

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

December 5, 2025; 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: Jenna Joeckel, Ahmen Cabral, Andrea Mancuso, Maura Keaveney, Beth Gagnon, Senator Donna Bailey, Taylor Kilgore, Molly Owens, Christine Hufnagel, Erika Simonson, Julie Smythe, Jean Haynes, Sarah Langevin, Melissa Hackett, Heidi Aakjer, Katherine Brice, Ashley Perry, Travis Bryant, Adrienne Carmack

Guests of the Panel- Carlie Fischare, Kristina Famolare, Kaela Scott, Christine Theriault

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.

9:05 a.m. MCWAP Housekeeping:

The panel voted on and approved the October minutes

Members were reminded that OCFS is holding Focus Groups regarding Family Team Meetings, which has been a focus of the MCWAP Panel. If members are interested in participating in the focus group, please notify the Panel Coordinator prior to end of the Panel meeting.

The link for the compiled recommendations was shared and can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HimbpldXTsHsWyc0YVaotxuexTgHgsK-cjfN2Xy6-WM/edit?gid=0#gid=0> Members were encouraged to continue to add updates to the document along with their initials and were reminded that it is subject to FOAA.

Members are also reminded to complete the Annual MCWAP retreat evaluation at the following link:

<https://forms.gle/RHGv2zpjD4mMbiHa7>

9:15 a.m. Contingency Fund Discussion:

Jean Haynes, Associate Director of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) provided a presentation regarding Contingency Funds. The presentation included a review of the legislation related to

contingency funds, eligibility criteria, steps for accessibility, data from the last three years and steps that have been taken to provide awareness about funding for staff. The presentation slide deck is included in the minutes.

Discussion: The Panel reviewed discrepancies between the legislation governing contingency funds and current implementation practices. When the funding was first established, OCFS elected to limit families to a one-time use to ensure statewide availability. With additional funding now accessible, members agreed that this limitation can be reconsidered. It was noted that there is no internal cap on the total amount a family may request.

The group also discussed a recent contract-related barrier that temporarily affected access to contingency funds. During this period, OCFS used general funds to fulfill requests and maintain support to families.

Members observed that utilization of contingency funds varies across the state. Districts 7 and 8 have the lowest usage, suggesting a need for additional outreach or training to ensure staff and families are aware of how to access available resources.

Additional barriers faced by families involved with OCFS were identified. Contingency funds currently support families with an open investigation or a trial placement, but do not extend to families in active reunification who are experiencing financial hardship. Members emphasized the need for resources to support families during the transition to trial placement. Transportation challenges were also highlighted, with current transportation practices not aligning fully with existing contracts. OCFS will participate in a transportation study beginning in December 2025 to explore improvements.

A recommendation was made to expand collaboration with the Department of Corrections (DOC), as DOC involved families face similar barriers and may benefit from coordinated efforts

10:00 a.m. Family First Prevention Presentation:

Christine Theriault, Family First Prevention Services Program Manager from the Office of Child and Family Services provided a presentation on the Family First Prevention Services Act Updates. The presentation included a brief overview of the Family First Prevention Services Act, information about programs that have been implemented and broadened, prevention implementation, data, lessons learned, important intersections with community partners and plans, and next steps towards goals. The presentation slide deck is included with the minutes.

The Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan can be Found Here: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/CSFWB%202025-2030.pdf>

The Mandated Reporting and Community Supporting Initiative report-out can be found here: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Maine%20Mandated%20Reporting%20and%20Community%20Support%20for%20Families%20Initiative%20-%20February%202025.pdf>

Discussion: Members are encouraged to continue to support Family First Prevention and advocate for services.

10:50 a.m. MCWAP Subcommittees:

Members were asked to provide an update for the MCWAP subcommittees

Family Centered Policy & Practice Subcommittee: The subcommittee has been doing some work around creating agendas, work plans, and processes. Members are encouraged to participate as they are available. Members are encouraged to provide feedback about scheduled meeting times, which is the second Wednesday of the month from 12-1. The agendas and the minutes are in Sharefile. The subcommittee is systematically going through the recommendations to determine if there is additional information to add or if there are recommendations that they think would benefit from being prioritized.

Members are encouraged to reach out to Panel chairs or Panel coordinator if there are any items that they would like to add to the agenda.

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