

The mission of MCWAP is to assure that the state system is meeting the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families through assessment, research, case reviews, advocacy, and greater citizen involvement. Our goal is to promote child safety and quality services for children, youth, and families.

Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel Minutes

March 6, 2020 / 9am-11am

DHHS, OCFS / 2 Anthony Avenue / Augusta, Me

Co-Chair: Bobbi Johnson

Co-Chair: Deb Dunlap

Panel Coordinator: Steph Barrett MCWAP

Phone: Esther Anne, Tracy Cooley (retiring), Chris Bicknell

Present: Deb Dunlap, Bobbi Johnson, Betsy Boardman, Deb McSweeney, Lanelle Freeman, Christine Hufnagel, Jim Jacobs, Susan Clardy, Adrienne Carmack, Travis Bryant, Jean Youde, Erin Witham, Todd Landry, Alana Jones, Kelly Del Aquilla, Jamie Brooks, Heidi Landry, Steph Barrett, Brittany Raven

Meeting minutes: Unanimous vote to accept January meeting minutes (February meeting cancelled due to snow).

Staff and Member updates: Steph is leaving employment with OCFS and will start a new position at OADS soon. Heidi Landry will cover panel support duties until a replacement can be hired. Group acknowledged Steph's important contributions to the reorganizing work of the Panel over the past year, and thanked her for her service. Tracy Cooley is stepping down from serving on the Panel. Group thanked her for her many years of service to Maine's children and families through her work on the many versions of this panel.

Annual Report updates: Annual report is drafted and in the process of formatting and waiting for OCFS responses to recommendations. When draft is ready, Annual Report workgroup will formalize and then it will go to the panel for a vote. The CDSIR report will not be incorporated into the MCWAP report this year, but will be submitted as part of the annual federal reporting for CAPTA and CJA Application.

Panel updates: Children's Justice Task Force has been exploring a Navigator pilot project to support connections to community resources in family courts, and is working on partnership with Restorative Justice Project. At the last meeting, JTF provided a forum for collaborative problem-solving for legal aid for youth detained in Long Creek to ensure appropriate services, education, etc. Have issued Annual Report and updated the charter.

Website Updates: Working on content development, plan is to go live no later than June. Betsy is working on the JTF page, Adrienne and Alan are working on MCWAP content, and Steph has been developing content for CDSIRP page. Betsy will lead setting up call with all workgroups involved with website content development so everyone is on the same page. Bobbi is contact person for MCWAP until Steph's role is filled.

Legislative updates: Dr. Landry gave updates on legislation related to the department and Juvenile Justice. Senator Diamond's bill LD1554 has reached a compromise: in lieu of a

commission, OCFS will be required to submit reports to GOC three times annually. Panel member shared LD1916 seeks to reduce barriers to graduation for youth experiencing disruption (homelessness, foster care, looking to expand to tribal and immigrant youth). improve graduation rates. DOE would issue diplomas to youth who have had considerably disrupted education. LD1684 would cut off court's jurisdiction for juvenile justice before age 12, working together on rebuilding CBH services that could prevent entry to care and aligning with Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

OCFS updates:

- New FFPSA Coordinator, Christine Theriault, is convening workgroups. Panel asked for clarification on process, and agreed to add FFPSA to future MCWAP agenda. Information is also on website: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/family-first-act.shtml> All related questions can be sent directly to Christine.
- OCFS is looking to provide same type of opportunities for youth in care as youth in parental custody. Youth in care had a chance to be honorary pages at the legislature. Youth spent day at the senate and had lunch with OCFS Director and Commissioner during day.
- Workgroup is working on plan of safe care for substance exposed/affected newborns that includes short- and long-term strategies for supporting women and caregivers with universal model.
- State contracts for CPPC contracts will be ending on June 30th, and contract agencies have been notified that contracts will not be renewed. Instead, the Department will focus resources, including funding and staff time and attention, to the implementation of services which can be implemented under FFPSA. The Department will continue funding the Parent Partner portion of the program in a pilot that will include rigorous evaluation, with locations to be determined later in March. Panel members leading CPPC initiatives noted that these networks were active for many years prior to the current state contracts, and local partners intend to continue the work with OCFS as a committed partners.

Citizen engagement subcommittee update: Subcommittee has met twice; notes have been shared with Panel. Subcommittee is working on ways to bring in more feedback from community members, including format for listening sessions to get community involvement that assures safety and confidence of participants. Logistics and process are on next agenda.

Parent survey workgroup: Parent Survey was distributed from March-June 2019, all questions were aligned with Title 22 requirements. 65 parents in 13 counties completed, all families who had been involved with child protective services. 38 out of 65 experienced child removal. Workgroup distributed report and identified 3 themes: respect and empathy for families, communication, and family knowledge of rights. Workgroup acknowledged small sample size and desire to recognize and honor the people who took the time to respond. workgroup report is distributed. Workgroup provided proposed recommendation for the Department:

As part of the current work underway on revisions to CPS training, recommend that OCFS review and identify opportunities to strengthen current training and professional development

for caseworkers and supervisors on (1) working with caregivers with respect, (2) clear and timely communication, and (3) sharing information with caregivers about their rights and responsibilities. As noted previously, CPS can build on the areas where more caregivers reported positive experiences, including engaging families in the development of their family plan and in the court process. OCFS is encouraged to build on the current simulation and panel that are part of the new worker training, and identify other ways to extend the inclusion of parents' perspectives on an ongoing basis in professional development for new, experienced, and returning workers, supervisors, and CPS leadership.

Workgroup also made recommendations to MCWAP for future work on the panel:

- *Share the survey results with parents, caregivers, and OCFS staff. Incorporate parent survey/voice into next 3YA.*
- *Examine current CPS policies and practices around communication strategies and expectations, inclusion of parent/caregiver voice and perspective, and parents and other caregivers' understanding of their rights as part of the Family Quality Engagement work in 2020. Review the three documents that go to all parents who are contacted for an investigation ("A Guide to Child Protective Services," "The Child Welfare Ombudsman Program" pamphlet, and "Child Welfare Services Practice Model") as part of that work.*
- *Request information about OCFS' quality assurance work to better understand how parents and other caregivers are involved in the case process, the areas of improvement that have been identified internally, and efforts to address these challenges.*
- *Determine the best schedule to continue to administer the parent survey moving forward.*

All recommendations were accepted by majority of panel and voice vote on phone. Parent Survey Workgroup will close and merge efforts with the Citizen Engagement Committee.

Next Steps:

OCFS will be at the Judicial Conference in April. Group determined panel members who can meet should gather; Alana and Adrienne will facilitate.

Action	Lead
Finalize draft of Annual Report and share with Panel for approval	Deb, Bobbi, Annual Report Subcommittee
Invite Christine Theriault to future Panel meeting to review FFPSA and progress	Executive Committee
Convene meeting among three workgroups (CJTF, CDSIRP, MCWAP) to coordinate content for new website	Betsy
Share approved parent survey recommendation with training team as they update new caseworker training.	Bobbi

Next meeting: April 3rd, 2020