

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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MAINE CHILD WELFARE ADVISORY PANEL
MAINE CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL
ANNUAL REPORT
2017

Maine's Citizen Review Panel examines the policies, procedures, and practices of State and local agencies and where appropriate, specific cases, to evaluate the extent to which the state and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-320)

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MAINE CHILD WELFARE ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS

First	Last	Position	Organization
Christine	Alberi	Child Welfare Ombudsman	State of Maine
Stephanie	Barrett	Panel Coordinator	Department of Health and Human Services
Jamie	Brooks	Parent Partner	Parents as Partners
Kirsten	Capeless	Director, OCFS	Department of Health and Human Services
Adrienne	Carmack	Pediatrician	Penobscot Community Health Care, FQHC
Lyn	Carter	Rural Grant Program Coordinator	Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Susan	Clardy		
Elaine	Clark	Family and Civil Process Manager	Maine Judicial Branch
Tracy	Cooley	Director	Safe Families-Safe Homes National Training Project
Kelly	Dell'Aquila	CPPC Parents as Partners Program Coordinator	The Opportunity Alliance
Debbie	Dembski	Citizen, LCSW	Grandparent whose family's Substantiation was overturned upon appeal
Debra	Dunlap	Southern Maine Senior Director	Community Partnership for Protecting Children
Lanelle	Freeman	Social Services Director	Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
Meg	Hatch	CAC Network Coordinator	Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Jim	Hatch	Director of Operations	Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine
Destie	Hohman Sprague*	Associate Director	Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Bette	Hoxie	Director	Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.
Christine	Hufnagel	Director of Family Services	Community Concepts
Bobbi	Johnson*	Associate Director of Child Welfare Services	Department of Health and Human Services
Dulcey	Laberge	Youth Transition Specialist, OCFS	Department of Health and Human Services
Tracy	Leigh		State of Maine Judicial Branch, Family Courts
Dave	McCluskey	Executive Director	Community Care
Debra	McSweeney	Licensed Physical Therapist	MaineGeneral Medical Center
Kate	Perkins	Executive Director	Maine Children's Trust
Nancy	Ponzetti-Dyer	Director of Psychology	MaineGeneral Medical Center
MaryAnn	Ryan	Treatment Specialist, SAMHS	Department of Health and Human Services
Cindy	Seekins	Director	G.E.A.R. Parent Network
Nora	Sosnoff	Chief, Child Protection Division	Office of the Maine Attorney General
Briana	White	AAG, Child Protection	State of Maine, Attorney General's Office
Donna	Yellen	Associate Director	Preble Street
Jean	Youde	Programs Coordinator	MaineGeneral Medical Center

*Panel Co-Chair

MISSION/VISION STATEMENT

Mission Statement:

To improve the experience of children and families involved with the State of Maine's public child welfare system. MCWAP is a federally mandated group of professional and private citizens who are responsible for determining whether state and local agencies are effectively discharging child protective/welfare responsibilities; pursuant to the 1996 amendments to the Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and any subsequent amendments.

Vision Statement:

Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel is committed to diverse stakeholders and being comprehensive, responsive and respectful to child and family needs, and provides an adequate framework for safe, thriving children having permanency with families and community.

Goal: To promote child safety through the provision of quality child welfare services to children and their families in Maine.

Objectives:

- Engage with community partners to review and provide feedback on the Child Welfare State Plan.
- Facilitate the interdisciplinary coordination of public and private partnerships as it relates to child welfare services.
- Promote the physical and emotional well-being of children and youth and families.
- Support the development of professionals working in and with the child welfare system to deliver high quality intervention services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel (MCWAP) first convened in December, 2015 following the merger of several community advisory groups. MCWAP will serve as the State of Maine's Citizen Review Panel pursuant to CAPTA Sec. 106(c).

MCWAP held nine Panel meetings in calendar year 2017. During the year, the Panel participated in Federal Child and Family Services Review focus groups in collaboration with the Department on the CFSR process and in February 2018, attended the Federal Exit Meeting, where work on the Program Improvement Plan was begun. Throughout the year, the Panel heard and provided feedback to the Department on a variety of topics, such as the Domestic Violence Liaison Program, Structured Decision Making, and the Title IV-E Waiver program, the Maine Enhanced Parenting Program.

The Panel has identified goals of continuing to formalize their structure and role in the year to come, along with formalizing the communication and feedback process with the Department for the purposes of having a more transparent advisory role.

MAINE CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

The CRP is comprised of 15-25 members representing providers, consumers of the child protective services, former foster children over the age of 18, resource parents, civic representatives, and members of the community at large. Membership of the CRP attempts to achieve a broad and diverse representation of the community including, but not limited to, law enforcement, biological parents, former youth in care, researchers, foster/adoptive/kinship parents, domestic violence professionals, mental health therapists, clergy, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), disabilities specialists, teachers, and medical professionals. Membership recruitment also weighs diversity of age, race, ethnicity, gender and class as critical to the makeup of the CRP. The DHHS, Office of Child and Family Services, Associate Director of Child Welfare serves as a liaison to the panel and is Co-Chair of the panel. The panel also recruits ad hoc members who have expertise in the areas of current panel focus.

TRAINING AND PANEL EDUCATION

In 2016, the Panel surveyed stakeholders to determine statewide training needs. Survey returns did not provide clear direction for the Panel in providing a single training opportunity. Given that other agencies were beginning to address identified training needs, funding was redirected to multidisciplinary trainings offered through the Children's Advocacy Centers to streamline efforts and maximize return on investment. Due to this change, MCWAP placed the Training Subcommittee on hold for the 2017 year, although MCWAP continues to use its platform to publicize and inform of the community trainings.

The Panel recognizes the value of learning more about programs of both the Department and the community, in order to identify areas of policy improvement and future collaboration, as well as to identify trends, recommendations, and topics for deeper exploration.

To that end, in 2017, the Panel heard presentations on the following topics:

January: Wabanaki Reach and the Maine Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission, regarding relationships between the Department and Tribes and the first-in-the-nation Truth and Reconciliation Commission aimed at healing past traumas experienced by the Tribes and their members resulting from engagement with the State Child Welfare system.

March: Family Team Meetings and the Department's plan to train and certify all casework staff and supervisors in a model of Family Teaming that is both trauma informed and resilience building and engages families to identify their challenges, strengths, and partners to resolve the challenges that have brought them to involvement with Child Welfare.

The new model of Family Teaming includes a new training modality, where a worker is exposed to content through a 3-hour classroom instruction, followed closely by observation of skills, and demonstration of skills- "see one, do one." The training is delivered in 3 Modules with the 'see one, do one' skills acquisition happening in Modules 2 and 3, followed by a demonstration of skills for certification and fidelity monitoring.

June: OCFS adoption of Structured Decision Making (SDM) at the Intake level was shared with the group, including the office goals of introducing SDM, how it may change Intake outcomes, and how the SDM tools were developed.

September: OCFS Domestic Violence Liaison Program and Children's Advocacy Centers were described, along with OCFS plans for continuance and expansion of these programs.

October: The Panel reviewed the OCFS Strategic Plan and the SDM tool in use at Intake.

November: The new format, policy, and process for OCFS Child Plans and Family Plans were presented for discussion and feedback.

December: The Panel heard a presentation on Maine's IV-E waiver program, the Maine Enhance Parenting Program (MEPP.) MEPP combines the evidence-based substance abuse Intensive Outpatient Program known as Matrix IOP with the evidence-based parenting education program Triple P. Both programs are delivered concurrently, rather than sequentially, with the intended goal of shortening timeframes and increasing likelihood of reunification.

REVIEW OF CHILD WELFARE POLICY AND PRACTICE

Child and Family Services Review

In April, the Panel prepared for participation in the CFSR focus group by learning more about the CFSR process and purpose, and participated in the CFSR focus group in May. In November, the Panel heard updates regarding the CFSR process and continued to follow the CFSR process through participation in the Federal Exit Meeting in February 2018.

OCFS Strategic Plan/Child Welfare Data Review

On an ongoing, regular basis the panel has reviewed the OCFS strategic plan and child welfare data to both learn about outcomes related to child safety, permanency and well-being as well as to offer observations regarding child welfare practice. This will continue to be an agenda item in future meetings.

Family Teaming

The Panel heard a presentation on Family Teaming and the new training rollout early in the year and was offered an overview of progress, accomplishments, and successes during the March 2018 meeting.

Structured Decision Making

The Panel received information on Structured Decision Making with updates starting in the month following implementation of SDM.

Child Plans and Family Plans

The Panel received updates on the implementation process of the new Family Plan and development of a new Child Plan and provided feedback on changes-to-date at the November meeting.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Legislative Tracking

The panel recognizes the value of keeping up to date on legislation that would impact child welfare practices and policies. A spreadsheet has been developed that is updated as new legislation is introduced and as current legislation makes its way through the legislative process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the Panel's work over the past reporting period, members continue to make the following recommendations:

- Enhance opportunities for meaningful input from the public and consumers, including Parents as Partners on FTM's; kinship care providers and survivors. This might include a variety of models such as focus groups of existing meetings like CPPC, surveys or convening a dedicated group of participants.
- Increase awareness of OCFS core practices in the community and among partners through community trainings and engaging MCWAP in regular review of the OCFS Strategic Plan and child welfare data.

In addition to continuing the prior year's recommendations, the Panel has the following recommendations from their work in 2017:

- Provide regular CAC data updates on a quarterly basis to MCWAP to monitor efficacy.
- Collaborate with Children's Justice Task Force and CDSIRP to request and incorporate data sources that measure outcomes of investigation and prosecution across other agencies that handle child abuse cases.
- The Panel finds that representation of the Tribes is lacking on the Panel and will seek to bring Tribal representation to MCWAP in the coming year.
- The Panel will continue to define its role and structure in 2018. Pursuant to this work, the Panel finds that much of the discussion of OCFS policy and practice in 2017 was informative of decisions and events that had already happened. The Panel recommends that OCFS bring policy and practices to the Panel for feedback prior to adoption in a clear and transparent manner.