

March 5, 2019 Minutes of the DC Citizen Review Panel

Time: 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Day: Tuesday

Place: CFSA, 200 I Street. SE, Washington, DC 20003

Nearest Metro: Navy Yard Metro Station

Catering: Cornercopia; cornercopiamarket@gmail.com

In attendance:

CRP members: Justin Stephens (Chairperson), Megan Conway, Marie Cohen, Katrina Foster, Maura Gaswirth, Sherrill Taylor, Patrick Foley, Elizabeth Corson-Mohler, Shana N. Bartley, Sarah Schooler and Rick Bardach (Treasurer) via phone connection.

Absent: Joy Graham, Emily Smith Goering

Guest Speaker: Brenda Donald, Director, Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)

Visitors: Andrea Reid, CFSA Grant Monitor

Michele Rosenberg, Ariana Quinones, Bev-Freda Jackson, and Jennifer Anderson (CFSA)

Office of Planning and Development

Lia Walker: CFSA In-Home/Entry Services

Jarrett Blaize, Student, State University of New York at Plattsburgh:

Facilitator: Joyce N. Thomas

Welcome/Introduction

This final CRP quarterly meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Justin Stephens, Chairperson. Justin expressed greetings to members and guests. He indicated we have a quorum for this meeting and the Facilitator reported that we are following the District open meeting requirements. Notice of the meeting was posted on the DC Register and CFSA websites, thus the requirement for public notification was satisfied. CRP panel members, visitors and the Facilitator signed a confidentiality form to ensure privacy of client information. There was no client information discussed during this meeting.

Review and Approval of Minutes and Introduction of Guest Speaker

Justin requested that each person present should give a brief introduction, and this was done. Panel members indicated they had received and reviewed the minute from December 4, 2018 meeting. Marie Cohen made a correction to the minutes. In reference to the In-Home Services Working Group, July 2019 is the expected date for completion of the project. This correction will be made and the Facilitator indicated that current minutes are posted on the CRP website. Prior copies of the minutes and annual reports can be retrieved by panel members from the CRP Dropbox. Justin introduced the guest speaker, Brenda Donald, Director of Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

Guest Presentation

Brenda Donald, Director of Child and Family Service Agency, thanked CRP panel members for the opportunity and invitation to participate in the quarterly meeting. She expressed great appreciation for the work of the Citizen Review Panel and the commitment to the safety of DC children. Ms. Donald gave a comprehensive overview of child welfare characteristics and strategies used in CFSA. She provided an explanation of values-based agenda known as the four pillars which focuses on prevention, practice, placement stability and permanence. She emphasized that foster care is a temporary safe-haven with planning for permanence beginning on the very first day the child comes into care.

A handout was provided to panel members which discussed the demographics, trends, and agency priorities. In general, achieving and maintaining LaShawn Exit Standard is on-going. Other priorities are to consolidate the Family Assessment unit with Child Protective Service Investigation in order to create a more effective and efficient one-track system. In addition, CFSA has created new practice models for coordination with DC public schools and child protection to better handle referrals of educational neglect. Finally, there is a major effort for Family First Prevention Plan Implementation.

Ms. Donald shared some demographic data reporting the total number of children served at the end of FY2018 was 2,205 of which 38% were in out-of-home placement, and 62% were in-home care. In general, children in care are about equally divided between males and females, most (89%) are low-income African Americans ranging in age from birth to 21 years old. Most of these children are from Wards 7 and 8 in Southeast, DC. The number of children in out-of-home care continues to decline and in FY2018, there were only 839 children. Most (71%) of these children are in family settings such as placement in foster care or kinship care in DC and Maryland.

The CFSA Director informed the group that the CPS system screens the initial response to determine whether to investigate the case or conduct a family assessment based on presenting factors. Differential response at the front door is an area of CPS reform also referred to as dual track, multiple track, or alternative response. CFSA uses a differential response where either calls or walk-ins have structured decision making to choose whether the worker should conduct a family assessment or an investigation. Most family assessment cases are referred to one of the Family Strengthening Collaboratives for services. Marie Cohen expressed concerns and feedback from participants in the two focus groups involving both biological parents and in-home care social workers. Ms. Cohen indicated the workers had many concerns about the definition of chronic neglect, extreme high-risk cases, and increased removals.

Lia Walker, a social worker from the In-Home/Entry Services unit provided a more detailed explanation of cases involving chronic neglect and how they are handled. Ms. Walker stated the number of staff involved in direct services for in-home cases includes 45 social workers, 10 family support workers, and 10 supervisory social workers. She stated, CFSA uses the Quality Service Review (QSR) process to assess the effectiveness of practice with families receiving in-home services. The QSR is a case-based qualitative review process that requires interviews with all the key people familiar with the child and/or family whose case is under review. Using a

structured protocol, reviewers synthesize the information gathered and rate how well the child is functioning and how well the system is performing to support children and families.

Ms. Walker stated that In-home services has established an enhanced Frontline Practice Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan to help evaluate performance, make ongoing decisions and analyze clinical practice with in-home cases. These processes include Case Plan Reviews, One-Year-Plus Case Reviews, Supervisory Log Reviews, and Case Presentations. The data, information and results from these processes coupled with weekly check-ins with the in-home supervisors and program managers have been used to affect positive changes in policy, process, and case practice. The in-home administration will continue to utilize these strategies as they target a variety of practice areas and the initial analysis of the results indicate that they have had a positive impact on our overall practice improvement. In-home workers provide intensive engagement with families and the average length of services is from 8-10 months. Social workers are looking for positive change in family functioning.

Brenda Donald informed the group that, due to difficulties in getting and keeping mental health services, CFSA has decided to offer in-house mental health services to children. Following this presentation, there was a brief period of questions prior to ending the discussion and Brenda Donald again thanked the group.

Deliverables

Justin Stephens transitioned to the next item on the agenda and asked the group to provide input about the preparation of the CFSA annual report. Bev-Freda Jackson, and Jennifer Anderson of the CFSA Office of Planning and Development indicated CFSA needs to get the report early enough for the agency to attach comments on the CRP recommendations. It was agreed that each Working Group will submit a draft set of recommendations by April 15 to Justin and he will revise and forward to the Facilitator. It is anticipated that the Facilitator and the Chairperson will finalize the report for submission by June 1st to CFSA.

Next, Justin informed the group of the upcoming 18th Annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference, to be held on June 6-8, 2019 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. There were three members who expressed interest in attending (Justin Stephens, Patrick Foley, and Dr. Sarah Schooler). The Facilitator provided a handout of the flyer to all panel members. Ms. Thomas will follow-up with these individuals and provide information on the process for registration and reimbursement.

Finally, Justin indicated that Emily Smith Goering has stated that she wishes to step down as Vice Chairperson of the CRP. The Facilitator indicated that according to the staff person from Council Chair Mendelson's office, the DC City Council must approve the new person for this position. Marie Cohen has expressed interest in serving as the new Vice Chair of the CRP. There were no other volunteers. This information will be shared with Peter Johnson.

Budget/Facilitator Report

The Facilitator informed the panel of the following:

- As of March 12, 2019, the last day of the current grant period, there are many unsettled issues, for example, the Center for Child Protection and Family Support has not received payment for services to the District Government. A new online invoice system has

proved to be a challenge and payments have been delayed. In addition, CFSA has indicated a need to assess the fiscal needs of the CRP before it can be determined what the grant amount will be for the upcoming period. It is for these reasons, there is no fiscal report.

- Emily Smith Goering and Marie Cohen will be introduced for reappointment, and Emily Bloomfield will be introduced to DC Council on March 5, 2019 for appointment to the CRP. The process will take a few weeks before it is finalized and MOTA will do the swearing-in ceremony.
- Each CRP member is assigned a DC Government email which is posted on the MOTA website. The Facilitator will provide the necessary information to CRP members to activate their email account.
- The website is still under construction and several issues regarding how to list the panel members were discussed. The Center is still seeking to include photos and brief bios of panel members. So far, we have only four bios. The goal is to make the site more visually attractive, and to include interactional components for information gathering. For example, if we host a community forum, participants should be able to register online, and if individuals want to attend quarterly meetings, the website will capture their names and contact information. We also want to collect demographic data and diversity from members for a more descriptive understanding of who is participating on the panel. The cost and rate of the on-going website is likely to increase. The tabs for the new website pages will include Home, History, About Us, Event, Contact Us, Resources, and FAQ. A timeline will be established to document the steps toward completion.
- The Facilitator pointed out that with Emily Bloomfield joining the CRP panel, there is still a tremendous void of panel member from Ward 8 community and youth representation. This will be discussed with MOTA since there is only one open position remaining on the panel.
- As the fiscal agent of the CRP, it is necessary to have documentation of all expenditures. Cost related to transportation, child care, and miscellaneous expenses should be forwarded for payment. The Facilitator will send out expense forms to all CRP members in order to close out this year's cost.

Working Group Reports

In-Home Services Working Group: Marie Cohen, Chairperson of this working group provided an update on activities. Marie reported that this working group has three components: (1) analysis of CFSA administrative data, (2) separated focus groups involving parents and social workers, and (3) a literature review.

An analysis of CFSA administrative data will be done to learn more about the interventions provided to the families that are receiving in-home services and have been identified as having “intensive” needs. This working group is seeking to understand both the scope of in-home services and the outcomes for families receiving these services. They will be requesting data from a cohort of families entering in-home services and determine the need of intensive services.

Two separate focus groups were held on December 12, 2018 for eight parents and twelve social workers. The sessions were held at a Collaborative Southeast, DC. Consent/confidentiality forms were signed by both parents and social workers that serve in-home clients. Participant incentives

were provided. Only the parents received gift cards. The outcome of the focus group was to identify a list of topics and themes to determine recommendations for next steps.

The final component of this project will be a literature review to inform the recommendations to CFSA about future. The Working Group is seeking information on what works in in-home services, what is promising, and what might be worth considering. They plan to search for case-management based interventions, interventions aimed at substance-abusing parents, and newer ideas such as supportive housing for child welfare involved families, child welfare/mental health partnerships, and the provision of trauma-focused child care to families receiving in-home services.

Youth Ageing Out of Foster Care: Members of the Working Group provided information on a meeting that was held with Brenda Donald. The Young Women's Project (YWP) is still unable to document client outcomes beyond counting activities. The Working Group suggested to the CFSA Director to invest in hiring a research person to work with the YWP, but this idea was not accepted by CFSA. Members of the Working Group felt they have achieved as much as they can, and perhaps it's time to seek new goals to terminate this effort.

Community Forum: Joy Graham, Chairperson of the proposed Community Forum, was not present. Following this meeting, the Chairperson and Facilitator will determine next steps. Discussion focused on the possibility of partnering with other stakeholders to implement the Forum.

New Business

Members expressed the need to get more involved in other working groups. This will be discussed further at the June meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Action Items:

1. Continue work on the website.
2. In-Home Care Working Group will share information gathered from the focus groups.
3. Youth Ageing Out Working Group will meet to determine if it is time to finalize this activity.
4. CRP members will submit bios and pictures to Meron by Friday, March 8, 2019 for the website update.
5. CRP members will send suggestions for FAQs for the website to Joyce by March 19, 2019.
6. Working groups will submit draft recommendations for the annual report to Justin by April 15, 2019.
7. Joyce and Justin will work on the annual report for submission by June 1st.
8. Joyce will send an email to CRP members about how to access our DC government email accounts.
9. Joyce will follow up re: the process for Marie to step in as Vice Chair position.

Respectfully Submitted:

Joyce N. Thomas, Facilitator