*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**

**April 1st, 2022 / 9 a.m.-11 a.m.**

**Virtual:** Meeting held over Zoom

**Co-Chairs:** Ahmen Cabral; Deb Dunlap

**Panel Coordinator:** Jenna Joeckel

**Minutes**

**9:00 a.m.- Welcome and Introductions:**

Virtual Attendance: Heidi Aakjer, Esther Anne, Senator Donna Bailey, Betsy Boardman, Kathryn Brice, Travis Bryant, Ahmen Cabral, Adrienne Carmack, Kelly Dell’Aquila, Deb Dunlap, Lanelle Freeman, Ariel Gannon, Jim Jacobs, Jenna Joeckel, Dulcey Laberge\*, Todd Landry, Annette Macaluso, Andrea Mancuso, Ashley McAllister, Deb McSweeney, Kris Pitts, Rebecca Richardson\*, Julian Richter, Tammy Roy, Erika Simonson

\*Guest of the Panel

**9:15 a.m.- Standing Agenda Items**

Update on Coordinator Role: The Panel’s new coordinator, Jenna Joeckel, has just started in her role. Over the next month, she and Kathryn will be working closely together as Kathryn transitions out of her position.

Legislative Update: On 03/29/2022, an amendment to LD 1853, An Act to Support Improvements in Child Protective Services, was adopted. The amendment expands on the Panel’s requirement to submit their annual report to the Health and Human Services Committee by also requiring MCWAP to report out on their work on a quarterly basis. Members noted that this change provides an avenue for recommendations to be made by the Panel more frequently, if needed, rather than waiting for the annual report release. *See attached PowerPoint*.

**9:20 a.m.- New Business**

In November 2021, the Panel identified the need to explore what information regarding citizen feedback is already being gathered- both within and outside of the Panel- so as not to duplicate efforts when seeking input from parents, youth and resource families.

Members had the opportunity to hear from guest panelists regarding data collection within partnering agencies, but first broke into their subcommittee workgroups to discuss perspectives that already exist within the Panel. Subcommittees were asked to consider the three following questions and to document their discussion on a virtual whiteboard:

1. Who is impacted by the subcommittee and recommendation- primarily those with lived experience?
2. From whom do we need to gather feedback?
3. What are the types of feedback that would inform the Panel and your subcommittee work?

When members rejoined the larger group after participating in their breakout sessions, each subcommittee had the opportunity to share their answers to the questions above:

**Family-Centered Policy & Practice**

*Who is impacted by the subcommittee and recommendation- primarily those with lived experience?*

* All families;
* Families affected by domestic violence;
* Professionals who are working with families; and
* Systems change to support families.

*From whom do we need to gather feedback?*

* Families, System leaders, Diverse family serving professionals;

*And what are the types of feedback that would inform the panel and your subcommittee work?*

* Thoughtfully collecting information from parents as to whether or not they had access to the supports they needed to be successful;
* Looking at the continuum of care for families- focus on the before, during and after a child welfare case;
* Feedback from parent attorneys/GAL as to how to best support them in advocating for families;
* Feedback from entry points- schools (bus drivers), childcare providers, doctors, CDS, etc.- on primary prevention efforts.

**Fatherhood Engagement Subcommittee**

*Who is impacted by the subcommittee and recommendation- primarily those with lived experience?*

* Child welfare will benefit from engaging fathers and improve child outcomes.
* Research shows that when dads are active, safe and engaged there are better outcomes.

*And what are the types of feedback that would inform the panel and your subcommittee work?*

* Need to hear from fathers and recognize that the outreach from the subcommittee was challenging and did not result in fathers completing the survey.
* Possible option might be to outreach to fathers involved in cases that closed in the last 6 months.
* Include fathers in the MCWAP parent survey.
* Hear from workers about how they are engaging fathers, locating fathers, paternity testing.
* Engaging when father does not have a relationship with the child…different from when they do.

**Effective & Coordinated Communication Subcommittee**

*Who is impacted by the subcommittee and recommendation- primarily those with lived experience?*

* Resource parents, young people and parents.
* Resource parents need to have the information and platform to advocate for the children they are caring for.

*And what are the types of feedback that would inform the panel and your subcommittee work?*

* Do resource parents understand the process of a case and where they can advocate on behalf of children in their care?
* Resource parents, what information is helping them understand the process of a case and what gaps is there in the information?
* Is there a map that outlines the process of a case and where key decisions are made?
* Do youth, resource parents and parents understand the map of a case (a visual might be helpful)
* Important to ask youth what information they have access to and what information they feel like they need?

Members were thanked and the panelists- Dulcey Laberge, Youth Transition Program Manager, OCFS; Travis Bryant, Executive Director of Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine (AFFM) and The Kinship Program; and Rebecca Richardson, Regional Associate Director, OCFS- were introduced. Each panelist shared a presentation which explored the ways in which their agencies are collecting information from citizens with lived experience. *See attached PowerPoints.*

The group discussed the material presented by the panelists. Members suggested that GALs may require additional training to support youth in feeling comfortable to attend and share their perspectives at court hearings and Family Team Meetings (FTMs). Others wondered what resources exist that outline the rights of youth in custody. The Executive Committee agreed to share additional resources to the Panel after the meeting, including the Maine Youth in Care Bill of Rights and an information sheet regarding the National Youth in Transition Database in Maine. *See attached documents.*

Workgroup Meetings**:** Subcommittees broke out into workout groups and then rejoined the full Panel. During committee reports, groups were asked to share highlights about their current activities, list the Panel members who participated today, and identify the level of OCFS participation that is needed.

1. **Family-Centered policy and practice**

*Andrea, Betsy, Erika, Heidi, Kelly, Senator Bailey, Susan*

Members reported that they talked more about today’s discussion and identified two areas for further consideration: the court process as it relates to inclusion of youth in court hearings, and how information is shared with youth after court hearings when they are not present themselves.

1. **Effective Communication/Coordination**

*Ahmen, Deb M., Kris*

Members spent their time today reviewing information about the resource parent portal that will be introduced through OCFS’ CCWIS system, Katahdin. The group plans to invite an OCFS contact to join them at a future meeting to discuss the portal in greater detail.

1. **Father Engagement**

*Ashley, Tammy, Travis and guests Karen Wyman and Erin Whitham*

Members noted that they have a listening session scheduled for 04/19. While the group had initially struggled to identify interested participants for the listening sessions, a recent expanded outreach effort has resulted in 18 inquiries from interested fathers.

**11:00 a.m. – Adjourn and Next Steps**

Members were notified that they’ll be receiving a poll in the coming weeks regarding the structure of MCWAP meetings. An electronic vote will be held for approval of the March minutes.

**Next Panel Meeting: Virtual Meeting, May 6th, 2022, 9 a.m.- 11 a.m.**