

Eastern Citizen Review Panel for Child Protective Services

Meeting Summary March 4, 2021 • 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Attendees:

Eastern Panel Members

Mary McCarthy

Eunju Lee

Carrie Smith

NYC Panel Members

David Lansner

Western Panel Members

Welfare Research, Inc.

Jennifer Goldman

Darlene Ward

Guests

David Haase, OCFS

John Thompson, OCFS

David Bach, OCFS

Handouts

Eastern CRP Meeting Agenda 3.4.21

CRP Annual Report One-Pager

Welcome – Mary McCarthy

Introduction of panel members and guests.

Updates from OCFS

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.

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.

David Haase provided an update on reports of maltreatment trends.

OCFS also provided an update on the workforce workgroup that was put on hold during COVID. The workgroup reconvened and held a meeting in February with the Department of Civil Service. OCFS' Public Information Office is creating a media toolkit, including an interactive map, where child welfare workers can click on a county and be taken to that county's recruitment page.

Debrief and Next Steps

Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy asked if meetings for Eastern CRP could take place on the second Thursday of the month as members had conflicts with first Thursday of the month. This will start with May meeting, which will also be 1.5 hours to give more time if needed.

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.

Next Meeting May 20, 2021 for 1.5 hours
Meeting adjourned 11:20a.m.