

*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**

**November 3, 2023; 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.**

**Co-Chairs:** Ahmen Cabral; Andrea Mancuso

**Panel Coordinator:** Jenna Joeckel

### **Minutes**

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

Attendance: Andrea Mancuso, Tammy Roy, Ahmen Cabral, Brent Beaulieu, Senator Donna Bailey, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Julie Smyth, Deb Dunlap, Heidi Aakjer, Taylor, Dr. Adrienne Carmack, Melissa Martin, Melissa Hackett, Kathryn Bryce, Michelle Westbrook, Chelsea Peters, Bobbi Johnson, Kris Pitts, Maura Keaveney, Beth Gagnon, Betsy Boardman

Guests of the Panel –Christine Theriault, Mariette Arbon, Michael Dixon, Penthea Burns

#### **9:10 a.m. Opening Statement:**

Members shared the opening statement and reviewed the MCWAP shared values.

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.

#### **9:15 – MCWAP Housekeeping Items:**

Members unanimously vote to approve the October meeting minutes.

#### **9:35 a.m. New Business:**

##### **Update on Status of recommendations:**

Members were provided the opportunity to review recommendations in preparation for the voting process. All of the recommendations that were put forth for panel consideration were approved through voting. The executive committee will begin drafting the MCWAP annual report and OCFS will draft responses to the recommendations in the report.

##### **Subcommittee updates:**

- Family Centered Policy and Practice Subcommittee – (Assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community). Over the summer, this group created a parking lot for future topics. In October, the group reviewed this parking lot and discussed additional information needed and partners with whom they plan to invite to participate in further discussions.
- Citizen Engagement Subcommittee – (Reviews and advocates for parent and youth voice. The current work has focused on the parent and provider surveys and the process to ensure citizens understand the child welfare process while engaging with OCFS). This subcommittee has focused on engaging youth voice and partners with lived experience. The last meeting focused on the survey dissemination process and the next priority is the provider survey. The parent survey will be administered in 2024.
- Family Team Meeting (FTM) Subcommittee – This subcommittee met recently and will be co-led by Kelly and Erika. They will schedule ongoing meetings in the near future.
- OCFS Liaisons- Amanda Hollander from OCFS has been participating in the Citizen Engagement subcommittee, which has been helpful to make the connection between the survey questions and OCFS policy. The OCFS liaisons for the FTM Subcommittee are Stephanie Wiken and Bobbi Johnson. The family centered policy and practice subcommittee liaison is Vickie Brayall.

Annual Report Development: The MCWAP annual report includes the panel recommendations, OCFS response, a synopsis of each meeting through the year, an update on previous recommendations and progress, updates to the legislative process, and a full membership list which includes new members. There is a framework which makes the report easier to draft.

#### Panel Member Updates:

Dr. Carmack provided updates regarding meeting the medical needs of youth in care. The OCFS Nurse Consultants provide outreach to caseworkers and resource parents to connect them with resources in the community. The Pediatric Psychiatric Mental Health Access Grant was recently transferred to OCFS. The purpose of this grant is to assist pediatricians accessing consultation when they are treating children through their practices that do not have access to a psychiatrist.

Pediatric Behavioral Health Partnership – resources for providers and families

Link: <https://www.bhpartnersforme.org/>

The team has also created a link to resources for support due to the shooting in Lewiston that is available on the OCFS website.

Oral Health: Tammy and Dr. Carmack are meeting with the Children’s Oral Health Network to learn about a grant for ensuring dental access for children in care. More information will be provided when available.

Panel members raised the question as to how young people in care are prioritized for access to behavioral health services. Custody status does not impact a child's eligibility for services. Their eligibility is based on their level of need and diagnoses. Waitlists are prioritized for any children who need to transition to a less restrictive level of care.

Panel Members shared that the Maine Recovery Council recently disseminated a survey regarding the use of opioid recovery funds. Panel members are invited to share suggestions around the use of the opioid settlement funds to this address – [info.recoverycouncil@maine.gov](mailto:info.recoverycouncil@maine.gov)

The survey can be accessed via this link:

[https://qualtricsxmfwms54hzt.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bvI9ghpc2SWNQjk](https://qualtricsxmfwms54hzt.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bvI9ghpc2SWNQjk)

### **10:00 am: Maine Child and Family Well-Being Plan Overview and Questions**

Mariette Aborn, Christine Theriault, Deb Dunlap, Melissa Hackett

Please see attached PowerPoint for the complete presentation

Discussion:

1. What role do you play in strengthening families? What are you already doing in alignment with this Plan?

Panel members shared that they are impressed with the work on this plan and the strategies developed. A panel member representing the Department of Education highlighted championing community schools and discussed positions within the Office of School and Student Supports including a specialist focusing on family engagement and cultural responsiveness. Panel members are encouraged to connect with Julie Smyth of the DOE with questions or comments. Information regarding Community Schools can be accessed via this link: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/safeschools/communityschools>.

Panel members shared activities that are aligned with strengthening families including engaging YLAT and the Young People's Caucus to lift up their voices. Members also stressed that the lack of affordable child care resources, especially infant care, impacts a parent's ability to return to work and their economic stability.

Panel members are encouraged to contact Deb Dunlap, Mariette Aborn, or Melissa Hackett if there are connected with a group or resource that could be represented in MCWAN.

2. When you think about the strategies in the Plan, what resonates with you as being the most helpful to families?

Panel members shared that wraparound services and the team approach is helpful for families and discussed that a family may become overwhelmed by piecemealing services together for themselves and their children.

Panel members discussed the importance of educating people on what it means to sustain healthy communities, health families and each other. There are opportunities to measure success through increases in protective factors and looking through a strength-based perspective with the family at the center. Strengthening families through increased access to basic needs and resources will promote success for these families.

3. We want the strategies in the Plan to promote greater equity for children and families across Maine. What should we do or consider to achieve this outcome?

Panel members discussed strategies including ensuring that conversations are occurring with partners who may not always be represented. This would include building partnerships that may have not been previously identified. Members discussed that this could include outpatient methadone treatment

processes for infants born substance exposed to promote children being able to be discharged home with their families and not remaining hospitalized for treatment.

Members also discussed a survey that was previously completed with youth leadership. The results of this survey revealed that youth are not always participating in discussions because they did not believe their voice would impact change. Encouraging a sense of belonging and building relationships which lead to greater involvement by youth, increase youth perceptions that they are change makers, and improvements to their overall well-being.

4. What other supports or services to strengthen families should we consider for Version 2.0?

Panel members suggested Family Centered Coaching or Whole Family Coaching to empower the family to think about what their needs are rather than being told what their needs are, and also suggested including parent serving organizations to facilitate mapping out the resources that are available to parents and ensuring that tribal communities are represented.

MCWAN will be distributing a community program survey, and this will be forwarded to all panel members. Members are encouraged to complete this survey.

The Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan (Version 1.0) is located at this link:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/2023-05/Maine%20Child%20Safety%20and%20Family%20Wellbeing%20Plan.pdf>

**10:40 a.m. Next Steps: Adjourn**

**Next Panel Meeting: December 1, 2023**