

Office of Child and Family Services MCWAP Update

June 6, 2025



2024 Recommendations

- **Create a Plan to Improve the Availability of Needed Services and Supports** – OCFS agrees that as a state, it is critical to build capacity in programs to increase the availability of services statewide and continues to meet internally and externally to explore and implement innovative solutions. OCFS has participated in an OpEx review to identify the most effective way to respond as a state to complex cases, identify pathways for collaboration and increase knowledge across programs.
- **Address the Critical need to Improve Family Team Meetings Practices Statewide** - OCFS has begun exploring the implementation of Family Team Meeting Facilitators in each district. Additionally, the OCFS CQI team will begin evaluating Family Team Meetings quality and frequency and will make recommendations for process improvement.
- **Improve Information Sharing on Child Deaths** - OCFS currently reports all child deaths to CDSIRP and the Ombudsman. If the Health and Human Services Committee requests information related to a death of a child in state custody, OCFS shares that information within the bounds of state and federal confidentiality laws. Additionally, OCFS has recently joined the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention. OCFS did not act on Part 3 of this recommendation as it is directed to the CDSIRP.
- **Address Misaligned Aggravating Factor** - OCFS does not intend to act on this recommendation. OCFS believes the statute as currently written provides an important legal tool for safety and timely permanency for children.

2024 MCWAP Recommendations Cont.

- **Reinforce the Requirement to Provide Reasonable Efforts to Rehabilitate and Reunify Families** – OCFS continues to follow the provisions in statute to provide reasonable efforts to reunify parents. This process is closely overseen by the District Court Judge who makes an independent and impartial determination which OCFS believes is the most appropriate path to balance oversight and accountability.
- **Consider Trauma to Children of Removal from Family** - The Department has invested in Family First Prevention Services with the goal of preventing removal whenever safely possible. As part of the investigation and removal process OCFS will continue to consider all possibilities before removal and weighing the harm of removal with the harm of child abuse and neglect.
- OCFS will not act on the second portion of this recommendation regarding statutory timeframes for the summary preliminary hearing as this is best directed to the Maine Judicial Branch.
- **Expand Regional Care Teams to Include Youth and Families** – OCFS believes this recommendation is too broad to effectively implement due to the number of families considered "at risk" . There is already a case review system in place through supervision, TDM, court oversight, permanency reviews and clinical support reviews. OCFS has a dedicated Youth Transition team of staff and provide support including financial to youth through age 23. The remainder of the recommendation related to the Legislature providing funding to additional state agencies is outside of the Department's authority.

Legislation

Adjournment is scheduled for June 18th, although this date is subject to change. Committee work is completed, bills now sit with the House and Senate, and the Budget is with AFA.

Department - OCFS Bills

- LD 84: An Act to Improve the Coordination of Health Care for Minors in State Care
 - Access to Health InfoNet (HIN) (OTP-AM)
- LD 122: An Act to Update Certain Laws Regarding Extended Care and Adoption
 - Changes to the law to only require judicial reviews for young adults (age 18, 19, and 20; not age 22-23) on a Voluntary Extended Care Agreement
 - Requires OCFS to provide notice to youth age 14 and older of upcoming judicial reviews
 - Clarify language in the Alumni Transition Grant Program to allow for the participation in training programs as eligible for the grant. Removes an exception in the rules governing adoption allowing a court considering a petition for adoption of a minor child to receive results of a background check conducted by the department.
 - (Majority OTP-AM, divided report)
- LD 156: An Act to Improve Notifications Related to Substance-exposed Infants
- LD 1001: An Act to Prohibit Medical Providers and Certain Others from Reporting Prescribed Medication-assisted Treatment of Parents to Child Protective Services
 - (156 – OTP-AM, 1001 - ONTP)

• Legislative Workgroup Process

OCFS Strategic Plan

- OCFS created a strategic plan identifying its primary objectives, strategies and outcomes for 2025-2027.
- Key child welfare areas include – **M**aximizing Safety, **A**chieving Permanency, **I**ncreasing Well-Being, **N**avigating Policy and Practice and **E**ngaging the Child Welfare Workforce
- Appendices of the plan include:
 - a. The review and response to over 200 recommendations from stakeholders and staff for child welfare improvements.
 - b. Recent accomplishments
- Implementation and data tracking will begin in July

PCG

- Management Re-Organization has been in effect for almost a year and has been going well.
- The Decision-Making Framework was released in January 2025. PCG is currently working on a 2.0 version based on staff feedback.
- OCFS and PCG are currently working on a framework to address adaptive challenges within district offices. This framework is currently being rolled out in District 3 to address staff retention.
- Communication Plan has been developed centered around the values of relationship building and connection, transparency, and listening to build collaborative, innovation solutions together.
- Other activities include – leadership training and strengthening the CQI process

Questions

Director Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW
Associate Director Jean Haynes

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