

*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**

**May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 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: Ahmen Cabral, Leigh-Anne Bordas\*, Debra McSweeney, Julian Richter, Lanelle Freeman, Travis Bryant, Adrienne Carmack, Annette Macaluso, Ariel Gannon, Ashley McAllister, Christine Alberi, Senator Donna Bailey, Erika Simonson, Jim Jacobs, Bobbi Johnson, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Libby McCullum, Mark Moran\*, Maura Keaveney, Susan Denoncour, Tammy Roy, Heidi Aaker, Jenna Joeckel

\*Guest of the Panel

#### **9:10 a.m.- Standing Agenda Items**

March and April Minutes: Unanimous vote to approve March and April minutes

Poll Results: 15 out of 21 members participated in the poll.

*Question 1: Are you happy with the current balance between full panel business and subcommittee work in our monthly meetings?*

87% Yes

13% No

*Question 2: What changes if any would you like to see in the MCWAP meeting?*

60% N/A I like the current structure

20% More time give to full panel business

20% more time given to subcommittees.

*Question 3: What do you think about the 2-hour monthly meeting time?*

13% Too long

73% Just right

13% Too short

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

One of the goals identified by MCWAP was to have better communication amongst (or between) the citizen review panels. As a result of that goal, members had the opportunity to hear from guest panelists regarding data collection within partnering agencies. The Justice for Children's Task Force was unable to attend today's meeting and will present their annual report at the June meeting.

Panelists- Mark Moran, CDSIRP Panel Chair; and Christine Alberi, Child Welfare Ombudsman; were introduced. Each panelist shared a presentation and/or information related to the data collection and trends within their annual reports. *See attached annual reports.*

The group was afforded an opportunity to ask the panelists questions and discuss the material presented by the panelists. Members discussed the trends in the CDSIRP annual reports related to Safe Sleep and the difference between co-sleeping and bedsharing. The panel discussed what the current safe sleep recommendations include.

The group also discussed the role of the Ombudsman and the focus being on child welfare practice and policy. Initial investigation activities, and the use of safety planning were identified as the two ongoing focuses of the Ombudsman over the next several years. The Ombudsman discussed the systemic issues that are affecting initial investigations and policy changes that have impacted safety planning. Panelists discussed the importance of ongoing contact with families as well as the importance of understanding and encouraging staff in the field. A member asked how the Ombudsman's office determined areas of focus and raised concerns about possible underlying assumptions regarding parents. A robust conversation followed, and it was determined that this topic could be explored more at a later date with the Ombudsman and interested Panel members.

Legislative Update: As a result of a recommendation from the panel, LD 1824 To Establish the Commission to Develop a Pilot Program to Provide legal Representation to Families in the Child Protection System was passed. A membership of the Commission was created and requires a member of MCWAP to be recommended by MCWAP. Members discussed the need for a representative of children's interests to be included in the Commission. Additionally, members would like to have relative's interests represented. Panel members will put forth nominations to the Panel Coordinator. After nominations are received, a future vote will take place to determine a representative for the committee. Senator Bailey will not be able to be a nominee as she will be the Senate Chair and unable to serve as the MCWAP representative role.

10:40 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, Senator Bailey, Erika, Julian, Kelly, Lanelle, Maura, Heidi, Susan*

Members shared updates about the ongoing agenda items. Members identified the desire to have a more in-depth conversation about youth participation and presence in court. Members also spent time discussing, as a group, who they would like to nominate as a representative for LD 1824. The subcommittee will make a recommendation to the panel coordinator.

#### **Effective Communication/Coordination**

*Adrienne, Ahmen, Debra, Jim, Tammy, and guest of the panel Leigh-Anne Bordas*

Members discussed the new child welfare information management system, Katahdin. Members highlighted the use of the mandated reporting portal and the resource parent portal. Members shared that they feel the portal functionality will support communication improvement. The soft roll out of both portals has been completed. Members are excited for the portal implementation and interface.

#### **Father Engagement**

*Bobbi, Libby, Travis and guests of the panel Karen Wyman and Chris Bicknell*

Members noted that four fathers participated in a listening session that occurred since the last panel meeting. During this session, the fathers shared their experience and perspective regarding their involvement with the child welfare system. Eight additional fathers have expressed their interest in participating in a listening session. The next session will occur in June.

**11:00 a.m. – Adjourn**

**Next Panel Meeting: Virtual Meeting, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, 9 a.m.- 11 a.m.**