

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

November 6th, 2020 / 9 a.m.- 11 a.m.

Virtual: Meeting held over Zoom

Co-Chair: Bobbi Johnson

Co-Chair: Deb Dunlap

Panel Coordinator: Kathryn Brice

Agenda

9:00 a.m.- Welcome and Introductions

Virtual attendance: Esther Anne, Betsy Boardman, Kathryn Brice, Marie Briggs, Jamie Brooks, Travis Bryant, Ahmen Cabral, Adrienne Carmack, Lyn Carter, Deb Dunlap, Jim Jacobs, Bobbi Johnson, Annette Macaluso, Ashley McAllister, Julie McShane*, Deb McSweeney, Brittany Raven, Tammy Roy, Erin Whitham, Jean Youde

*Guest of the Panel

9:10 a.m.- New Business

Caseworker Training Discussion: The Panel heard from Julie McShane, the Training Team Lead for the Child Welfare Cooperative Project at the Muskie School. The Office of Child and Family Services has partnered with the Muskie School to, in part, redesign and deliver training for new OCFS caseworkers. Julie introduced some of the goals of the project and shared what has been accomplished within the first year, including assessing the current foundations training, researching different models and examining how Maine has performed regarding certain key measures. The Muskie School has developed an online training model that has been provided over Zoom. The key elements of the training were discussed, as well as certain topics explored within the model: family engagement, substance use disorders, incorporating youth voice, the case flow, child development and education for caseworkers, handoffs between investigations to permanency, etc.

The Panel was reminded that caseworkers also take part in additional, specialized training within their first year of hire. This curriculum is provided by OCFS and allows new staff to explore relevant topics in greater depth than what is covered in foundations training.

Julie provided her email address- julie.mcshane@maine.edu- and encouraged members to reach out if they had any additional questions, comments or feedback.

Workgroup Meetings: The subcommittees broke out into separate Zoom rooms to work on their topics. Once the breakout groups rejoined the main group, they were asked to provide updates to the Panel (this prevents each group having to send their notes to the coordinator and will allow for greater discussion and idea-sharing amongst the group as a whole).

1. Family-centered policy and Practice

Kelly, Betsy, Lyn, Lanelle, Brittany, Esther, Jamie, Annette

This group reported that they had spent some time today sharing their notes from the last subgroup meeting, for those who weren't able to be present. They found it helpful to hear from Julie and are planning on scheduling an additional meeting with her. The subcommittee will be focusing on OCFS training regarding case closures and parallel parenting. While this process does involve other systems as well, the group worried that it may not be within their charge as MCWAP members to make recommendations to other agencies/stakeholders.

The Executive Committee weighed in and reported that they felt it was well within CRP parameters to make recommendations regarding the coordination between systems. The recommendation could be provided to OCFS but could include a systemic recommendation rather than just an agency-wide recommendation.

2. Effective communication/coordination for the care of children entering the system

Alana, Cindy, Jim, Ahmen, Deb McSweeney, Marie

The subcommittee has realized that there are two different kinds of informational binders that are used at OCFS: those that are like training manuals and appear to go out to resource parents, and those that are "passports" for children in care (which contain information on the child's health history, education history, etc.) and follow the children as they move through resource homes and/or are reunified with their family. The subcommittee will be researching how other states manage these records and are planning on connecting with DHHS staff to gather more information about how this process can be streamlined in Maine.

The subcommittee has also considered how critical caseworkers are in getting this information and keeping the passport up to date. The group is also considering the use of Life Books, which are books provided to older youth and contain information about the people they have been connected to.

3. Child welfare staff training

Erin, Ashley, Travis, Jean, Chris

This subcommittee will be looking at the ongoing training that caseworkers and resource families receive through OCFS. They will be exploring desired competencies and skill development needs.

The Executive Committee reported that while the breakout rooms were active, there was a discussion around inviting the OCFS training team to be a part of our next meeting. While Muskie has started foundations training, the overall work is guided and monitored by the OCFS training and policy team- inviting these key players would give MCWAP the opportunity to hear about training more generally, as it applies to both new and seasoned caseworkers.

10:50 a.m.- Standing Agenda Items

Approval of October 2020 Minutes: Unanimous vote to approve minutes from October 2020 meeting.

Panels Website: The Panel was provided an update on the Panels website, which continues to be under construction. Edits are actively being made, and we are well on our way to having a new website.

OCFS Updates: The Panel did not have any questions for OCFS regarding the updates that went out by email prior to the meeting.

11:00 a.m.- Adjourn and Next Steps

Erin will provide Julie McShane with a copy of the family survey.

Next Panel Meeting: Virtual Meeting, December 4th, 2020, 9 a.m.- 11 a.m.