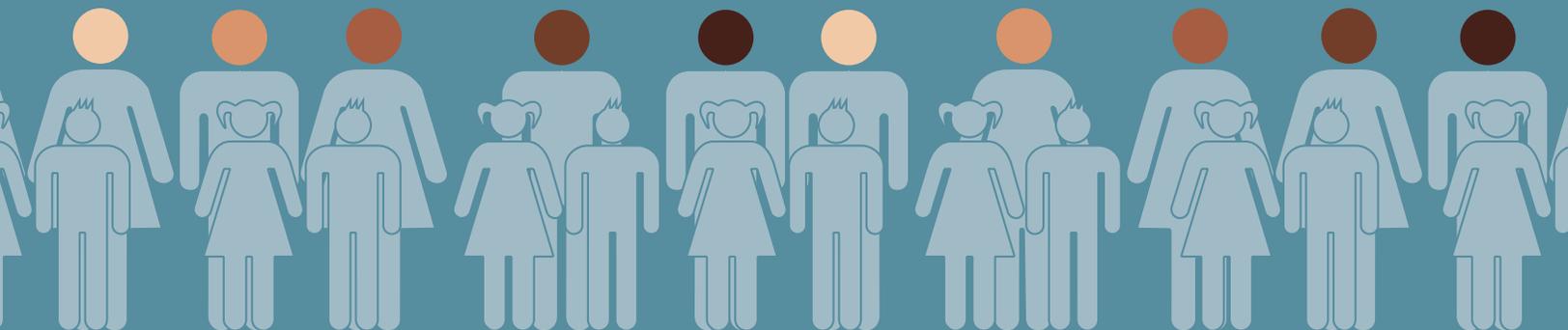


Supporting Child Welfare Workers

Invest in the workforce, invest in NYS' children and families

New York State Citizen Review Panels 2019 Annual Report



Supporting Child Welfare Workers

Invest in the workforce

Invest in NYS' children and families

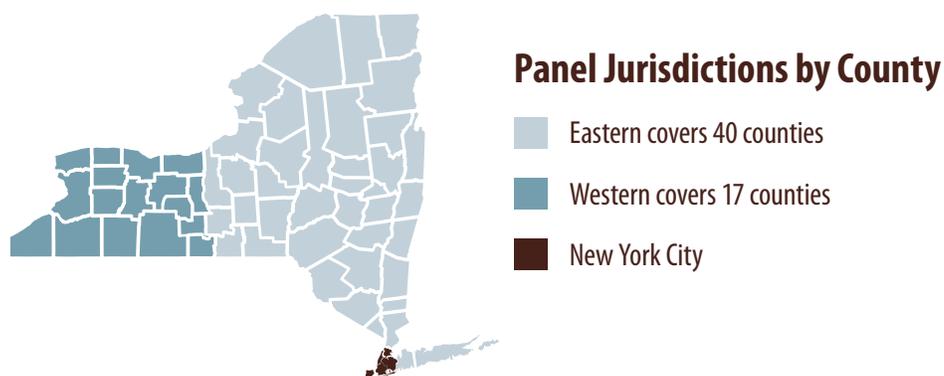
NYS Citizen Review Panels

The New York State (NYS) Citizen Review Panels (the Panels) for Child Protective Services (CPS) are important conduits for public sentiment and offer an 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 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.

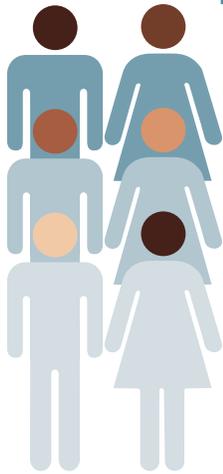
The Panels are authorized by both State and Federal law to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of the state and local departments of social services and, where appropriate, the outcome of specific cases. The Panels are authorized to hold public hearings and to evaluate the extent to which 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 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. The Panels continue to identify potential Panel members.

For summaries of Panel activities and a list of Panel members, refer to the Appendices.



Foreword

Each year, the NYS Citizen Review Panels (the Panels) for Child Protective Services (CPS) honor their commitment to improve NYS' child welfare system by issuing an Annual Report that includes recommendations to the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the NYS Legislature, the NYS Division of Budget (DOB), and the Governor's Office. In previous years, the Panels have issued a number of recommendations based on: prior child welfare knowledge; presentations and discussions at Panel meetings; research; and meetings with other stakeholders. **The Panels remain committed to previous recommendations, including the ones described below.**



Home Visiting

In the 2018 Annual Report, the Panels made the carefully selected recommendation to “devote funding and support to evidence-based home visiting programs by investing \$40.5 million.”¹ Home visiting is a cost-effective, evidence-based strategy for strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect. The recommendation included funding for evidence-based home visiting programs, the Home Visiting Coordination Initiative, and the First 1,000 Days on Medicaid Home Visiting Pilot. While the total recommended amount of funds was not in the FY 2019-2020 State budget, the Panels noted that some funding was included in the State budget for home visiting related projects, and that OCFS continues to support these programs and their positive outcomes. The Panels strongly support continued expansion of this evidence-based intervention and again this year recommend increasing the state's fiscal commitment to sustaining and growing home visiting programs.

Informing Mandated Reporters of Case Outcomes

In addition to home visiting funding, the Panels also recommended that the Child Welfare Information System, also known as CONNECTIONS, automatically generate a letter to mandated reporters of child abuse and/or neglect, providing a summary of the findings of a case upon supervisor approval and closure.

Prior to the Panels raising this issue, the local departments of social services (LDSS) were responsible for providing such letters upon request via mail, which resulted in an inconsistent distribution of the letters to mandated reporters.

On October 9, 2019, OCFS issued a Local Commissioners Memorandum (19-OCFS-LCM-24) detailing the following: “After the closure of a CPS investigation reported by a mandated reporter, a system-generated email with an attached Summary of Findings letter will be sent to the email address (of the mandated reporter) recorded by SCR staff in the intake report.”

This procedural change will automate the process so that mandated reporters are better and more consistently informed of case outcomes, potentially impacting future reporting. The process also will assist LDSS in complying with NYS Social Services Law [SSL 422(4)(A)] and adhering to the New York State Child Protective Services Manual.

Executive Summary

Supporting the children and families of New York requires a strong, dedicated, well-trained and stable child welfare workforce. At this juncture, however, the State's child welfare system is facing a workforce crisis. Limited fiscal resources, dwindling applicant pools, and unhealthy staff turnover rates lead to high case/workloads for child welfare workers. High case/workloads have been shown to impact:

- Worker retention;
- Timeliness and quality of services to children and families;
- Worker and client relationship building; and
- Most importantly, the safety and well-being of New York's vulnerable children.

OCFS is leading a workgroup to examine current recruitment practice, identify barriers, and strategize remedies; however, there are additional resources and opportunities that could be tapped. In addition, New York is in the process of implementing conditions specified in the recently enacted federal Family First Prevention Services Act, which will greatly impact the child welfare workforce and service delivery in the State.

With these factors considered, the New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services recommend the following:

- Invest a three percent increase on contracts and rates for human service organizations over each of the next five years, as outlined by the current 3 for 5 Campaign;
- Maximize federal IV-E dollars and State funds to expand opportunities for scholarships and loan repayment for students in Bachelor and Master social work degree programs;
- Expand university-agency partnerships; and
- Continue to explore, prioritize and implement strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of child welfare workers.

Now is the time for decision makers in New York State to intensely focus on the stabilization of the child welfare workforce. The safety and well-being of our vulnerable children and families depend on it.

“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.”²

— Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

2019 Annual Report

Why Workforce? Why Now?

This year, the Panels are making recommendations to focus on the stabilization and enrichment of the child welfare workforce. The New York State child welfare system is facing an undeniable workforce recruitment and retention crisis. High caseloads and workloads, constant turnover and vacancies impact the morale of child welfare workers and create crises in effectively providing services to the State's children and families, jeopardizing successful outcomes. The well-being of our vulnerable families is urgent enough, but recent Federal legislation, Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) spotlights the pressing need to strengthen New York's child welfare workforce, as detailed below.

This report and accompanying recommendations explore what contributes to the multiple issues plaguing the State's child welfare workforce, and recommends remedies.

"Human services workers—most of whom are paid through contracts with the state government—represent 20 percent of our State's workforce and deliver services to more than 2.5 million New Yorkers."³

—Michelle Jackson,
Deputy Executive Director,
Human Services
Council of New York

Family First Prevention Services Act

The Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), signed into law in February 2018, reforms child welfare service delivery across the country, placing focus on evidence-based services to prevent children from entering foster care, keeping families together, and prioritizing kinship and/or foster family placements over congregate care placements. If a child has higher needs requiring placement in a residential setting, there will be restrictions on the length of stay for the child. Also, at least 50% of services provided to the child must be evidence-based in order for states to be federally reimbursed for those services. There are additional requirements to evaluate the delivery of these evidence-based services, including model fidelity and effectiveness, and accreditation through organizations like the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations or Council on Accreditation.

NYS' implementation of FFPSA in September 2021 will greatly impact the child welfare workforce, placing additional demands on workers to assure children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate for each child's needs. In addition, it requires the education of the workforce in approved evidence-based practices. Universities in other states have begun to infuse evidence-based theory and services into Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work curricula with the intent to better prepare future graduates to work in the field.⁴ For New York, this represents a largely untapped opportunity to increase partnerships with universities, in order to strengthen the workforce as it implements FFPSA.

The requirements of FFPSA will drive fewer placements into congregate care, resulting in some savings at the LDSS level. This may provide funding to reinvest in the workforce and its service to vulnerable families.

Critical Needs of New York's Child Welfare Workforce

High caseloads and workloads are a known issue in New York State. When a LDSS or voluntary agency experiences significant vacancies in its workforce, this leads to higher caseloads and workloads for existing staff. In 2006, OCFS conducted a statewide child welfare workload study, at the direction of the Governor, identifying the following caseload goals:⁵

- **Child protective service**—12 investigations per worker per month
- **Foster care**—11 to 12 children per worker per month
- **Preventive**—12 to 16 families per worker per month.

NYS does not have statutory or regulatory caseload requirements; however, caseloads in many counties are estimated to be well over the established caseload goals.⁶

Vacancies and high case/workloads have negative impacts for children and families including but not limited to “worker retention; timeliness, continuity, and quality of service delivery, family engagement and relationship-building; and safety and permanency outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, and families.”⁷

Improve Recruitment of Entry-Level Workers

Both LDSS and voluntary agencies in New York find it challenging to recruit new workers to fill vacancies in child welfare related positions.⁹ LDSS and voluntary agencies can potentially invest significant amounts of money and time on job postings that go unfilled, recruiting, and interviewing.

In addition to lower pay, described in more detail under “Enhance Retention of Caseworkers,” stakeholders in the field have identified other impediments to reaching a diverse and qualified pool of applicants. For example, potential applicants interested in working in this field may face obstacles to obtaining a bachelor’s degree, a minimum requirement for many positions. This can include factors such as tuition costs, needs as a non-traditional student, and other socioeconomic factors. Current employees who want to advance in the field may face similar obstacles if they want to pursue a baccalaureate or master’s degree in social work, which provides quality preparation for the work. Lived experience should be considered with appropriate weight as well as academic accomplishments.

Particularly for applicants seeking positions in LDSS, the constraints of the civil service system can prove to be challenging. Positions require strong performance on qualifying exams, yet the offering of those exams rarely aligns with the timing of vacancies. Residents of rural areas can encounter hardships in accessing the exams, as significant travel is required and/or exams are not frequently held in their area.

Traditional avenues for job postings include websites and news media. While these outlets may reach a broad range of potential applicants, child welfare organizations may be unintentionally excluding pools of applicants without access to internet or newspapers, or who typically live in rural or economically challenged neighborhoods.

OCFS has convened a work group with child welfare stakeholders to examine current recruitment practice, identify barriers, and strategize remedies to increase the pool of applicants for child welfare related positions.¹⁰ **The Panels commend OCFS for taking on this work and encourage them to continue to prioritize solutions.**

Enhance Retention of Existing Caseworkers

Failure to retain existing child welfare workers also has negative impacts on the child welfare system, both financially and on outcomes for children and families. According to a report by the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies, the statewide voluntary agency turnover rate is estimated to be 38%.¹¹ Turnover rates of 12% or below are considered to be optimal and healthy; New York’s rate for voluntary agencies is estimated to be more than three times that and also above the national average of 30%.¹² “Even higher average rates of turnover have been noted among child welfare trainees: 46-54 percent.”¹³

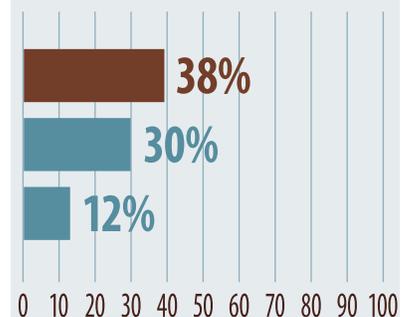
Voluntary agency: an organization other than a LDSS that is authorized to provide child welfare related services.

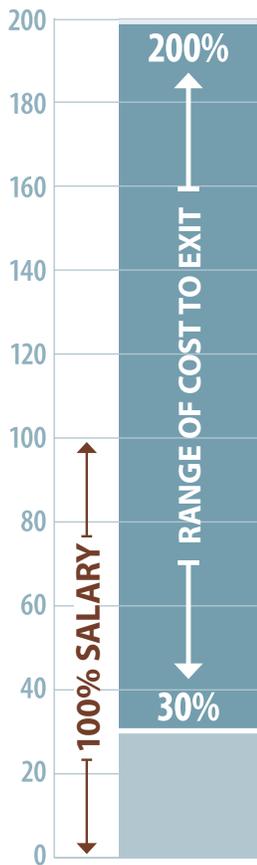
Caseload: the number of cases assigned to an individual worker at any given time.

Workload: the amount of work required to successfully manage assigned cases and bring them to resolution.⁸

Voluntary Agency Turnover Rate

38% New York State
30% National Average
12% Optimal





Range of Cost When a Caseworker Leaves a Job

"Every time a caseworker leaves, the cost to the child welfare agency is 30 to 200% of the exiting employee's annual salary."

—Casey Family Programs

Secondary trauma: the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand traumatic experiences of another.¹⁷

The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute estimates that each time a worker leaves an agency, it costs approximately \$54,000 in lost investments.¹⁴ Agencies and LDSS may then also have additional cost of overtime to cover existing caseloads, worker unemployment, and investments in hiring new staff. "Every time a caseworker leaves, the cost to the child welfare agency is 30 to 200% of the exiting employee's annual salary."¹⁵ This strains the already tight budgets of these organizations.

Caseworkers leave positions, and sometimes the field, for a variety of reasons. Stakeholders in the child welfare field attribute caseworker turnover to the following reasons, among others:¹⁶

- ➔ Low salaries
- ➔ Stress and burnout due to complex and high case/workloads and secondary trauma
- ➔ Inadequate supervision
- ➔ Unrealistic expectations of the nature of casework
- ➔ Lack of positive and diverse organization culture
- ➔ Negative public perception of child welfare workers

When comparing a social worker salary to other helping professions, the national median annual wage is noticeably lower. This is even more so for workers directly interacting with youth. Executives in New York's voluntary agencies have anecdotal information that many of their direct care workers have second and third jobs in order to attain the income level they need.

"As the economy has improved, it has become more difficult to recruit and retain staff given the current starting and average salary levels our agency is able to pay. The improved general employment rates, while welcomed by all, reflect increased competition for fewer skilled, capable staff. The changes in minimum wages for selected fields of employment will greatly exacerbate these challenges."¹⁸

Agencies in some areas have noted they lose workers to other fields such as fast food restaurants.¹⁹

2018 National Median Annual Salary²¹

Registered Nurse	\$68,450
Community Service Manager	\$64,680
Police Officer	\$63,380
Human Resource Specialist	\$59,000
Community Health Educator	\$53,000
Social Worker	\$46,890
Mental Health Counselor	\$44,630
Youth Worker	\$28,840

"I have a young person in a foster care group home who just got a job as an assistant shift supervisor at the local Starbucks," Bill Gettman, CEO of Northern Rivers Family of Services, told NYN Media. "He makes \$16.85 an hour, not bad. . . . The staff who drives him to work and picks him up makes \$13 an hour."²⁰ — William Gettman, CEO, Northern Rivers

This unfortunate salary trend sends the message that the professionals doing some of the most challenging and complex work with at-risk children and families are undervalued. Here are some staggering facts:²²

- ➔ More than half of NYS' human service workforce qualifies for some form of public assistance;
- ➔ The average NYS human services worker is living at or below the poverty line; and
- ➔ It has been ten years since NYS last provided a cost-of-living-adjustment to rates and contracts.

The Panels support the work of the non-profit human services agencies, such as the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) and other stakeholder groups to increase salaries for caseworkers and direct care workers so they are able to earn a living wage.²³ **The Panels join nonprofit coalitions from across NYS in requesting that the Governor and NYS Legislature invest in a 3% increase on contracts and rates for human service organizations for each of the next five years.**²⁴

*"Underfunding agencies affects New York's children and families, both the people served by and the people employed in human services. Our agencies strengthen families and work to maximize every child's potential and that requires a dedicated professional workforce."*²⁵ — *Jim Purcell, President and CEO, COFCCA*

Promoting Caseworker Well-Being

Demanding caseloads, life and death decisions, and a high degree of uncertainty are all factors that lead to burnout and turnover within the State's child welfare workforce. Providing child welfare services is challenging and can lead to physical and mental health consequences similar to those of someone who directly experiences trauma. "It is important that the field of child welfare supports the health and wellness of the environments in which its professionals work...Child welfare workers are at risk of experiencing secondary or vicarious trauma due to the scope and severity of the cases they manage."²⁶

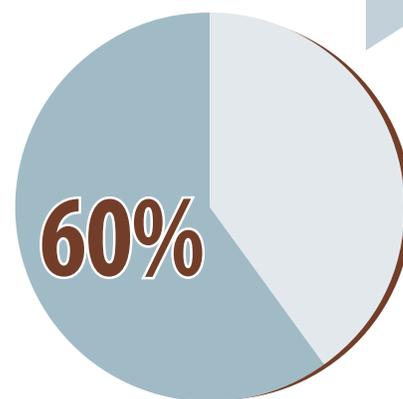
The Mayo Clinic defines job burnout as "work-related stress—a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity."²⁷ Child welfare workers experience higher rates of burnout than many other helping professions, increasing the likelihood that those workers will leave the child welfare agency or LDSS.²⁸ Workers who have been employed three to five years and carry higher caseloads are more likely to experience burnout.²⁹

Skilled management support is key. "The supervisory support function sustains morale and encourages employee professional sense of worth."³⁰ When supervisors provide no more than a stamp of approval on reports, caseworkers can feel isolated and unsupported. OCFS has made great strides in providing coaching training to supervisors that supports a multi-faceted approach to supervision. This encourages quality, useful feedback on casework, thereby instilling a sense of confidence in caseworkers. **The Panels support OCFS' ongoing work to improve statewide trainings for supervisors.**

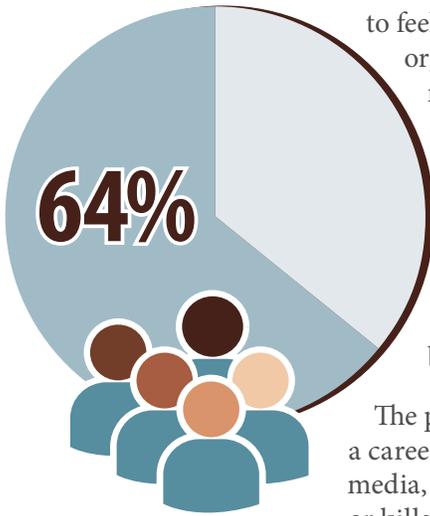
Along with feeling unsupported, new and inexperienced caseworkers in the field may be unprepared for what a job in child welfare entails, such as long hours, high caseloads and workloads, and the stress that goes along with supporting populations with multiple needs. This can lead to quick exits of newly hired workers, resulting in additional losses of recruiting and training investments. Some strategies to address this include showing videos during the interview process that simulate the demands of the job, job shadowing, or field placements during



Percentage of Human Service Workers Who Qualify for Public Assistance



Workforce Burnout Related To Organizational Demands



Sixty-four percent of child welfare workforce burnout is related to organizational demands such as bureaucracy and paperwork, rather than client-related.

“At the center of a caseworker’s day-to-day is a significant amount of manual and repetitive and at times mundane work to remain compliant with government policies. The result: not enough time spent supporting children and families at critical moments.”³³

—Leah Dienger,
American City and County

Bachelor or Master in Social Work studies. At the OCFS Human Services Training Center, new caseworkers are immersed in realistic training scenarios related to child welfare or juvenile justice. Attention should be given to new worker selection that focuses on hiring people with basic competencies known to be important for this work.

Healthy organizational culture and climate have been shown to be a strong predictor of job satisfaction and retention.³¹ In order to create a positive work climate and culture, staff need to feel supported, valued and safe—not just while out working in the field, but within their organization’s work culture. Sixty-four percent of child welfare workforce burnout is related to organizational demands such as bureaucracy and paperwork, rather than client-related.³² Changes such as flexible work hours piloted in some New York jurisdictions have shown dividends for creating a positive work climate.

Organizational culture can have a profound impact on an agency’s ability to attract and retain a diverse workforce. If an organization is not diverse and/or perceived to not value diversity, staff from under-represented groups may feel uncomfortable and leave the organization. It has also been shown that a diverse child welfare workforce is better equipped to respond to the families served by the child welfare system.³⁴

The public image of child welfare work also acts as a deterrent to beginning or continuing a career in child welfare. Typically, when a child welfare organization is featured in the media, it is because a child known to the LDSS or voluntary agency was seriously injured or killed. Child welfare workers can feel a sense of blame, although they might not have been directly involved in the case. “This perceived blame can heighten workers’ feelings of job insecurity and cause them to consider leaving their jobs.”³⁵ In addition, child welfare workers may experience “stigma-by-association” as they work with children and families on a daily basis that have been socially devalued and stigmatized themselves.³⁶ There is rarely a counterbalance of positive stories acknowledging the hard work that is a daily part of child welfare practice. **OCFS is working with other agencies and stakeholders to support positive media coverage of child welfare; the Panels encourage the continuation of these efforts to more accurately depict the work of the field.**

The Impact of Worker Turnover on NYS Children and Families

The unhealthy turnover of caseworkers directly impacts children and families in New York State, leading to longer stays in foster care, and delayed reunifications of children with their birth parents, finalizations of adoption, or other permanent arrangements.

Higher rates of turnover can produce negative outcomes for the children and families such as:³⁷

- Reduced ability to engage families and to foster relationships between workers and children and families;
- Failure to meet professional casework standards for timeliness and quality;
- Increased time to permanency and decreased rates of stability for children in care;
- Increased rate of recurring maltreatment of children; and
- Increased number of foster care placements.

Many of these negative outcomes for children and families could be ameliorated by focusing attention and resources on the workers supporting those families. The time is now to take significant and strategic action to support the child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for NYS’ most vulnerable children and families.

Solutions to New York’s Child Welfare Workforce Crisis

Given the current fiscal climate and implementation of FFPSA, New York State can benefit from repurposing funding streams and expanding partnerships, in order to develop and institute new recruitment and retention strategies.

New York has traditionally accessed federal IV-E dollars to subsidize trainings for existing caseworkers.³⁸ While the Panels recognize that ongoing training for caseworkers and supervisors is vital, the Panels urge the State to consider repurposing some of these Federal dollars and increase State dollars for additional financial support of scholarships and loan repayment programs for social work students. An example would be expanding the NYS Licensed Social Worker Loan Forgiveness Program with a dedicated fund for child welfare workers, which in the 2017-2018 fiscal year provided loan forgiveness to only 259 licensed social workers.³⁹

Supporting and subsidizing social work education among child welfare workers has multiple benefits:

“Research shows child welfare workers with a BSW or MSW are far less likely to experience burnout, are more likely to remain on the job even in challenging conditions, and feel more prepared for the work they do. Research also indicates that education incentives—such as tuition reimbursement, stipend programs, and state access to title IV-E funds to subsidize child welfare worker education programs—are commonly utilized as effective recruitment strategies for child welfare workers.”⁴⁰

The Workforce Development Framework,⁴² developed by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, provides a prime example of university-agency partnerships. Universities and child welfare agencies or tribes partner together to implement strategies that address the following components, improving service delivery:

- Community engagement
- Inclusivity/racial equity
- Recruitment and selection
- Education and professional development
- Supervision
- Leadership
- Workload
- Work conditions and benefits
- Practice supports
- Organizational culture and climate

Preliminary results from Workforce Excellence sites are promising.⁴³ The Panels strongly urge the State to consider expanding university-agency partnerships across the State to address workforce-related issues. Social work education and specialized IV-E stipend training have been shown to increase retention among child welfare workers.⁴⁴

“Individuals rely on [human service workers] to fulfill their dreams of independence and families rely on them to provide their loved ones with the quality care they need to keep them safe and thriving.”⁴¹

— Glenn Liebman, CEO,
Mental Health Association in NYS

Recommendations

The Panels recommend the following immediate actions to the Governor, NYS Legislature, and State agencies:

“Many workers in the sector are forced to rely on the same public assistance programs as the clients they serve. Low wages lead to a crisis in recruitment and retention as high employee turnover reduces the quality of care the sector is able to provide.”⁴⁵

—Michelle Jackson,
Deputy Executive Director,
Human Services
Council of New York

- **Invest a three percent increase on contracts and rates for human service organizations over each of the next five years, as outlined by the current 3 for 5 Campaign.**
- **Maximize federal IV-E dollars and State funds to expand opportunities for scholarships and loan repayment for students in Bachelor and Master social work degree programs working or committing to work in child welfare.**
- **Expand university-agency partnerships by:**
 - Increasing initiatives such as the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) Workforce Excellence Sites;
 - Infusing evidence-based practice into existing curricula to enhance New York State compliance with Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) regulation and better prepare recent social work graduates to succeed in the new child welfare environment; and
 - Expanding opportunities for field placements in child welfare agencies.
- **Continue to explore, prioritize and implement concrete and practical partnerships and strategies to improve recruitment and retention of new caseworkers including:**
 - When possible, provide alternate paths of hiring through the civil service system including rolling open vacancies and position qualifications based on experience rather than solely on exam test scores;
 - Engage potential applicants through non-traditional means such as reaching out to communities of faith and posting job opportunities at facilities openly available to members of the community like libraries, community centers, or bus stops;
 - Provide ongoing practical trainings, such as coaching and mentoring, for case work supervisors; and
 - Support positive media coverage of child welfare related work.

The Panels commend OCFS for recognizing the urgent need to address crises within the child welfare workforce. With the upcoming implementation of FFPSA, the field of child welfare in New York State will experience a sea change that, while challenging, will offer an opportunity for the critical issue of workforce development and support to rise as a priority. As a policy and budgetary focus, there must be statewide recognition that a strong and healthy workforce is key to the State’s goal of strong and healthy families.

“[Social work] means accompanying a human that you never would have met had you chosen a different profession on their powerful life journey. It means building meaningful connection with resilient and fascinating individuals. It means the precious opportunity to learn from people very different than you. It means experiencing the struggle with someone who so generously trusts you. It means sitting quietly next to someone in a moment of hardship and realizing that you do not need words to feel someone’s intense gratitude for your presence.” — *An excerpt from “What It Really Means to Be a Social Worker.”*⁴⁶

Appendices



Summary of Panel Activities

New York City Panel

March 19, 2019

Panel Chair David Lansner convened the meeting. Social Media Consultant Alicia Peet provided an update on the social media pages and encouraged Panel members to interact and share those pages to increase public awareness of the Panels. Several staff from the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) joined the meeting to provide updates on Raise the Age, workforce improvement and predictive analytics. Chris Gottlieb and Joyce MacMillan from the Statewide Central Register (SCR) Coalition reported on proposed legislation. The Panel members agreed to sign on to a letter of support for the proposed legislation. Lisa Gordon and Jennifer Maurici from OCFS provided updates on Family First implementation. The Panel members then elected Stanley Capela as Chair and David Lansner as Co-Chair. Panel Chair Stanley Capela thanked guests and adjourned the meeting.

April 30, 2019

Panel Chair Stanley Capela convened the meeting. Phoebe Rosen and Consolata Mogeni from ACS provided an update on the employee wellness program. Jennifer Maurici and Lisa Gordon from OCFS discussed Family First implementation and the opening of the new training center. The Panel members approved the first draft of the letter of support for the SCR Reform Bills S6427A/A8060A. Panel Chair Stanley Capela thanked guests and adjourned the meeting.

September 17, 2019

Panel Chair Stanley Capela convened the meeting. The Panel members reviewed a draft recruitment flyer for potential Panel members. The focus of the Annual Report was discussed and Panel Members chose to focus on child welfare workforce improvement. Shelly Aubertine-Fiebich provided updates from OCFS, which included Raise the Age implementation, Erin's Law, and Family First Act implementation. The Panel members discussed the upcoming Child Welfare Workforce Round Table. Panel Chair Stanley Capela adjourned the meeting.

Eastern Panel

March 22, 2019

Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy convened the meeting. Bridget Walsh from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy provided an update on the First 1,000 Days on Medicaid Home Visiting Pilot. Social Media Consultant Alicia Peet reviewed how to share content from the Facebook and Twitter accounts to increase awareness of the work of the Panels. Anya Mukarji-Connolly from the SCR Coalition reported on proposed legislation to reform the SCR. The Panel members agreed to sign on to a letter of support for the new proposed legislation. Lisa Gordon and Jennifer Maurici provided OCFS updates and announced that the new training center will be open soon. Panel members decided to vote on Panel chair and co-chair via email. Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy acknowledged the resignation of Panel Chair Edward Blatt, thanked him for his dedication, and then adjourned the meeting.

May 2, 2019
(combined Eastern & Western
Panel meeting)

Eastern Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy convened the meeting. Annette Semanchin-Jones from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) reported on the recent NCWWI Award that was granted to Erie County, a five-year project focusing on the child welfare workforce by partnering Erie County Department of Social Services with the University of Buffalo School of Social Work. Lisa Gordon and Jennifer Maurici of OCFS reported on initiatives to improve the workforce, the progress of Family First implementation, and the reinvigorated Safe Sleep campaign. The Eastern and Western Panel Members approved of the first draft of the letter of support for the SCR Reform Bills S6427A/A8060A. Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy thanked the guests and adjourned the meeting.

September 19, 2019

Panel Chair Sharon Chesna convened the meeting. New panel member, Eunju Lee, joined the meeting. Jennifer Goldman, NYS CRP Coordinator, reviewed a draft recruitment flyer for prospective Panel members. The Panel members discussed the Annual Report and agreed to focus on child welfare workforce improvement. Shelly Aubertine-Fiebich provided OCFS updates, which included Raise the Age implementation, Erin's Law and the Family First Act. Panel members then discussed the upcoming Child Welfare Workforce Round Table. Panel Chair Sharon Chesna thanked guests and adjourned the meeting.

Western Panel

March 15, 2019

Panel Chair Ellen Kennedy convened the meeting. Chris Gottlieb from the SCR Coalition reported on proposed legislation to reform the SCR, and Panel members agreed to sign onto a letter of support for the new proposed legislation. Social Media Consultant Alicia Peet provided guidance on how to share posts from the Facebook and Twitter accounts. Lisa Gordon and Jennifer Maurici of OCFS provided updates on Raise the Age, Family First, expanding the use of the blind removal strategy, and the upcoming opening of the new training center. The Panel members agreed to a vote for Chair and Co-Chair via email. Panel Chair Ellen Kennedy acknowledged the resignation of panel member Danny Sklarski, thanked him for his dedication, and adjourned the meeting.

May 2, 2019
(combined Eastern & Western
Panel meeting)

Eastern Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy convened the meeting. Annette Semanchin-Jones from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) reported on the recent NCWWI Award that was granted to Erie County, a five-year project focusing on the child welfare workforce by partnering Erie County Department of Social Services with the University of Buffalo School of Social Work. Lisa Gordon and Jennifer Maurici of OCFS reported on initiatives to improve the workforce, the progress of Family First implementation, and the reinvigorated Safe Sleep campaign. The Eastern and Western Panel Members approved of the first draft of the letter of support for the SCR Reform Bills S6427A/A8060A. Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy thanked the guests and adjourned the meeting.

September 27, 2019

Panel Chair Linda C. Brown convened the meeting and NYS CRP Coordinator Jennifer Goldman shared a draft recruitment flyer for potential Panel members. The Panel members agreed to focus the Annual Report on child welfare workforce improvement. Shelly Aubertine-Fiebich and Vajeera Dorabawila, OCFS, reported on current workforce initiatives, Raise the Age implementation, and the 2018 MAPS data. Panel members discussed the upcoming Child Welfare Workforce Round Table. Panel Chair Linda C. Brown thanked the guests and adjourned the meeting.

Joint Panel

January 29, 2019

NYS CRP Coordinator Jennifer Goldman of Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI) convened the meeting. Ariela Perez-Wallach, Project Specialist, provided an update on the 2018 Annual Report distribution. Jennifer Goldman reported that the Twitter and Facebook pages for the Panels are up and running. Panel members discussed upcoming meetings with NYS Legislators and the priorities for 2019. Panel members agreed to focus on workforce development issues in child welfare, home visiting, and the current opioid crisis and its effects on the foster care system. Jennifer Goldman adjourned the meeting.

June 13, 2019

Eastern Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy convened the meeting. Todd Sage, new member on the Western Panel, joined for the first time. Sharon Kollar from NCWWI reported on the recently chosen national sites for workforce excellence, including Erie County in NYS. All sites are partnered with a school of social work to make improvements to service delivery, organizational culture, and workforce among other components. OCFS Commissioner Sheila J. Poole

and Deputy Commissioner Lisa Gharthey Ogundimu provided an update on the Youth Advisory Board, Raise the Age implementation, Family First, and the Safe Sleep campaign. NYS CRP Coordinator Jennifer Goldman debriefed the Panels on the National Citizen Review Panels Conference. Eastern Panel Co-Chair Mary McCarthy adjourned the meeting.

October 10, 2019

Child Welfare Workforce Roundtable

NYS CRP Coordinator Jennifer Goldman welcomed guests, which included stakeholders from various groups such as LDSS, voluntary agencies, schools of social work, OCFS, state and national social work organizations, and representatives of NYS Legislators. The Panel members and stakeholders in the field discussed ideas to improve child welfare workforce retention, recruitment and wellness. Some recommendations included partnering with schools of social work to recruit students into the workforce, better utilizing Title IV-E money for student loan forgiveness, and the importance of mentorships and supervision. Jennifer Goldman thanked the guests for their expert input on workforce issues which will be valuable information as the Panels develop their Annual Report, and adjourned the meeting.

Citizen Review Panel Members 2019

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

Edward Blatt, PhD (resigned 2019)
Consultant
Appointed by the Governor's Office

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 at 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

Paula Mazur, MD
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
Program Director
Child & Adolescent Treatment
Services
Appointed by the Governor's Office

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

Danny Sklarski (resigned 2019)
Auditor; Legislator
NYS Parks and Recreation
Appointed by the Assembly

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

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

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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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