

Western Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

Meeting Summary September 23, 2022 • 9:00 AM

Attendees:

Western Panel Members

Sarlyn Tate (Co-Chair)

John Treahy

Ellen Kennedy

Todd Sage

Melissa Cavagnaro

Welfare Research, Inc.

Darlene Ward

Liz Roberts

Felicia LaClair

Jeesoo Jung

NYC Panel Members

David Lansner

Handouts

Welcome – Sarlyn Tate

Meeting commenced 9:04 AM

Guided Discussion: Current State of NY Child Welfare System

Mrs. Sarlyn Tate led the discussion by asking the first question - Do you think that the child welfare system's responsibility to protect children from harm conflicts with its responsibility to serve families? If so, how would you resolve the conflict? Mrs. Ellen Kennedy stated that in earlier years, the two responsibilities were a united front. It was a social worker's duty to protect children, but also provide and assist families with resources as needed. She noted today's system is vastly different where much policing is being applied. Mr. David Lansner noted during his previous discussion with the NYC Panel, they have talked about taking funding from ACS provided services centers and shifting that money to hospitals and schools where they can provide similar services but not under the ACS/CPS umbrella. Mrs. Kennedy made note of the prior Homemaker program implemented through CPS in previous years, and how it effectively gave insight into the ongoings inside a family's household while building a rapport and ensuring the services needed in the home were being provided. Mr. Todd Sage informed, that while the Homemaker program is a great tool to be utilized, we currently have a shift in culture where many people don't want someone within their household.

Mrs. Tate proceeded onto the second facilitated question - There is an agreement among many advocates for dismantling the current child welfare system of racism and oppression, however, if we were to dismantle it, what system or structure would be re-imagined? A.) Who would intervene? Who is responsible for filing a report? B.) Would there be steps to take prior to filing a report? Would there be an intermediary? Mr. Sage responded there will always be a need for the structure in place while noting his vision would be to put more social workers in higher touch points such as schools, churches, and medical settings. Those individuals would be able to see on a more frequent basis, what needs are going unmet, and how to combat those unmet needs.

Many panel members agreed, but questioned how will these families get help if not through a report to CPS? Mr. Sage noted a referral system could be implemented through educators, medical professionals, and other community touch points versus making an abuse report, which would refer families to programs and resources needed.

The Panel moved to the third question - What would be an appropriate distinction between poverty and neglect? Are there intersections with poverty where there is a responsibility for ensuring the child's well-being? Panel members came to a consensus that families shouldn't be reported due to poverty, but rather referred to resources and programs that can aid in assistance. Mrs. Melissa Cavagnaro reported she's worked with counties that have assisted families in addressing these issues and helping them with resource applications, while also dealing with counties that would rather have a supervision court order to initiate facilitation.

Annual Report Recommendations

Mr. Sage led with the idea to request action research and set up a Homemakers pilot. The idea behind this is being able to show OCFS the meaning and data behind the program, as well as the cost savings. He noted it's easier for the legislators and OCFS to be shown a model and work out the issues. The Panel liked the idea adding, it may be useful to gain support from local county commissioners and would like to be able to set up future meetings to see where their needs, and support lies.

School of Social Work Curriculum Update

Mr. Sage gave a brief report on the previous discussion with Dean Alford about the need for child welfare-specific education. He stated the idea was warmly welcomed by the Dean and meeting attendees but dually noted the school has other focuses at this time. He suggested drafting a letter to the Dean regarding the panel's eagerness to support this process and how they can be supportive. Panel members agreed and invited Mr. Sage to draft a letter for review.

Wrap-Up

WRI let the Panel members know the chair elections would be moved to a ballot poll so other members can nominate and participate, and the panel was in consensus. The Panel decided they would ideally like to meet with the county commissioners prior to year's end and WRI would set that up.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:36 AM

Next CRP Meetings:

- Recommendations Subcommittee Meeting: 10/6 | 9:00 AM
- Joint Panel Meeting: 10/13 | 5:00 PM