

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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MAINE CHILD WELFARE ADVISORY PANEL
MAINE CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL
ANNUAL REPORT
2018

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

MCWAP Membership (eff 03/1/19)

First	Last	Position	Organization
Christine	Alberi	Child Welfare Ombudsman	State of Maine
Stephanie	Barrett	Panel Coordinator	Department of Health and Human Services
Chris	Bicknell	Executive Director	New Beginnings
Betsy	Boardman	Child Protection and Children's Judicial Liaison	State of Maine Judicial Branch, Family Courts
Marie	Briggs	Director	Beloved Children
Jamie	Brooks	Parent Partner	Parents as Partners
Daniella	Cameron	Associate Director	Preble Street
Adrienne	Carmack	Pediatrician	Penobscot Community Health Care, FQHC
Lyn	Carter	Rural Grant Program Coordinator	Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
Susan	Clardy	Research Assistant	Office of the Maine Attorney General
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
Justin	Frank	Pastor	Penny Memorial United Baptist Church
Lanelle	Freeman	Social Services Director	Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
Jim	Hatch	Director of Operations	Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine
Meg	Hatch	CAC Network Coordinator	Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Destie	Hohman Sprague*	Associate Director	Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Bette	Hoxie	Kinship Specialist	Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.
Christine	Hufnagel	Director of Family Services	Community Concepts
Jim	Jacobs	Psychologist	Maine General Medical Center
Bobbi	Johnson*	Associate Director of Child Welfare Services, OCFS	Department of Health and Human Services
Alana	Jones		
Caroline	Jova	Family Division Manager	State of Maine Judicial Branch, Family Courts
Pam	Lahay	Executive Director	Maine Children's Trust
Tracy	Leigh-Jacques	GAL Services Coordinator	State of Maine Judicial Branch, Family Courts
Colleen	Madigan	Representative District 110	Maine House of Representatives
Dave	McCluskey	Executive Director	Community Care

Debra	McSweeney	Licensed Physical Therapist	Maine General Medical Center
Sarah	Minzy	Family Services Director	Home Counselors Inc.
Alivia	Moore	Tribal Representative	
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	Office of the Maine Attorney General
Elissa	Wynne	Acting Director, OCFS	Department of Health and Human Services
Jean	Youde	Program Coordinator	Maine General Medical Center

*Panel Co-Chair

PURPOSE/MISSION STATEMENT

Purpose Statement:

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 and child welfare responsibilities; pursuant to the 1996 amendments to the Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA)¹ and the Children's Justice Act (CJA)².

Mission Statement:

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, case reviews, advocacy and greater citizen involvement. Our goal is to promote child safety and quality services for children, youth and families.

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.

¹ Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq; 42 U.S.C. 5116 et seq.

² Sec. 107. GRANTS TO STATES FOR PROGRAMS RELATING TO INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES. [42 U.S.C. 5106c]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

MCWAP scheduled ten and held eight Panel meetings in calendar year 2018. During the 2017 year, the Panel participated in the Federal Child and Family Services Review focus groups to provide stakeholder feedback related to the Child and Family Services Review measures and in February 2018, attended the Federal Exit Meeting, where work on the Program Improvement Plan was begun. Throughout the year, the Panel was informed of and provided feedback to the Department on a variety of topics, with a standing agenda item of updates from the Department.

The Panel identified the need to continue to formalize the structure and role of the work. This included developing a defined communication plan and feedback loop with the Department to share recommendations and achieve greater transparency in the Panel's advisory role. In 2018, the Panel was able to achieve this goal with newly enacted by-laws and a reinvigorated purpose.

MAINE CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

The Maine Citizens Review Panels (CRPs) are comprised of members that represent 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 CRPs attempt 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. MCWAP serves as the primary voice of the CRPs. The DHHS, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Associate Director of Child Welfare serves as a liaison to the panel and is Co-Chair of the panel. OCFS staff members of MCWAP serve as non-voting members of the Panel. In addition to regular members, MCWAP recruits presenters and ad hoc members who have expertise in the areas of current panel focus.

PANEL UPDATES

With a new Panel coordinator onboard in early 2018 and a recent history of structural changes that left a lack of clarity of purpose, the Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel dedicated time in 2018 to grounding and identity consolidation activities. The Panel schedules ten meetings per year, with two months off during the summer, resulting in a Panel “year” of September through June.

In July 2018, to prepare for the upcoming Panel year, the coordinator worked with Panel leadership to map out agendas items that needed to be completed to ensure that mandatory tasks and timelines were completed on schedule. An example of this is outlining the work to conduct the Three-Year Assessment for the CJA application. (Exhibit 1) In addition to these tasks, the annual agenda included reviewing the statutory authority of the panel and the development of bylaws. (Exhibit 2)

The Panel established a standard agenda (Exhibit 3), that assures the Panel is regularly updated on legislative matters, as well as Department activities.

PANEL TOPICS AND POLICY UPDATES IN 2018

The Panel heard presentation on several topics and Department initiatives throughout the year. In 2018, the Panel this has included the following:

February: Child and Family Services Review Exit Meeting and development of the Program Improvement Plan

March: Family Team Meetings and the Department’s use of safety planning in cases of immediate risk of harm. The Panel was updated about proposed changes the Department was planning to make to safety planning practices and Panel confirmed approval for the changes in practice.

April: Update regarding the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) with regard to a recent Department decision to discontinue funding CPPCs, the manner in which the decision was conveyed, and the legislative response to the change.

May: The Department presented on the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety and Risk Assessment tools which were under development for implementation by the end of the year. The SDM Safety and Risk Assessment tools were developed in consultation with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and as such, is proprietary and was unable to be distributed. The tool is to be used at various points in the case to provide decision support in reassessing safety and risk.

September: In September, the Panel was familiarized with the coming year's panel duties and schedule, the new standard agenda, the charge of the CRP under convening statutes, and started early planning for the 3 Year Assessment. The Panel heard updates from the Department regarding staffing changes, the Program Improvement Plan, implementation of a new family plan, procedural changes to response to certain reports and differential response dispositions, and that the Department halted the rollout of the Teaming Training discussed at the March meeting due to workload challenges.

October: The Panel began the work of developing and adopting new by-laws to reflect the current Panel structure and charge, while continuing to formulate the 3 Year Assessment.

November: Work on by-laws and the 3 Year Assessment continued. The Panel was updated on a number of structural changes at the Department, including a change of Commissioner, the creation of a Background Check Unit to conduct more thorough and meaningful criminal history checks, restructuring to add two new regional child welfare directors, the contracting of Public Consulting Group to conduct a 3 year comprehensive system assessment of Maine's child welfare system, and the return of foster home licensing duties from the Maine Centers for Disease Control to the Office of Child and Family Services.

December: The Panel explored the question of policy and procedure related to the use of expert medical opinions, particularly access to obtaining a second opinion. Through family member testimony and review of Department policies, it was determined that additional, deeper exploration would be helpful, and an ad-hoc committee was formed. The ad-hoc committee will report back to the Panel with findings and recommendations for consideration

by the Panel in the spring of 2019. The draft by-laws were finalized and accepted by the Panel.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Legislative Tracking

The panel recognizes the value of keeping up to date on legislation that would impact child welfare practices and policies. Legislative updates are a standing agenda item and the Panel has included the option to provide legislative testimony via newly enacted bylaws.

In 2018, the Panel heard regular updates on a number of pieces of legislation. LD 1923, an emergency funding bill, increased caseworker and supervisor pay, foster parent reimbursement, and authorized funding for an updated child welfare information system. In addition, this bill created 16 supervisor positions, 16 caseworker positions, eight case aide positions, and two regional associate director positions. This bill also established funding for clinical supports to district offices.

Public Information

The Maine Child Welfare Advisory Panel website is outdated and a standing Communications Committee will be formed to updating both the technology behind the web presence and the online content during 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Updates on recommendations from MCWAP 2017:

- The Panel continues to discuss the most effective ways to share information between Maine's Panels and to coordinate the work of each to achieve the best outcomes for children and families.
- The Panel recruited a representative of the Maine Tribes.
- The Department seeks input from the Panel regarding proposed policy and practice changes.
- MCWAP reviewed the charge of the panel and developed and adopted bylaws that reflect the purpose and goals of the panel.

New Recommendations from Panel year 2018:

- A. There continues to be a need for work related to the Department's efforts to assess child safety.
- B. The Panel recommends specific action steps related to supervision and support related to caseworker's vicarious trauma.
- C. Include Department child welfare data as a standing agenda item for future meetings.
- D. The Department should have a clear policy and practices related to authorizing and funding medical second opinions in cases and clear communication to and training of staff regarding this policy.

Department Responses

A. The Department has taken numerous steps to improve the assessment of child safety. These efforts include the implementation of the Structured Decision Making Safety and Risk Assessment Tools, updates to the Child Protection Investigations Policy and changes in safety planning practices. In addition, there have been several reviews conducted in 2018, of the Department's efforts to assess child safety. Staff at all levels of the

organization have been involved in prioritizing recommendations which will be implemented over 2019.

B. Several of the assessment recommendations addressed in A, above, speak to caseworker support. The Department is currently in the process of procuring a contract for clinical support for each district office which will provide both case consultation and staff support during child death, serious injury or other complex case situations.

C. The Department stands ready to provide data to the Panel as a regular, standing agenda item.

D. The Department is in receipt of the recommendations of the subcommittee and will consider these as relevant policies are updated.