

# Western Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

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**Meeting Summary**  
**March 11, 2022 • 9:00a.m.**

## **Attendees:**

### Western Panel Members

Linda C. Brown  
Ellen Kennedy  
Sarlyn Tate  
Todd Sage

### Welfare Research, Inc.

Darlene Ward  
Ellen Unruh  
Liz Roberts

## Guests

Marie Cannon, Erie County DSS Commissioner  
Catherine Gavin, Erie County DDS First Deputy Commissioner

## **Handouts**

Joint Panels Meeting Minutes 2-1-22

Western Panel Meeting Agenda 3-11-22

“Blending and Braiding Funds to Support Home Visiting,” Prevent Child Abuse New York

“Child Abuse or Maltreatment Reports to the Central Register Must Include the Caller’s Name and Contact Information,” Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition New York

## **Welcome – Linda C. Brown**

### **Updates from OCFS**

OCFS noted the protocol for screening malicious calls made to the Statewide Central Register (SCR). If suspected to be malicious, calls are routed to the SCR supervisor (all calls are recorded). The supervisor emphasizes to the caller the ramifications of false reporting, including potential criminal prosecution. If deemed malicious, OCFS sends the report to the county for investigation. Counties may initiate prosecution of malicious callers; OCFS was not aware of the number or outcomes of prosecutions of malicious callers at the county level at this time.

With regards to recent changes in CPS policy reflected in revisions to the CPS manual, OCFS stated these changes are covered in a statewide training through WebEx, and there is the possibility of refresher courses. From there, it is the counties’ responsibility to implement practice changes.

Regarding trauma-informed practice responses, OCFS focuses on evidence-based practices and continue to look for the right model to follow based on the needs of families. Pilot practices in selected counties have been successful for 11 years, and they are looking at when to implement them throughout the state.

### **Discussion with Erie County**

Commissioner Cannon started the conversation by responding directly to the CRP’s 2021 Annual Report, responding to each of the recommendations made. Erie County continues to review the

delineation of poverty and neglect allegations, noting that 51% of children live in poverty. The county has seen great success with Family First implementation, which First Deputy Commissioner Gavin discussed later on. The Commissioner went on to describe the difficulties with the funding for and conditions of the child welfare workforce. About two years ago, in correlation with the pandemic, there was about a 34% workforce turnover—that rate is down to just 10% today. The Commissioner accredited this success to a focus on leadership, focusing on the families, and a transition to smaller caseloads.

First Deputy Commissioner Gavin then presented an overview of Erie County's Family First implementation. For the first time in Erie County history, there are more kinship placements than those in certified foster homes. Ms. Gavin noted that the number of congregate care placements continue to go down as well. This success is accredited to an investment in and building the capacity for preventive services. These services include contracting with agencies for evidence-based interventions; the agencies continue to roll out trainings and practices throughout the county.

### **Wrap Up**

Panel members noted how helpful it was to hear a direct response to their Annual Report from Erie County and would like to hear from other counties in the Western region. For continued success in future discussions with counties and OCFS, Panel members would like to see clear agendas, strong facilitators, and respectful conversations, even when there are differing opinions. WRI wrapped up by providing updates about the upcoming meetings, and will follow-up with other Western counties for future discussions.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 10:30a.m.

**Next CRP Meetings:** Western Panel meeting May 13, 2022 at 10:00a.m.