

Maine Justice for Children Task Force
September 14, 2021 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

Welcome (10:00 a.m.-10:05 a.m.) —Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

Introductions (10:05 a.m.-10:15 a.m.)

Review of June 2021 Minutes (10:15 a.m.-10:20 a.m.)

- June 2021 minutes were unanimously approved.

Introduction to the Youth Leadership Advisory Team & Strategies to Support Authentic Youth Engagement: (10:20 a.m.-10:50 a.m.)

- **Presenters:**
 - **Ahmen Cabral:** Ahmen is a Senior Associate with the Youth and Community Engagement team at the Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy. She joined the Youth and Community Engagement team in 2005 and her work has focused on youth development, mentoring, facilitations, and promoting practice and policy change in the child welfare system.
 - **Dulcey Laberge:** Dulcey has worked for the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services, for the past 30 years in various positions including: Child Protective Caseworker; Quality Assurance Program Manager; and Director for Public Service Management. For the past 15 years, Dulcey has served as the OCFS Youth Transition Program Manager. Dulcey supervises Youth Transition Specialists across the State, oversees federal and state funding for youth in care to pursue post-secondary education and training programs, and writes policies and rules related to Youth Transition Programming.
- **About YLAT:** YLAT is a leadership group for young people in care, ages 14-26. They host statewide activities (YLAT meetings, panel presentations, leadership trainings, annual teen conference), and engage youth in supporting each other, advocating for change, and education about the child welfare system. YLAT also asks young people for policy input through focus groups, YLAT meetings, and a policy summit.
- **Data:**
 - 472 youth in foster care ages 12-21 (June 2021); 51% female, 49% male.
 - 152 youth participated in a YLAT event; 55% identify as female, 41% identify as male.
 - 67 new youth participated in YLAT this year and of those attendees, 28% attended 3 or more meetings.
 - 95% of youth feel that their voice is sometimes or always heard at YLAT meetings, and 5% of youth feel that they have a greater overall sense of belonging after participating in YLAT.
 - YLAT held 40 meetings in 5 locations through the state and virtually over Zoom.
- **YLAT'S recent accomplishments include:**

- Alumni transition grant program: In 2014 Maine became the first state to pass legislation supporting youth in care with their post-secondary goals through the age of 27.
- New England Coalition: YLAT is supporting the development of a New England Normalcy Bill of Rights and Staff Toolkit.
- YLAT has also formed the Maine Driving Workgroup to remove barriers that exist for young people obtaining their driver's license.
- Contact information: Ahmen Cabral, ahmen.cabral@maine.edu (207-228-8548).
- Q&A / Comments:
 - Is there comparative outcome data between YLAT youth and youth who do not engage in YLAT? Not yet, but YLAT is now working with a doctorate student from UNE and expects having some data on comparative outcomes in December.
 - Dr. Landry noted that 152 youth engaging in YLAT is not a subset of the 472 youth in foster care, ages 12-21. The reason for this is that YLAT support goes beyond the age of 18. YLAT is a great example of a program that recognizes the importance of offering supports beyond the age of 18.
 - Several Task Force members noted that presentations from YLAT youth are always impressive and helpful.

Updates (10:50 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)

- **An Organizational Update from the Judicial Branch – Chief Judge Jed French (10:50 a.m.-11:00 a.m.)**
 - **Current filings:**
 - From January 1, 2021 to September 10, 2021: There have been 711 new PC case filings statewide.
 - Last year, during the same period: There were 838 new PC case filings statewide.
 - This represents a 15% decrease in filings as compared to the same time period last year.
 - **Judicial Branch Child Welfare Training:**
 - The National Institute for Trial Advocacy continues to host two trainings a month that focus on direct and cross examination, as well as exhibits and impeachment.
 - There will be a one-day plenary session on Tuesday, October 26th. Details about that training will be emailed this week.
 - **CASA Update:**
 - A pre-service volunteer training was held virtually between August 24th and 27th. Upon completion of credentialing, the program anticipates onboarding eleven new CASA volunteers.
 - **PPMO-SJC-1:**
 - PPMO-SJC-1 was issued on June 1, 2021 and has been revised a couple of times since then, with the most recent revision on August 16, 2021. Face

masks are required to enter and be in all courthouses, regardless of vaccination status.

- **Government Oversight Committee:**
 - On Wednesday, September 8th, all three Citizen Review Panels (the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel, the Justice for Children Task Force, and the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel) were asked to present to the Government Oversight Committee. All three panels offered a broad overview of the panels' including missions, initiatives, and membership.
- **An Organizational Update from the Office of Child and Family Services at DHHS - Dr. Todd A. Landry, Director & Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director (11:00 a.m.-11:10 a.m.)**
 - Dr. Landry presented to the Health and Human Services Committee on September 1, 2021. If Task Force members wish to see the slide deck that was used, they may contact Dr. Landry.
 - OCFS is on track with the 90-day review it requested from Casey Family Programs. Recommendations are expected to be publicly posted in mid-October. Please note that the actual case reports that were part of the assessment will not be made public because they contain personal identifying information.
 - On September 12th, the Administration for Children and Families approved Maine's state plan for implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act. Maine is the first state in New England to have an approved plan.
 - OCFS conducted an internal review of the tragedies that occurred in June. OCFS also participated in an external review that involved OCFS staff, the ombudsmen, OPEGA, law enforcement, and ARP providers.
- **An Organizational Update from the Office of the Attorney General – Nora Sosnoff, AAG (11:10 a.m.-11:20 a.m.)**
 - AAGs participate in several stakeholder groups including the CASA Advisory Panel, the three citizen review panels, Domestic Homicide Review Panel, ICWA Workgroup, Child Advocacy Center Planning Groups, several court rules advisory committees, and the Family Law Advisory Committee (which is currently examining post-adoption contact between siblings). They also participate in more informal groups, including a group to study record sharing with state police, a collaboration with Pine Tree Legal Assistance to study the use of PFAs to establish safety for children, and a group to study the use of minor guardianships to establish safety for children. Additionally, in anticipation of the implementation of Family First, AAGs engaged with the judicial branch to work on implementation of court requirements.
 - Child protection AAGs are eager to be a part of work with MCILS to expand interest in the child protection field, including continuing to offer internships and externships to law students.
 - Attorney Sosnoff noted that we must continue to work together to decrease the threats of violence to DHHS staff and AAGs. As recently as yesterday, they had

two serious threats against DHHS staff and an AAG through social media. Additionally, a parent threatened an AAG in the presence of judicial marshals.

Strategic Plan Updates (11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)

- **Parent Curriculum Workgroup Update:** Betsy Boardman and Kelly Dell'Aquila
 - The workgroup is working on a project that would create a curriculum for parents involved in the child welfare system. The Maine Judicial Branch has obtained permission from the Children's Bureau to use Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds for this project. The workgroup is also coordinating a meeting with Dr. Alicia Summers from the Capacity Building Center for Courts who will advise the workgroup on the data points that would be helpful to measure outcomes of this project.
- **Race and Equity Data Collection Committee:** Mary Bonauto and Regina Phillips
 - An RFP for a project consultant was posted through the month of August. Submissions were due on August 31 and since that time the evaluation team has met and an award will issue soon.

Other

- Chief Justice Stanfill reported that she and Justin Andrus from MCILS have been in close and regular contact regarding the current crisis the State of Maine is facing in terms of having enough court-appointed attorneys to serve as constitutionally required counsel in criminal and child protection matters. She welcomes suggestions for recruitment.
- The next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for December 14, 2021.
- Jill Ward announced an upcoming CLE course on October 1 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 pm. on changes to the juvenile code. The program will include breakout sessions. Information will be circulated to this group.

ADJOURN (12:00 p.m.)