

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 7, 2025; 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Co-Chairs: Ahmen Cabral; Andrea Mancuso

Panel Coordinator: Jenna Joeckel

Minutes

9:30 a.m. - Welcome and Introductions:

Attendance: Andrea Mancuso, Melissa Hackett, Jenna Joeckel, Jamie Brooks, Taylor Kilgore, Ashley Perry, Maura Keaveney, Erika Simonson, Christine Hufnagel, Molly Owens, Betsy Boardman, Julie Smyth, Jean Haynes, Bobbi Johnson, Senator Donna Bailey, Sarah Langevin, Esther Anne, Travis Bryant, Adrienne Carmack, Beth Gagnon, Kathryn Brice, Abbie Rohde, Michelle Westbrook

*Guest of the Panel – Ashleigh Barker, Elizabeth Ward, Darcy Fisher, Mark Moran

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.

Members participated in a review of the Panel Values Statement.

9:10 a.m. – MCWAP Housekeeping:

Sarah Langevin and Jamie Brooks were welcomed to the Panel as voting members

Melissa Hackett was welcomed to the Executive Committee.

The panel voted on and approved the February minutes.

The Annual Report is ready to be reviewed by the Executive Committee and will be sent to the Panel the week following the Panel meeting.

During the February Panel meeting, a discussion took place about gaps and challenges that providers are feeling around collaboration with OCFS. Panel members expressed a desire to have a future discussion around this topic. The Panel is invited to meet with the Associate Director of OCFS, Jean Haynes, to discuss gaps that are being observed. The Co-chair of the Panel will also be connecting with the National

Association of Social Workers (NASW) to gather information to add to the conversation. Panel members are encouraged to contact the Panel Coordinator with interest in participation in the group discussion.

During the February Panel meeting, Rebecca Richardson, OCFS Manager of Child Welfare Strategy and Policy Implementation provided a follow up for OCFS Policy Review. The Executive Committee had an opportunity to meet with the Associate Director of OCFS. The Panel will develop a subcommittee to review policies and provide feedback to OCFS. Panel members that are interested in being part of the subcommittee are encouraged to reach out to the Panel Coordinator.

MCWAP members Chelsea Peters has changed professional roles from an attorney that represents parents to an attorney that represents children with special needs and is interested in remaining on the Panel in her new role. The Panel Bylaws allows for an individual that has experience working with children with disabilities and that seat is currently vacant on the Panel. A recommendation was made to change Chelsea's role on the Panel from Attorneys involved in both civil and criminal court proceedings related to child abuse and neglect to Individuals experienced in working with children with disabilities. An electronic vote regarding role change will be sent to members after the Panel meeting.

9:20 a.m. - Justice for Children Task Force Report Presentation by Betsy Boardman, Esq

Betsy Boardman, Esq provided an update on the 2024 Annual Report for the Justice for Children Task Force. The presentation included information about the mission, the structure and content of meetings, strategic plan items including Information Sharing, Parent curriculum, Race and Equity Data Collection, and Parent Attorney & Guardian ad Litem Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee. The presentation also included information about the Continuing Education Subcommittee efforts. The presentation slides are attached to the minutes.

9:40a.m. Presentation on the 2024 Child Advocacy Center Annual Report

Elizabeth Ward, Director of the Maine Coalition to end Sexual Assault and the Director of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Bobbi Johnson shared information about the Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers. The presentation included information about the history of Child Advocacy Centers, accreditation, the model, advocacy efforts, statistics, funding, and the referral process. Presenters provided clarification around the populations that make referrals to the CAC being limited to OCFS staff and law enforcement. The Annual report is still pending at this time and will be sent to the Panel upon completion.

Additional information about Children's Advocacy Centers can be found here: [Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers - Home](#)

Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion centered around the referral process and further clarification about the criteria that qualifies an individual for a CAC referral. Presenters outlined that if there is suspicion of sexual abuse by law enforcement, a CAC referral is made. There are some exceptions, but the focus is sexual abuse. There is some flexibility to provide services for special circumstances and the multidisciplinary teams support those determinations.

Additional Resources Include:

The Children's Safety Network: [Homepage | Children's Safety Network](#)

The Children's Safety Partnership: [Ending Child Sexual Abuse Together - Home](#)

10:25a.m. Presentation on the 2023-2024 Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel (CDSIRP) Annual Report

Mark Moran, Chair of the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Panel presented on the 2023-2024 Annual Report. The presentation included information about reviews the Panel participated in, both individually and jointly with the Domestic Abuse & Homicide Panel, the Panel's quarterly reports to the Health and Human Services Committee, and a review of the Panel recommendations. The Annual report and recommendations can be found on the Citizen Review Website: [Maine Child Welfare Citizen Review Panels | Maine](#)

Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion centered around the following recommendation from the report:

The Maine Legislature should propose and pass a bill requiring children to wear helmets when riding or operating motorized recreational vehicles, regardless of whether the recreational vehicle is being operated on public or private property.

Members were interested in learning more about the current headgear requirements for children that are in the care and custody of the State of Maine. Currently, resource parents are required to follow Maine State Laws and there are no additional requirements.

Information about Mandated Reporting was provided to the Panel at a prior meeting. Panel Member Melissa Hackett offered to provide additional information about the steps that are being taken to support Mandated Reporting. Members were reminded that there is a need to engage and mobilize a broader community to support families.

10:52a.m. OCFS Updates

Jean Haynes, Associate Director of OCFS, provided the following updates:

- The Resource Parent Bill of Rights has been released and OCFS staff are receiving training on it.
- The decision-making framework is being reviewed to continue to empower OCFS staff to feel more confident in decision making.
- There is some data available regarding ED and hoteling updates. This will be added to the June Panel agenda
- Policies that have been finalized include the Caseworker Contact Policy, Period of Purple Crying and Safe Sleep, and the Use of Expert Consultation When Investigating Child Abuse and/or Neglect Policy.
- OCFS has submitted 3 bills to the Legislature that they continue to follow
- The Director of OCFS is completing biweekly presentations to the Health and Human Services Committee.
- The Strategic Plan is in the development stage. Part of the final product of the plan is going to be a response from OCFS to all the recommendations that have been received over the last few years.

OCFS will have additional time on the June agenda to provide updates to the Panel.

10:59 a.m. Subcommittee Updates

Aftercare Subcommittee – Panel members that want to participate in this subcommittee are encouraged to reach out to Kelly Dell'Aquila or Melissa Hackett

Family Team Meeting (FTM) Subcommittee -A meeting is scheduled to take place in March. OCFS will be attending the April meeting to discuss the work that is taking place within the agency around FTMs.

Next Panel Meeting: June 6, 2024, 9 a.m. – 11a.m.