

**Joint Panel Meeting Minutes
October 6th 2025 1:30-2:30pm**

Attendance

OCFS: Dana Boylan, Laura Darman, Dr. Harris, Alyson Grant, Gail Goehagan Pratt, Terrance Pratt, Tracy Swanson, Alexis Young

NYS CRP: Jocelyn Brown, Linda Brown, Kathy Halas, Wayne Ho, Ellen Kennedy, Carole Levy, Eunju Lee, David Lansner, Mary McCarthy, Joanne Merriman, Mathea Rubin, Jorge Saenz deViteri, John Treahy

PCA-NY: Elizabeth Stephenson, Tamaé Memole

Agenda Item	Discussion (Future Action, Highlights)	Decisions and Next Steps
Updates from OCFS	- OCFS has been working on developing and promoting child care initiatives and positive youth development opportunities, and serving children in systems of care. - The Commissioner has had over 70 external visits and engagements since we last convened. - Celebrated Kinship month in September and acknowledged the importance of these families. - Dr. Harris-Madden has been a spokesperson at meetings in the child welfare space. - Aim is for OCFS to be a support to the panels and learn about the goals of the CRPs.	
Anonymous reporting Has there been any exploration of approaches in other states that have eliminated anonymous reporting like California and Texas?	- In California, it remains unclear what occurs when a caller refuses to provide contact information. - OCFS has spoken with L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services; while the statute permits investigations of suspected abuse or neglect, further clarification is being sought. - In Texas, anonymous calls are not accepted; however, referrals may be made to law enforcement. - To OCFS's knowledge, most other states continue to accept anonymous reports.	

Observation of injuries • Is it possible to have someone other than a caseworker perform an examination when needed?	• Caseworkers are required to assess and document injuries observed during visits or disclosed by a child or youth during interviews. • Such assessments must be based on reasonable cause. • Medical examinations are conducted in cases of serious injury or allegations of sexual abuse. • OCFS has engaged with ACS regarding best practices for responding to visible bruises on children. • ACS is aware of requirements and has aligned its training accordingly.	
Notification of free legal services and Know Your Rights Information • “OCFS would include a link to an electronic copy of the list from the OCFS letters, which would also include NYS Bar Association free services.” What is the expected date of implementation?” • Specifically what pro bono services would be made available? • Has the Know Your Rights pamphlet been launched? Which counties?	• OCFS has consulted with the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA), which has no objections to including a QR code linking to NYSBA’s pro bono legal services. • The QR code would be included on specific letters from OCFS to help individuals understand and assert their legal rights. • Applicable letters include: • Notice of Indication (issued when an allegation is substantiated) • Administrative Review decisions where the indication is upheld • OCFS is continuing internal discussions on moving forward with the Know Your Rights initiative. • Plans are underway to provide field training and resources related to legal rights. • OCFS is also working to expand website guidance on foster care and kinship care in collaboration with counties across the state.	• Once the QR code is finalized, OCFS will provide the link to the NYSBA. • CRP members offered ideas for successfully rolling out the Know Your Rights campaign, including holding meetings with local commissioners to discuss key issues. • OCFS has heard concerns about child welfare workers’ safety assessments, particularly when they cannot enter homes and may need to seek access orders through family court. • NYC has been using access orders for about a year, with court interventions occurring in less than 5% of cases, indicating it is rare. • CRP suggested embedding required training on this topic within the common core curriculum to familiarize workers early in their careers. • The Commissioner supports collaborating on a listening session or roundtable, as recommended by the CRPs.

Child Fatality Review protocols • What can OCFS do to change the fatality report issuance timeline so a final autopsy report would have been received? • Is there a way to step up the receipt of those reports? • Would it be possible to issue a preliminary draft report without recommendations, but just the factual findings from the investigation before the final report, which would include the autopsy and recommendations?	• Timelines for issuing fatality reports are set by statute; changes require legislative action. • Current law (Social Services Law §20(5)(c)) requires reports be issued within 6 months of the date of death. • The law does not allow for draft or preliminary reports. • OCFS works with counties and NYC to obtain final autopsy reports before issuing reports. • OCFS is exploring approaches for cases where autopsy results are received after the report is issued.	
Foster Care Agencies • Are there standard elements to the contracts that the LDSS would use with the agencies with whom they contract?	• OCFS provides a model contract (24-OCFS-ADM-07): https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/2024/adm/24-OCFS-ADM-07-Model-Contract.pdf • LDSS cannot remove language from the model contract. • Counties may add provisions specific to their needs or additional requirements for contracted entities. • As part of federal AFCARS reporting, OCFS tracks foster care removals and their causes. • Most commonly reported reasons for removal include caretaker drug use, inadequate housing, physical abuse, domestic violence, child behavior issues, Inadequate access to mental health service and homelessness	• Commissioner asked if CRPs have recommendations about what they would like to see in contracts and is it linked to the treatment of families, particularly kinship foster families. ○ CRPs would like to take a look at the contract to see if anything could or should be added

Separating out poverty ● HEARS: Are there any plans to extend HEARS hours to some evenings or weekends? Is there any reporting of callers whose requests were unable to be met? Or if any callers have subsequent involvement with the SCR? Is it possible to know if a CPS case that is indicated had earlier contact with HEARS? ● Family Resource Centers and Family Opportunity Centers: What results are you hoping for, a reduction in CPS calls or indicated cases? From the flyer – <i>“Families who attended showed improvements in protective factors and the most vulnerable families made the most improvements.”</i> How is this measured? Can data be shared? ● Guaranteed Income pilot: Is the white paper to be released in January? Can it be shared with the panels?	HEARS Line ● Extension of hours would require additional staffing. ● Voicemails can be left and are returned by the next business day. ● No tracking of whether callers later enter the child welfare system. ● Designed as a support resource, not a pathway into the system. ● Goal is to support families upstream to provide supports and negate the need for child welfare involvement. Guaranteed Income Pilot ● \$500 monthly stipends provided to 500 families over 12 months. ● Evaluated by the Center for Guaranteed Income Research (CGIR). ● Research focuses on: ○ Impact on child welfare involvement ○ Parental physical and mental health ○ Child development ○ Financial stability ● CGIR white paper is scheduled to be available in January 2026.	● How do we know the effectiveness of the HEARS line if we’re not tracking it. ● We can think through this question in terms of if not through the tracking of the calls, but how do quantify and qualify the impact of prevention ● The commissioner would like to know if we are being efficient with the hears line or if there are
---	--	--

Other resources • Mobile response pilot: Can you provide more specifics on this pilot? What counties are involved? • Care Portal: Can you provide more specifics on this program?	Mobile Response Vans Initiative • Funded through Family First Transition Funds (ended September 30, 2025). • Vans deployed in Monroe, Westchester, and Albany counties. • Direct services provided (2023–2024): ○ Over 200 children served. ○ 20 children avoided entry into foster care. ○ Approximately 75 placements stabilized through intervention. • Used proactively to: ○ Support children returning home. ○ Prevent removal from homes. ○ Mitigate disruptions involving caregivers, children, or their relationships. Care Portal Platform • Web-based platform in partnership with The Global Orphan Project (GO Project). • Connects local districts with faith-based organizations and local businesses. • Supports families with concrete needs during child welfare investigations. • Usage period: September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025: ○ 19 counties participating. ○ ~2,000 referrals submitted. ○ ~85% of needs met. ○ 3,615 children served. • Positive feedback received from participating districts.	
--	--	--

Panel vacancies • Thank you for your help exploring revisions to SSL 371-b to address concerns re attendance and removal of inactive members. Can you outline the expected process and timing?	• There are nominees that have been sent to the Governor's office of appointments. The process can take upwards of a year. • OCFS acknowledged other vacancies and has been working diligently to fill all seats. • If a CRP member has been absent for 3 consecutive meetings without giving a valid reason, they are considered inactive and can be replaced. • OCFS is currently focusing on filling current vacancies and their next step will be removing and replacing inactive members.	
Deportation/ICE Raids • How has deportation/ICE raids impacted the NYS child welfare system?	• OCFS is mindful of ICE raids and when they receive notice of these situations they assess information and what it means in terms of programs that are under the purview of OCFS and their oversight and monitoring role. • OCFS proactively shared guidance to the field in February 2025 in the event that ICE were to come to voluntary agencies. • Link to guidance document from the attorney general's office as well as the governor's office https://ag.ny.gov/resources/individuals/immigrants-rights/private-non-profit-organization-guidance	• OCFS just issued a directive they are willing to share with CRPs, interpreting federal EO actions and how they affect the agency - to proactively ensure the field has access to information and some ability helping interpret that information
Healthy Families New York Services and the Child Welfare Protocol Memo • What does this memo mean? • Is there more money?	• Under the traditional Healthy Families Program, children from prenatal to 3 months old can enroll and remain eligible for up to 5 years. • A recently approved child welfare protocol under the Title IV-E Clearinghouse expands eligibility to include families with children up to 2 years old. • OCFS is preparing an LCM to inform the field about these expanded eligibility criteria and enrollment windows.	
Upcoming Steps/ Next Meeting		• PCA-NY will follow up to schedule next meeting