

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, 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

October 1st, 2021 / 9 a.m.- 11 a.m.

Virtual: Meeting held over Zoom

Co-Chair: Bobbi Johnson

Co-Chair: Deb Dunlap

Panel Coordinator: Kathryn Brice

Minutes

9:00 a.m.- Welcome and Introductions

Virtual attendance: Esther Anne, Donna Bailey*, Chris Bicknell, Betsy Boardman, Kathryn Brice, Travis Bryant, Ahmen Cabral, Adrienne Carmack, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Deb Dunlap, Lanelle Freeman, Jim Jacobs, Bobbi Johnson, Annette Macaluso, Ashley McAllister, Libby McCullum, Deb McSweeney, Andrea Mancuso, Julian Richter*, Erin Whitham

*Guests of the Panel

Approval of June Minutes: Members voted unanimously to approve the June minutes.

Citizen Co-Chair: During MCWAP's September retreat, members discussed making changes to the structure of the Executive Committee (specifically, to be chaired by two citizens and/or representative from a community organization, rather than OCFS holding a co-chair seat). Since then, the Executive Committee has circulated an email with proposed edits to the bylaws to reflect this change.

Members discussed the proposed bylaws and highlighted a concern for the use of the term 'community representative' as its definition is unclear (i.e.: do the chairs have to be members of community organizations, rather than volunteer citizens?). Members also noted that if citizens will be filling the co-chair seats, the conversation about stipends for volunteer members would be especially important given the amount of responsibility and time dedication it takes to co-chair the Panel.

The Executive Committee clarified with members that in the coming weeks, several other areas of the bylaws will be updated (including the process for stipends). Until then, the Executive Committee will revisit the language regarding co-chairs so that the definition of who is eligible for the position is clear. Once updated, the Executive Committee section of the bylaws will be distributed for electronic vote. If the Panel does vote in favor of the proposed changes, Deb Dunlap will be nominating Ahmen Cabral to join her as co-chair. Members may be asked to vote on this, and/or submit other nominations.

Confidentiality Agreement: An updated confidentiality agreement will be circulated via email in the coming weeks for members to sign and return to Kathryn electronically. In the future, these agreements will be signed on an annual basis, at the yearly retreat.

Survey Reminder: The Panel was reminded that the parent/provider surveys will close on October 15th. To date, 101 providers have responded with a 75% completion rate and 29 parents or caregivers have responded with a 100% completion rate. Members were encouraged to continue to circulate the surveys within their networks.

9:15 a.m.- New Business

Retreat Debrief: The Panel briefly discussed the retreat, noting that the day served to ground our work in citizen engagement. Members underscored the power of *Dawnland* and the opportunity to hear from the guest panelists. Members also noted that the topics discussed during the retreat were helpful in highlighting the need to be conscientious and thoughtful when engaging citizens.

Retreat Topics Revisited:

Citizen/Father Engagement. MCWAP is currently undertaking an initiative around father engagement, with one particular subcommittee focusing on the topic. Concurrently, another subcommittee is exploring the topic of citizen engagement, more broadly.

The Panel discussed the need for these groups to be coordinated in their work. Members from each group expressed interest in the subcommittees supporting the work of the other, and a plan was made for one member of the Father Engagement group to join the Citizen Engagement meetings to assure a coordinated effort, moving forward.

Convening Meetings. Members were reminded that the Executive Committee is planning to host a one-time meeting for community partners to engage in a broader conversation about the child welfare system. Recently, a draft invitation and guest list for the meetings had been circulated via email; the Executive Committee was interested in hearing feedback on these items before moving forward.

Members ultimately voted in favor of the Executive Committee hosting convening meetings, but asked that the following topics be explored by the Committee prior to distributing the invitations:

- Consider broadening the scope of guests to also include representatives from the Department of Corrections, Guardian ad Litem, and Maine State Police
- Consider whether the Panel is inviting guests as professionals, or as Maine citizens; this must be clear in the invitation. Members would also like to see efforts to engage community members who may not have a professional connection to the child welfare system. An idea was suggested that professional guests could be asked to invite a general community member (non-child welfare system professional) to attend the meeting as well.
- Consider the role of OCFS/DHHS, if any, in these sessions

Citizen Feedback: The Executive Committee has been in conversation about how best to consider the feedback received through the Citizen Review Panels website and is proposing the use of a template to aid in organizing extracted themes. The template would be completed on an ongoing basis during Panel meetings (whenever feedback is received) and would follow a September-August calendar so that the findings could be included in MCWAP's report. With that, the template was presented, and members were asked to reflect on the three citizen feedback summaries that had been emailed prior to the meeting. See attachment.

While completing the template, Panel members noted that if/when OCFS completes an analysis of the feedback as it relates to an individual's case, generalized findings should be brought back to the Panel. Members also suggested that MCWAP provide citizens with an update after their feedback is shared and

recommended that the Executive Committee develop consistent messaging when replying to those who are sharing feedback.

Workgroup Meetings:

1. Family-centered policy and practice

Kelly, Betsy, Lanelle, Esther, Annette, Andrea, Christine, Susan Denoncour

Members are in the process of implementing the mini training series around the intersection of PC cases and DV training. The first session will be held on 10/29, and the group is working on distributing that information as soon as possible. Members are also brainstorming future ideas for the parent survey. Betsy, Andrea and Kelly agreed to participate in the data analysis of this year's surveys.

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

Jim, Ahmen, Deb McSweeney,

The group reflected on the themes identified in the citizen engagement template around written communication and how communication may be provided in different ways. Members have looked at the FTM policy and are getting grounded in how frequently these meetings take place and what sort of written communication is yielded from these meetings.

3. Father Engagement

Erin, Travis, Jean, Chris, Libby, Jamie, Ashley, Tammy

The group has been in conversation with Welcome to Reality to facilitate listening sessions with fathers. Last week, Travis and Bobbi connected with Welcome to Reality to discuss the budget and their proposal; once updates have been made, the proposal will be redistributed to the subcommittee and the Executive Committee. From there, Tammy and OCFS will work on the contract.

OCFS Updates: OCFS is on track to receive the Casey Family Programs/Collaborative Safety report in the next week or so and recommendations will be made public a few weeks after that. Members were notified that the Citizen Review Panel presenters at the recent Government Oversight Committee were asked to complete a follow-up interview. Lastly, Erin and Bobbi recently pulled together data for the Maine Resilience Network that highlights risk factors and demographics of the children that are being served through OCFS and are willing to add this to a future agenda for greater discussion, should the Panel be interested.

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

Kathryn to send the Panel the PowerPoint that OCFS presented at the retreat.

Next Panel Meeting: Virtual Meeting, November 5th, 2021, 9 a.m.- 11 a.m.