

*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**

**February 3, 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, Julian Richter, Esther Anne, Andrea Mancuso, Maura Keaveney, Senator Donna Bailey, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Bobbi Johnson, Melissa Martin, Tammy Roy, Ashley Morrell, Adrienne Carmack, Erika Simonson, Heidi Aakjer, Susan Denoncour, Travis Bryant, Betsy Boardman, Todd Landry, Deb McSweeney, Kris Pitts, Libby McCullum,

Guest of the Panel-Ed Wiseman, 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.

January Minutes: Unanimous vote to approve January minutes.

Bylaw Approval : Bylaws have been voted on and approved.

Chair Transition Planning: The panel voted to extend Deb Dunlap's co-chair positions through 2023. 14 votes were received in favor.

There is a 6-month transition period outlined in the bylaws for a co-chair position. Members are encouraged to submit nominations to the panel coordinator for co-chair and nominations for another member to sit on executive committee. Members are able to nominate themselves or another member. The co-chair role has to be fulfilled by a citizen member.

A nomination is made for Andrea Mancuso as incoming co-chair. Andrea accepts the nomination.

Legislative Update:

Members discussed the current status of L.D.41: An Act to Increase the Hourly Reimbursement Rate of the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services Lawyers to \$150 per Hour. In a previous meeting, members expressed interest in providing input to legislators on L.D.41. Based on the votes at the last panel meeting, it was determined that the panel will send letters to the Appropriations Committee.

Panel members discussed another bill related to L.D. 41 that has been sponsored by Representative Margaret Craven. Clarification was provided about L.D. 133 113: An Act to Provide Funding for Guardians Ad Litem, which involves the state appropriating \$1M/year to pay Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in child protective cases. A public hearing was held on January 26th, and a work session was held on February 2nd. A majority of the Judiciary Committee voted to support the bill. The bill will be sent from the Judiciary Committee to the House of Representatives for a first vote.

During the discussion, panel members referred to Administrative Order – JB-05-05 that went into effect on November 22, 2021. The administrative order can be found here: <https://www.courts.maine.gov/adminorders/jb-05-05.pdf>

During the recent presentation to the Health and Human Services Committee (HHS), one of the legislators expressed interest in learning more about the abusive head trauma recommendation that the panel has made. The panel is reminded that there is a placeholder bill for MCWAP recommendations.

Annual Report: The 2022 Annual Report has been completed and will be uploaded to the Maine Citizen Review website. Thank you to all members that participated in the creation of the Annual Report and all members for their contribution.

### **9:30 - New Business**

Maine Indian Child Welfare Act Discussion: The Tribal State Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) work group is engaged in legislative discussions regarding the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act, in response to threats to the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act. More information on the Federal ICWA can be found here: <https://narf.org/cases/brackeen-v-bernhardt/>. A legislative bill to ensure Maine's statute reflects best practices in the current Federal ICWA has been submitted but has not been printed yet. If MCWAP members express an interest in submitting letters of support for the bill, the panel will participate in a vote to determine if the group agrees to do so.

Parent/Provider Survey Updates: Every 3 years, the panel is required under the CJA to do a more in-depth review of the child welfare system. As part of this review, the panel gathers information through parent and provider surveys. The panel has identified a goal to have the surveys completed in 2023 for distribution in 2024. Members suggested offering an opportunity to have a facilitated conversation to engage parents. Members suggested further exploration of how the data gathered from the surveys will be used in the future.

### Subcommittee Updates:

The **Citizen Engagement Subcommittee** has been focused on the parent/provider surveys. They have been working on adding consistency and eliminating redundancy in the parent survey. It has been decreased to 15 questions and there has also been a focus on formatting. Subcommittee members are hopeful that the survey will be ready by the end of February for sharing with the panel and would like to have some parent input in March. Next steps for the survey include focusing on distribution with an

emphasis on distribution becoming routine practice. An evaluator is working with the group to ensure standardization of the questions.

The **Family Centered Practice Subcommittee** has been continuing discussion on how to improve coordination of aftercare services. The subcommittee is going to explore how aftercare can be connected to the broader Family Team Meeting (FTM) panel discussion. Some of the information that the group would like to gather include when and where community service providers are involved, how they are invited to FTMs, and what the process is. The subcommittee members outline next steps including reaching out to the Ombudsman office and OCFS to gain information about their annual reports.

The **Lived Experience Subcommittee** is developing trauma informed best practices. The group is considering a target audience to be legislative with a goal of the first training occurring in the fall. The training will create a resource for those listening and share how to uplift multiple perspectives. The group is also exploring methods for design and delivery for implementing the training in the fall. Subcommittee members are exploring ways to compensate individuals that are participating in the training and are seeking information about available funding from the father engagement funding or from CJA funding that is available. The group is hopeful to bring in a perspective with lived experience and gain some clarification about compensation.

The **Family Team Meeting (FTM) Subcommittee** is in the process of developing. The panel co-chair will send out an email to members that expressed interest in participating in the FTM subcommittee today after the meeting.

Children's Services Discussion: Todd Landry, Director of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) presented to the panel. Two resources are provided for panel members to review including the 2022 Behavioral Health Report, which can be found here <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/data-reports-initiatives/system-improvements-initiatives/childrens-behavioral-health-evaluation-improvement> and a blog post about Historic Payment Reforms for Behavioral Health, which can be found here: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/blog/maine-dhhs-announces-historic-payment-reforms-behavioral-health-2023-01-11>. There are also slides available on the HHS committee website. Members were provided with time during the meeting to review both documents and prepare for a subsequent discussion.

Dr. Landry presented information on Federal 1115 waivers. OCFS is involved in 3 waivers.

- To expand Mainecare coverage for individuals who have an open case with CPS. This waiver would ensure individuals have Mainecare coverage and is connected to people that have been substance use disorder (SUD).
- To expand Family Visit Coaching. Family Visit Coaching is a visitation model piloted in District 6 (Penobscot and Piscataquis County). Family visitation is not a service that is MaineCare covered. The family coaching is a model that includes a coach. The child visits in the home and the coach provides attachment education, plans and understands child development, and promotes parental interaction with the children. Through 1115 waiver, the family visit coaching program is specific to families with SUD but there is additional funding to implement it to others, but not statewide. Five of the Eight districts will benefit from the service and OCFS is balancing funding to cover as much geographical area as possible.

- The third waiver that is related to the ABC model, which is an evidence-based program. A grant has been implemented in Maine and is currently in the evaluation process. More information about the ABC program can be found here: <https://www.abcintervention.org/about/>

Members engaged in a discussion about children that need behavioral health services and waitlists that are impacting their ability to access the services. One of the challenges related to the ability to access services is the limited workforce. New Mainecare reimbursement rates went into effect on 01/01/2023 and one of the goals for the higher reimbursement rates is to address that the workforce issue. Providers have the opportunity, with higher rates, to recruit and retain new professionals.

OCFS is utilizing funding that is available to provide upfront training for professionals to get trained in evidence-based models including Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Positive Parenting, and Family Functional Therapy. Promoting quality and fidelity in these evidence-based models promotes better outcomes for children and families as well as long term sustainability. Additional training opportunities that were opened include MATCH and RUBI.

Link to PDF on MATCH training can be found here:

[https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/MATCH%20Training%20Flyer\\_May%20and%20July%202022.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/MATCH%20Training%20Flyer_May%20and%20July%202022.pdf)

The Children's Behavioral Health Data Dashboard can be found here for additional information on trends: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/data-reports-initiatives/childrens-behavioral-health>

Members engaged in a discussion regarding children exhibiting behavioral challenges while in the Emergency Department (ED). When OCFS receives a call from the hospital, it is reviewed through the intake process to determine if an investigation needs to happen. Due to confidentiality, those results are unable to be shared and sometimes there is an assumption that nothing happens when actions have taken place. There are often situations happening behind the scenes that involve families who have tried many different pathways for support and have made active efforts to move to the appropriate level of care. The goal is always that OCFS can partner with the family and community partners to build solutions for the children involved. Members discussed using Children's Behavioral Health program coordinators as a resource and contacting them when a child is in the ED for discharge planning if the family is unable to take the child home due to safety concerns. It is beneficial for youth to be in as least restrictive of an environment as possible while still sustaining support.

Another service that is available is Crisis aftercare services. Crisis aftercare services were implemented in Aroostook County. Crisis aftercare services connects families with teams of appropriate clinicians and other support areas that are in the ED to prevent re-entry into the ED. The service has been expanded statewide to facilitate quicker discharges from ED and ensure families are supported to prevent re-entry. The initial evaluation data have been positive.

The organizations that support Crisis after services are as follows:

District 1- Sweetser

District 2 – The Opportunity Alliance

District 3 & 4– Sweetser

District 5- Crisis & Counseling

District 6 – Community Health and Counseling

District 7 & 8 – Aroostook Mental Health Center (AMHC)

Children’s Behavioral Health is committed to rebuilding a system of care. CBHS and Child welfare are connected. Appropriated funds for CBHS also supports those involved with Child Welfare and both need to be well supported and well-funded.

Open Q&A

A member shared that members of the Guardian ad Litem board are deciding what trainings would be beneficial to provide over the next year and welcomes ideas from panel members.

**10:50 p.m. – Adjourn**

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