

*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**

**January 6, 2023; 9 a.m.11 a.m.**

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

**Panel Coordinator:** Jenna Joeckel

### **Minutes**

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

Attendance: Deb Dunlap, Jenna Joeckel, Ahmen Cabral, Susan Denoncour, Betsy Boardman, Esther Anne, Erika Simonson, Bobbi Johnson, Kris Pitts, Adrienne Carmack, Donna Bailey, Maura Keaveney, Travis Bryant, Andrea Mancuso, Tammy Roy, Melissa Martin, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Libby McCullum, Heidi Aakjer, Todd Landry, Julian Richter, Ashley Morrell, Debra McSweeney,

Guest of the Panel\*- Ed Wiseman, Katie Church, Jamie Brooks

#### **9:10 a.m. – MCWAP Housekeeping Items:**

Opening Statement: Members shared the opening statement

We are a federally mandated group of professionals and private citizens who are responsible for determining whether state and local agencies are effectively discharging child protective and child welfare responsibilities. The mission of the panel 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. Each of us brings to this table a different set of experiences and opinions. Every voice is valued, and all perspectives are needed. Our shared goal is to promote child safety and quality services for children, youth, and families. This is the task to which we continually commit ourselves, and we hold our relationships in trust.

December Minutes: Unanimous vote to approve December minutes.

Bylaw Updates: There are currently 11 votes to approve the bylaws. Panel coordinator will resend the link for bylaw voting by the end of the day, so members have another opportunity to vote.

Legislative Updates: L.D. 41 was published recently and relates to a recommendation that the panel has in the annual report regarding increasing legal pay. The bill can be found here:

<https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0033&item=1&snum=131>

The bill was submitted as emergency legislation. There may be an opportunity for MCWAP to provide testimony. Members note that the increase for Guardian Ad Litem is not reflected in the bill, which was a recommendation made by the panel. If testimony can be provided by MCWAP, panel members will have the opportunity to review the testimony prior to it being submitted. Members voted in favor of providing testimony on the bill. Thirteen members voted to approve, and one member abstained.

Members also noted placeholder bill for any MCWAP recommendations

Statute requires MCWAP to present in front of the HHS committee quarterly and there is a placeholder bill to make that more permanent.

Member Julian Richter has recently accepted a newly created role as the statewide resource counsel for child protection cases through MCILS. In his new role, he will have more flexibility to participate in systemic advocacy efforts.

**9:30 a.m. - New Business:**

Member Representation: Statute requires MCWAP to have members on the panel that fulfill specific roles. A decision was made to include additional supportive roles as well. While some panel members are able to fulfill multiple roles, the bylaws do not allow for members to hold dual roles. The panel needs members that represent the law enforcement community, health and mental health professions, parents and representatives of parent groups, and adult survivors of child abuse or neglect per statute. Additional roles that the panel has identified are individuals representing early childhood development, school systems, and substance use treatment and recovery supports. Panel members suggested several individuals for panel membership and will continue to send suggestions in writing to the executive committee and/or panel coordinator. Membership will be an ongoing discussion at the next meeting. Panel meetings will continue to occur via zoom to promote ongoing participation.

Citizen Input Review: Members were reminded that the citizen input process is a MCWAP statutory duty. A discussion was held regarding the citizen feedback from a resource family and the response that was provided. The MCWAP goal is to look for any patterns and opportunities for a more thorough review. Expanding on the feedback presented, a member outlined a concern regarding the waitlists for children in care to receive appropriate medical and mental health services. Members note that services were a challenge to obtain during the COVID pandemic and express concern that the waitlists have not improved. Members would like to have a deeper discussion about this at the February panel meeting to gain a better understanding as a panel. Members are encouraged to send questions and thoughts to the executive committee and panel coordinator prior to the February meeting.

**9:50 a.m. – Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Presentation:**

Members heard from Melissa Martin and Katie Church from the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA) about the State of Maine’s Child Advocacy Centers. The presentation included information about the purpose and process of CACs in Maine. Presenters included the following programmatic highlights:

- Enhance Early Engagement (E3) Training – pilot designed to improve mental health outcomes for children who have experienced abuse
- All Maine counties now have CAC services available; the Downeast CAC began offering forensic interviews 07/01/2022
- CAC staff are participating in cultural competency training
- The CACs have a partnership with the Good Shepherd Food Bank and 730 household have been supported.
- Outcome Measurement System (OMS) – 372 surveys were completed and have been used for planning and defining success; survey results indicate that families are having positive experiences at the CAC. The surveys help to map out areas of focus for CAC staff.
- Outcomes of CAC Cases for FY22

Discussion:

Members noted that after children are interviewed by the CAC, their time on provider waitlists decreases. Presenters shared that many of the CACs have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with providers that promote a more rapid process and can be utilized when a family is working with the local CAC. CACs receive funding from CJA Funding, the National Children's Alliance and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Victims of Child Abuse Act. The funding is a result of a grant process that CAC staff participate in.

Members participated in a discussion with presenters about the CACs ability to bridge the gap between communities and counties. MECASA recognizes that the needs within counties can vary. A Multidisciplinary Team approach (MDT) is utilized to include as many community agencies and individuals as possible and to represent as many facets of the community as possible. CAC staff include numerous community members so various needs can be identified. Members offered a suggestion to explore services that are available to non-offending parents and other relatives. The panel identified Primary Care Physicians (PCP) as a population that may benefit from additional communication from the CAC. Current practice at the CAC includes referrals to the Spurwink Child Abuse Clinic and MECASA would like to partner with the panel to revisit the PCP suggestion to promote continuation of care.

**10:30 a.m. - FTM Discussion:**

Panel members discussed a correction from the December meeting regarding Family Team Meetings. The goal that was discussed was a panel strategic goal and not a recommendation. A suggestion was made to develop a workgroup charged with exploring the topic more in-depth to provide recommendations back to the full panel, including strategies for data collection and qualitative and quantitative analysis. The group is also tasked with exploring the components that already exist and creating proposals for research and improvement.

**10:50 a.m. – Open Q&A:**

The panel received an update from Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director of Child Welfare regarding OCFS including a review of the draft strategic priorities for the upcoming 4 years.

Annual Report: The Annual Report for 2022 is nearing completion and will be sent out for approval via email vote between meetings. The final report will be published before the end of January.

Subcommittees: Subcommittees continue to meet outside of the regularly scheduled panel meeting.

The **Citizen Engagement Subcommittee** continues to focus on the parent and provider surveys. Members found that it was too big, so they are trying to re-align the survey with what the charge is as a panel as they revise it.

The **Family Centered Policy and Practice Subcommittee** is currently focusing on aftercare for families that have been involved with OCFS and families that have reunified.

The **Lived Experience Subcommittee** continues to explore education and training opportunities available regarding trauma.

OCFS would like to provide representation for each subcommittee. The panel coordinator will send a list of subcommittee members and meeting dates to AD Johnson.

**Next Panel Meeting: February 3, 2023, 9a.m. -11a.m.**