

## Maine Justice for Children Task Force

September 12, 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

### MEETING NOTES

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Judge Brent Davis, Betsy Boardman, Caroline Jova, Sarah Branch, Kelly Dell'Aquila, Francine Garland Stark, Esther Anne, Kaela Scott, Jamie Brooks, Ariel Piers-Gamble, Christine Thibeault, Chris Bicknell, Amanda Brownell, Melissa Martin, Travis Bryant, Commissioner Mike Sauschuck, Dr. Todd Landry, Norma Saulis, Bobbi Johnson, Jim Billings, Ann Marie Lemire, Cassie Rodgers, Christine Alberi, Bette Hoxie, Xi Chen, and Joanna Davis.

**Welcome** (10:00 a.m. - 10:05 a.m.) - Chief Judge Brent Davis

#### Approval of the June 2023 Meeting Notes

- Minutes were unanimously approved without discussion.

#### Citizen Review Panel Updates: (10:05 – 10:45 a.m.)

- **Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel (MCWAP):** Andrea Mancuso, MCWAP Co-Chair, Public Policy Director, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence and Ahmen Cabral, MCWAP Co-Chair, Senior Policy Associate, Catherine Cutler Institute, University of Southern Maine
  - 2023 Priorities:
    - Updating parent and provider surveys;
    - Developing lived experience training;
    - Reviewing and promoting use of contingency funds; and
    - Continuing to study Family Team Meetings.
  - The panel has taken the summer off, but workgroups have been preparing recommendations for the panel's upcoming annual meeting.
- **Maine Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel (CDSIRP):** Dr. Amanda Brownell, Child Abuse Pediatrician, Medical Director, Spurwink Center for Safe and Healthy Families, CDSIRP Co-Chair and Mark Moran, LCSW, Manager, Social Services, Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center, Coordinator, Pediatric Forensic Clinical
  - The panel has completed new bylaws over the last couple of years.
  - Increased collaboration and communication with MCWAP and Justice for Children Task Force, including meetings with leadership from each panel.

#### Updates (10:45 a.m. - 11: 15 a.m.)

- **An Organizational Update from the Maine Judicial Branch – Chief Judge Brent Davis**
  - PC filings: Jan 1 – Sept 8, 692 original filings; 686 new filings last year during the same period.
  - GAL Core Training during fall admin week (October 24-27)
    - <https://www.courts.maine.gov/info/gals.html>
  - New Family Division Rules have been posted for comment.

- Maine eCourts Update: October 23<sup>rd</sup> Lewiston District Court and Androscoggin Superior Court will be implemented for family and civil matters, except for civil violations and protection order matters. Attorneys and self-represented individuals filing more than 6 cases per year are required e-filings. Maine Judicial Branch is providing ongoing training and resources for this implementation. Litigants and attorneys should familiarize themselves with the Maine Rules of Electronic Court Systems.
  - <https://odysseyfileandservecloud.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/8971375644429-Live-Webinar->
  - <https://www.courts.maine.gov/ecourts/efile.html>
  - [https://www.courts.maine.gov/rules/text/mrecs\\_2021-03-15.pdf](https://www.courts.maine.gov/rules/text/mrecs_2021-03-15.pdf)
- **An Organizational Update from the Office of the Attorney General-** Ariel Piers-Gamble, Assistant Attorney General, Chief of the Child Protective Division
  - 2,440 cases statewide. Down to 25 trial attorneys with two current vacancies.
  - Appeals have decreased slightly from last year. Hunter Umphrey handled 77 cases and oversaw 3 last year.
  - Office currently has an intern from Maine Law.
  - OAG was heavily involved in the drafting of Maine ICWA, which went into effect in June of this year.
  - Continues to assist with foundations training for new caseworkers, including mock trials.
- **An Organizational Update from the Office of Child and Family Services-** Dr. Todd Landry, Director & Bobbi Johnson, Associate Director
  - Legislative session:
    - Maine ICWA—OCFS provided technical assistance in drafting the bill.
    - Department bill re: information sharing with hospitals and law enforcement partners to collaborate on investigations. That will go into effect in October.
  - Budget: OCFS put forward several children’s behavioral initiatives to be funded. All initiatives were passed, resulting in about \$16 million in funding as of October.
  - Policy:
    - Cooperative agreement with Catherine Cutler Institute to hire family engagement specialists.
    - Since January: updated resource home licensing policy, created entry into care policy, update youth transition policy, updated missing and runaway policy, DV policy, ICWA policy, child protective investigation policy to help reduce redundancies.
    - Looking at what should be standalone policies, instead of embedded in others.
- **An Organizational Update from the Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services-** Jim Billings, Executive Director
  - Attended annual Maine Parental Rights Attorney conference.
  - Working internally on a recruitment plan for parent attorneys.
  - Has had discussions with OAG’s office re: mutual interests for collaboration.
- **An Organizational Update Youth Justice Clinic at Maine Law-** Jill Ward, Director, Chris Northrop, Professor and CO-Director of Clinical Programs
  - Multi-disciplinary training 2 day at law school at end of September for attorneys interested in representing youth in delinquency cases.

**Strategic Plan Updates (11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)**

- **Race and Equity Committee Update:**
  - Committee took summer off and will regroup in October.
- **Parent Curriculum Workgroup Update:**
  - Monthly sessions, to date 32 parent sessions and 30 provider sessions.
  - Most recently presented to District Court clerks and mailed flyers to the courts for distribution.
  - Meets monthly with OCFS staff.
  - In the process of securing ongoing funding.
- **Continuing Education Subcommittee:**
  - Tentative theme: Life of a Protective Custody Case from Investigation to Permanency
  - April 4-5, 2024
- **Parent Attorney/GAL Retention and Recruitment Subcommittee:**
  - First committee meeting discussed necessary membership.
  - Next meeting is September 18, 2023.

**Other:**

- Path to Healing and Wellness Conference September 27-29, 2023 in Bar Harbor, facilitated by Judge Eric Mehnert. Goal of establishing tribal wellness court.
- September is National Kinship Month. Most recent census information indicates around 17,600 children living with their grandparents as primary caregivers.

**Remaining 2023 Meeting Dates: December 12, 2023**

**ADJOURNED 10:59 a.m.**