

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

March 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, Ahmen Cabral, Julian Richter, Ed Wiseman, Kris Pitts, Susan Denoncour, Libby McCullum, Maura Keaveney, Jamie Brooks, Tammy Roy, Jenna Joeckel, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Adrienne Carmack, Senator Donna Bailey, Melissa Martin, Travis Bryant, Todd Landry, Esther Anne, Heidi Aakjer, Bobbi Johnson, Betsy Boardman, Andrea Mancuso, Deb McSweeney, Ashley Morrell

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.

February Minutes: An edit to the second paragraph on page two of the minutes was suggested by a panel member. The revised minutes will reflect “child protective cases” where “family matter cases” are currently documented. Upon this edit the minutes are approved by the panel with 14 votes to approve and none opposed.

Transition Planning: Members were encouraged to vote for the co-chair and executive committee nominations.

Membership: A suggestion was made to explore possible members from more rural areas to represent healthcare professional roles. Additional suggestions for potential members can be sent to the panel coordinator. The executive committee shared a list of possible members for approval to invite to the panel. There was no verbalized opposition to invitations.

9:20 - New Business

GAL/Parent Attorney Rate Update: Members discussed the allocations for increasing rates for appointed counsel and Guardians ad Litem to \$150 per hour. The ongoing discussion involves the question of whether to decouple those two rates. There is currently a state statute and administrative order with the Judicial Branch that states those two rates should be the same. The supplemental budget had language

in it that indicated the Judicial Branch could set a lower rate. There is dialogue about whether that statute can be repealed all together. The budget is currently authorized until the end of the fiscal year and is not guaranteed after June 30, 2023. Members discussed the challenges around the policy decision and the possible conflict in roles depending on who is determining what the ongoing rate will be for GALs. If the statute is repealed, the judicial branch could revoke their administrative order. A robust discussion took place about the roles that GALs have in child protective cases and the relation to CAPTA laws. Members would like to have a future conversation about the various roles. Members can notify the panel coordinator if interested in putting a presentation together in preparation for the conversation. Members agree that a presentation would be helpful to have a visual clarification of roles as it has been described to young people in a range of ways, and to know what the expectation is for the GAL for the youth, resource families, and kin. A suggestion was made to include roles and intended outcomes. Kaela Scott, GAL Services Coordinator, will be invited to the discussion.

Justice for Children Task Force Presentation: Betsy Boardman, Overview of annual report.

Betsy Boardman from the Judicial Branch provided an overview and update from the Justice for Children Task Force (JCTF) including information about the Parent Curriculum, Race and Equity Data Assessment, Information Sharing, and Continuing Education Subcommittee.

The link to the Annual Report can be found here:

<https://www.mecitizenreviewpanels.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/JCTF-2022-Annual-Report-2.pdf>

Subcommittee and Member Updates:

The **Family Team Meeting (FTM) subcommittee** met yesterday and is gathering information about FTMs including past practice and building infrastructure. The subcommittee members are completing historical research regarding surveys that have been previously administered to participants. Members are also exploring an electronic version of the survey. In the past members had an opportunity to fill out a survey at the end of each FTM. The next meeting will take place in April.

The **Citizen Engagement Subcommittee** continues to focus on the parent survey. Intentional questions around education and medical needs have been added. The group focused on questions and information gathering. The next steps include ensuring follow up questions are appropriate for ICWA related cases, outreach, and administration. It will then go back to Dr. Somers for review and feedback. The subcommittee has held discussions about parents with lived experience completing a review prior to administration.

The **Family Centered Practice Subcommittee** met in February and solidified next steps in terms of data requests from OCFS related to policy exploration. The group plans to meet again in March.

The **Lived Experience Subcommittee** has taken steps to revisit the original recommendation and decided to include child welfare partners. The next steps identified include developing a training outline with a goal of offering a training in the late spring or early fall. The next subcommittee meeting is March 13, 2023 @ 11:00AM.

Member Updates-

- The GAL Review Board is in the process of developing a curriculum for continuing education. Some considerations for the curriculum are Safety Science and Lived Experience including what that means and how it applies to GALs.

- Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine is having an annual conference in April. The brochure can be found here: <https://affm.net/support/training/annual-spring-conference/>
- April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Members are open to opportunities to collaborate. Senator Bailey is willing to sponsor a resolution to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. Members are encouraged to wear blue on March 31st to spread awareness.
- The Hall of Flags event is taking place in Augusta on March 16, 2023. YLAT and Jobs for Maine Graduates will be speaking at the event.
- Opportunity Passport has matched 200 million dollars for youth in the State of Maine
- Mainecare insurance covers young people through age 26. Young people would like to remove the annual renewal because if they don't renew, it can result in medical debt. The renewal is an administrative task because they are automatically covered by the insurance.
- Looking ahead, in April, OCFS will be presenting information to the panel about the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). In May, there will be discussion about any panel needs that are identified and in June, the panel will be looking back on goals identified. Members are encouraged to send additional agenda topics to the panel coordinator.

OCFS Q&A

OCFS appreciates the feedback that MCWAP provides on draft policies. The policy coordinator is retiring. As a result, there may be a gap in the process as OCFS continues to move that work forward and fill that position.

Next Panel Meeting: April 7, 2023, 9a.m. -11a.m.