
- ➔ Lack of a quiet, distraction-free space to do work; or
- ➔ Lack of supervision during school hours due to households where the parent(s) must work outside of the home.

Lack of access to technology is an issue that spans all areas of the State. Throughout the pandemic, representatives from Departments of Social Services in rural counties indicated to Panel Members that not all families have access to reliable WiFi/Internet services, and their county budgets have not been increased to purchase tablets, laptops, and other equipment necessary for in-home learning. Parents in urban areas, such as New York City, also report having limited access to reliable internet or faulty equipment.

REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN OF COLOR IN NYS CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM COMPARED TO GENERAL POPULATION



“If we’re in a home working with a family, and we can help resolve a [technology] problem, we will do that, but we don’t fundamentally think that should be a response assigned to the child welfare system.”

—David Hansell,
Commissioner
NYC Administration for
Children’s Services

Because educational neglect is a type of allegation in New York, absence from virtual learning classes has, in some cases, spurred child welfare investigations, regardless of issues related to access. This issue is especially prevalent in New York City. Educators, with few other resources, are reporting parents for educational neglect, if their child has not been actively participating in at-home virtual learning. At a hearing on racial disparity in the child welfare system, NYC Administration for Children’s Services Commissioner David Hansell said, “If we’re in a home working with a family, and we can help resolve a [technology] problem, we will do that, but we don’t fundamentally think that should be a response assigned to the child welfare system.”²⁴

Education and child welfare officials at both the State and local levels have pledged to work together to resolve this issue; however, inequities in access to technology and the link to child welfare reports should be closely monitored and resolved as soon as possible. Child welfare professionals, as well as education professionals, must strive to provide all children and families access to technology in order to eliminate disparity, especially in relation to virtual learning. Certainly, lack of access to technology should not be a reason to involve a family in a child welfare investigation.

Thriving Communities, Thriving Families

The Panels proudly join the growing number of child welfare advocates and professionals calling for a systemic change in child welfare—*time to be proactive, not reactive*. The child welfare system desperately needs to be reimagined to benefit and strengthen families, including families living in poverty and/or families of color.

Research shows “the answer to preventing child abuse relies on establishing several core protective factors: enhanced social connection; quality child care; access to health insurance; engagement with services that reduce stress; and stable employment that provides for basic needs ... but the Child Protective Services system isn’t designed to help improve protective factors at all.”²⁵

To make systemic change the child welfare system must focus on helping families through greater investment in cost-saving, preventive services and resources rather than investigations. An \$1 investment in prevention services can lead to a savings from \$1.79 to as much as \$20.²⁶ Although the safety of children and families is important, it’s not enough. **Families need to thrive.** Families should be provided with services when they need help, rather than punished by a child welfare investigation.

INVEST IN PREVENTION



\$1 TOWARDS PREVENTION CAN SAVE \$20

Investing in preventive services can lead to more money for services and programs that help, not investigate, families in need



Recommendations

Vision without action is simply just words. The Panels urge Governor Cuomo and the NYS Legislature to ACT and do the following:

Revise child maltreatment allegation definitions to differentiate poverty-related neglect from child endangerment/abuse.

Fully implement Family Assessment Response (FAR) in all counties and in all poverty-related neglect cases. In 2019, only 6% of reports received were directed to the FAR investigative track.²⁷ Re-allocate funds spent on investigating poverty-related neglect to address poverty-related neglect. Make efforts to reduce malicious false reporting by anonymous sources. “Poverty is a risk factor for neglect, but poverty does not equate to neglect ... a child should never be removed from his or her family due to poverty alone.”²⁸

Remove educational neglect as an allegation type.

Work with State and local education officials to create alternative methods to support children to stay engaged with schools without making a child welfare report. Re-invest funds spent on investigating educational neglect to address the gap in tools and technology for families to stay connected to schools and keep children learning.

Increase preventive services and community-based supports for families in need through coordination of housing, disability services, educational services, and mental health services along with the full range of funding options under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

Work collaboratively with other systems to holistically help and reinvest in families. Preventing foster care is NOT just the job of child welfare. Continue government supports supplied to families during COVID-19 such as laptops, free WiFi, and free lunch to strengthen families and students in underserved school districts. Utilize the full range of funding options under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act to address families’ needs and prevent entry into care. Trust local districts with flexible funding to determine how to best serve families in need in their communities.

Reduce racial inequities in the child welfare system through targeted policy and practice innovations.

The Panels support OCFS’ efforts to reduce racial inequities through statewide implementation of kin-first firewall policies²⁹ and the blind removal process.³⁰ The Panels also support OCFS’ work to help attain legal representation for parents and implore the State to take measurable action to reduce racial inequity at every stage of families’ involvement in the child welfare system. Recruit and retain professional workers that are representative of the families served. Identify and address implicit biases in child welfare decision-making processes.

Support efforts from elected officials and other stakeholders to purposefully address child poverty.

Enact the Child Poverty Reduction Act (S.9012/A.11063) to establish a child poverty reduction advisory council—with the goal of reducing child poverty in New York by 50% in ten years through measurable outcomes and goals. Work with federal elected officials, such as Senator Charles Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, to increase federal funding to help disadvantaged families. Support initiatives such as “Thriving Families, Safer Children” to be a partner in the re-imagining of the child welfare system to better support families.³¹

“U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand announced \$425,995 in federal funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the Empire Justice Center’s ROC Your Family’s Future -EITC and ACEs Outreach & Education Project, which will help at-risk and low-income children and families in the Greater Rochester Area.”³⁵

Now is the time!

Now is the time for action. It's time to fully address racial inequities in child welfare. It's time to stop punishing families for living in poverty and make every effort to help both children and families.

New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services strongly urge action by all levels of government, advocacy groups, and researchers to review and eliminate outdated and punitive child protective regulations, implement more proactive family supportive services, and eliminate racial disparity in the child welfare system.

“ Committing to a system that takes on poverty-related neglect in humane and effective ways requires active partnering with public and private entities that can, collectively, create the conditions where families can thrive and children are free from harm. It requires partnership with communities that know and understand the needs of their families and children. And, it requires a willingness to rally around families that are vulnerable and struggling with poverty, rather than judging them, labeling that vulnerability as neglect, and pathologizing them. If we truly care about children and families, it's time to stop confusing poverty with neglect and devote ourselves to doing something about it . . . ”³²

—*Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the U.S. Children's Bureau at the Department of Health and Human Services.*



If you are interested in providing feedback on the Panels' 2020 Recommendations, please complete the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NYSCR2020>; send a message at <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/contact-us/index.php>; or scan the QR Code to the left.

Appendices



Summary of Panel Activities

New York City Panel

March 3, 2020

Panel Chair Stanley Capela welcomed Panel members and started the meeting. NYC Administration for Children's Services staff joined the meeting to discuss various topics including potential implications of the Governor's proposed budget, implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), continuous quality improvement, and child welfare statistics trends. OCFS provided updates on a proposal to implement host homes, efforts to support the child welfare workforce, statewide implementation of the FFPSA, Raise the Age bed utilization, and the creation of the Statewide Parent Advisory Group and Statewide Child Fatality Review Team. Panel members discussed new member recruitment strategies and potential future meeting topics. Panel Chair Stanley Capela adjourned the meeting.

Eastern Panel

March 5, 2020

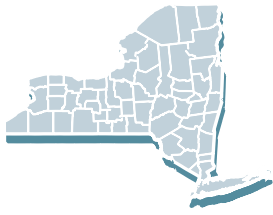
Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy welcomed Panel members and started the meeting. Bill Gettman, CEO of Northern Rivers, and Glenn Liebman, CEO of Mental Health Association in NYS, joined the meeting to discuss the 3 for 5 campaign, supported by the Panels in the 2019 Annual Report. The 3 for 5 campaign is asking for a 3% increase on state contracts with human service agencies for each of the next five years to strengthen and support the child welfare workforce. Cara Brown, Children and Family Services Manager at the Rensselaer County Department of Social Services (DSS), joined the meeting to discuss Rensselaer

County's preparation for implementation of the FFPSA. OCFS provided updates on efforts to support the child welfare workforce, statewide implementation of the FFPSA, Raise the Age bed utilization, and the creation of the Statewide Parent Advisory Group and Statewide Child Fatality Review Team. Panel members discussed new member recruitment strategies and potential future meeting topics. Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy adjourned the meeting.

Western

March 13, 2020

Panel Chair Linda C. Brown welcomed Panel members and started the meeting. Glenn Liebman, CEO of Mental Health Association in NYS, joined the meeting to discuss the 3 for 5 campaign, supported by the Panels in the 2019 Annual Report. Catie Gavin, Erie County DSS Deputy Commissioner, provided an update of work done through a grant from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) and the federal Children's Bureau to improve the child welfare workforce in Erie County. Ms. Gavin also provided an update on Erie County's preparation for FFPSA implementation. OCFS provided updates on the monitoring of CPS work in the region, efforts to support the child welfare workforce, statewide implementation of the FFPSA, Raise the Age bed utilization, and the creation of the Statewide Parent Advisory Group and Statewide Child Fatality Review Team. Panel members discussed new member recruitment strategies and potential future meeting topics. Panel Chair Linda C. Brown adjourned the meeting.



Joint Panel

May 5, 2020

Eastern Panel Chair Sharon Chesna welcomed Panel Members and guests and started the meeting. Senior staff from OCFS joined the Panels to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the New York State child welfare system. OCFS then announced the State will begin utilizing Title IV-E federal funding to provide parents with legal representation and is working on guidance for the field. Panel Members discussed recruitment efforts and meeting topics/guests for upcoming meetings. Panel Chair Sharon Chesna adjourned the meeting.

June 11, 2020

Western Panel Chair Linda C. Brown welcomed Panel Members and guests and started the meeting. Deputy Commissioner Allison Veintimilla joined the meeting to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the Cortland County DSS. Panel Members then participated in a presentation from Redlich Horwitz Foundation (RHF), followed by discussion. Rashida Abuwala, RHF Director, joined the meeting to discuss RHF's response to COVID-19. Jessica Rothkuo, RHF Senior Program Manager, discussed RHF's Family First readiness efforts. Panel members agreed to draft and share a statement in response to racial inequality related issues in the country. Jennifer Goldman, WRI, reviewed materials to support the recruitment of new CRP members. Panel members agreed to continue to discuss and promote CRP awareness and member recruitment. Panel Chair Linda C. Brown adjourned the meeting.

September 25, 2020

NYC Panel Chair Stanley Capela started the meeting. Panel Members reviewed neglect-related data provided by OCFS and then planned for the upcoming meeting on October 15. Panel Members then discussed the focus and recommendations for the upcoming 2020 Annual Report. Panel Members also discussed forming strategic partnerships with NYS Legislators or staff in the Office of the Governor to be a

champion for the recommendations made in the report, as well as marketing strategies such as a press conference or a letter to the editor. Elizabeth Roberts, WRI intern from the University at Albany MSW program, presented strategies and suggestions for new panel member recruitment. Ms. Roberts also reviewed the results of the Panel Member Demographics Survey. Panel Members discussed increasing representation of members with lived experience including former youth from foster care, birth parents, and foster parents; streamlining the appointment process; and committing to identifying potential candidates. Panel Chair Stanley Capela adjourned the meeting.

October 15, 2020

David Haase, OCFS Liaison, provided updates including the current child welfare financial landscape; a newly-issued ban on prone restraints; developments on host home regulations; malicious false reporting; and other topics of interest to the Panels. OCFS Associate Commissioner David Bach also joined the conversation. Representatives from Seneca, Broome, Erie, Westchester and NYC counties joined the meeting. Each provided an overview of the challenges they have faced during this unprecedented year. Panel Members and local representatives discussed how to work together to address some of these challenges. Panel Members added an additional meeting to the schedule to finalize recommendations in the 2020 Annual Report. Meeting was adjourned.

October 29, 2020

Jennifer Goldman, WRI CRP Coordinator, provided an update on candidates that have indicated interest in an appointment to the CRPs. Panel Members discussed the importance of continuing efforts to fill vacancies with a diverse and qualified pool of candidates. Panel Members participated in a guided discussion to finalize recommendations for the 2020 Annual report. Jennifer Goldman reviewed the report development timeline. Meeting was adjourned.

Citizen Review Panel Members 2020

Eastern Panel Members

Sharon M. Chesna, Panel Chair
Executive Director
Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network
of South Central New York, Inc.
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Mary McCarthy, Panel Co-Chair
Director, Social Work
Education Consortium
School of Social Welfare
SUNY Albany
Appointed by the Senate

Kathleen Thornton Halas
Executive Director
Child Care Council of
Westchester, Inc.
Appointed by the Assembly

Eunju Lee
Associate Professor
School of Social Welfare
SUNY Albany
Appointed by the Assembly

Maureen McLoughlin, Esq.
Attorney; Adjunct Professor
Hofstra University
Appointed by the Governor's Office

JoAnn Merriman, MS, PA-C
Physician Assistant
CapitalCare Developmental
Behavioral Pediatrics
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Erin Christopher-Sisk, PhD
Clinical Director
ECS Psychological Services
Appointed by the Senate

Carrie Jefferson Smith
Associate Professor
School of Social Work
Syracuse University
Appointed by the Governor's Office

New York City Panel Members

Stanley Capela, Panel Chair
Corporate Compliance Officer
Vice President for Quality
Management
HeartShare Human Services
of New York
Appointed by the Senate

**David J. Lansner, Esq.,
Panel Co-Chair**
Partner
Lansner & Kubitschek
Appointed by the Assembly

Dr. Jocelyn Brown
Director
Child Advocacy Center
Columbia Presbyterian
Medical Center
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Wayne Ho
President/CEO
Chinese-American Planning Council
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Sania Andrea Metzger, Esq.
Director of Policy
Casey Family Services
Appointed by the Assembly

Mathea C. Rubin
Parent
New York City
Appointed by the Senate

Jorge Saenz de Viteri
Chief Executive Officer
ECE Management NY, Inc.
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Marion White
Senior Program Director
New York Foundling
Child Abuse Prevention
Program (CAPP)
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Western Panel Members

**Linda C. Brown, CSW (retired)
Panel Chair**
Former Assistant Commissioner
New York State Office of Children
and Family Services
Appointed by the Assembly

Sarlyn Tate, Panel Co-Chair
Social Worker
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Melissa A. Cavagnaro, Esq.
Partner
Mattingly Cavagnaro LLP
Matrimonial & Family Law
Appointed by the Senate

Ellen T. Kennedy
Associate Professor of Social Work
Emerita
Buffalo State College
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Todd Sage
Clinical Associate Professor
University of Buffalo School
of Social Work
Appointed by the Assembly

Paula Mazur, MD (resigned 2020)
Associate Professor of
Clinical Pediatrics, Pediatric
Emergency Medicine, and
Child Abuse Pediatrics
Children's Hospital of Buffalo
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Stefan Perkowski (resigned 2020)
Program Director
Child & Adolescent Treatment
Services
Appointed by the Governor's Office

**Dennis Walczyk (resigned 2020)
(retired)**
Chief Executive Officer
Catholic Charities of Buffalo
Appointed by the Assembly

Karl L. Wiggins (resigned 2020)
Vice President of Youth and
Family Services
Gustavus Adolphus Child and
Family Services
Appointed by the Senate

Endnotes

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Federal Law and the Citizen Review Panels

The 1996 amendments to the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) mandate that states receiving federal funding under that legislation create volunteer Citizen Review Panels. The purpose of these Panels is to assess whether state and local agencies are effectively carrying out their child protection responsibilities. The federal statute broadly defines the work of the Citizen Review Panels. The Panels must meet not fewer than once every three months and produce an annual public report containing a summary of their activities and recommendations to improve the child protection system at the state and local levels.

They must evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protective responsibilities under its CAPTA state plan by:

- Examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies;
- Reviewing specific cases, when warranted; and
- Reviewing other matters the Panel may consider important to child protection, consistent with Section 106(c) (A) (iii) of CAPTA.

Following the order of federal CAPTA Amendments in 1996, the New York State Legislature passed Chapter 136 of the Laws of 1999, establishing no less than three Citizen Review Panels, with at least one in New York City. The other Panels were established to serve Eastern and Western New York.

For further information, please visit the Panels' website at www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org or contact:

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