



Citizen Review Panel

District of Columbia

Tuesday, July 11, 2023
DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Time: 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Day: Tuesday

Via: Zoom Meeting

Virtual Attendance:

CRP members: Pierrea Wallace, Chair, Shana Bartley (Vice Chairperson), Mattie Cheek, Emily Bloomfield, Dr. Wanda Thompson, Elizabeth Mohler, Theresa Gibson, Patrick Foley

Absent members: Meghan Schott

Visitors: Rick Bardasch

CRP Facilitator Team: Margie Chalofsky, Toni Carr

Contract Monitor: Roni Seabrook

Welcome/Introductions

Shana B., Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated she was excited to be turning things over to Pierrea W. who has finally been confirmed as the Chair of the CPR; she also added that it was recently discovered that Pierrea W's appointment had actually taken place in October, but we weren't informed by MOTA. She also thanked Margie and Toni for sorting through the issues and the discussions with MOTA to bring clarity. She thanked everyone for going with her on this journey as Interim Chair many times over the last several years and looked forward to continuing the work of the CRP as Vice-Chair. She then passed the meeting on to Pierrea W.

Margie C. thanked Shana B. for stepping up and doing such a great job.

Pierrea W. thanked Shana B. and Margie C. for their support in guiding her and getting her up to speed and for being really inclusive over the past year. She added that her goal is to be the best support for panel members to do the best work that we all want to do and that she was very excited to see where all the workgroups are today. She announced that Rick Bardash is joining and asked him to introduce himself; he introduced himself and stated that he would like to stay involved in the older youth work.

Pierrea W. announced that there was a quorum for tonight's meeting and the satisfaction of public notice was met.

Approval of Minutes

Pierrea W. asked panel members if they had any edits to the March 2023 meeting minutes. There were no changes to the minutes and the minutes were approved.

Approval and/or modification of tonight's agenda

Pierrea W. asked if there were any items that attendees would like to add or change to the agenda. There were no modifications to the agenda. She then presented the flow of the agenda.

Workgroup Presentations/ Feedback Session Overview

Margie C. introduced this section of the agenda and stated that members have done great work and that she wants members to feel completely comfortable wherever they are in their workgroup. She stated that she was hoping that each group will take up to 10 minutes to share where they are and give opportunity to get feedback, suggestions and comments and then next go into their workgroups to work on next steps so that everyone can be more ready to make their proposals to CFSA. She added that when members are in the convenings, they could also think about whether group members would like volunteers in their group. She stated that members were sent an abstract which might be a good template to go with in terms of building the proposal for CFSA.

Group #1 Older Youth

Theresa G. introduced the team (Shana W. and Mattie C.). Sharing a document with panel members, she stated that they changed the name to Youth Aging Out because the team looked at it as more of an action/ something that needed to be addressed. She mentioned the power point focusing on the seven issues plaguing older youth that she had presented in a previous meeting with panel members and stated that after further detailed discussion they agreed to focus specifically on the topic of homelessness. She added that they further discussed their guiding questions and as a result they came up with the following:

- a. How is CFSA collecting data on youth as they age out?
- b. What are the steps currently taken to prevent homelessness of youth aging out?
- c. What are the best practices of child welfare agencies used to prevent homelessness of youth aged out of foster care locally and across the country?

She added that they also discussed focusing on youth from ages 16 to 21, with hopefully obtaining some information regarding youth over 21 who aged out. They also discussed inviting volunteers outside of CRP including CLC to join their work group. She also shared that Rick Bardasch reached out to her about joining the group and stated that they would appreciate having him join.

Theresa G. added that they would like to collect information from CFSA, other child welfare organizations, the DC Council, school counselors, foster parents, and foster children. She stated that they will use surveys and interviews. Mattie C. also talked about the reason for changing the

name -that aging out is a progression- and said that Theresa G. did a great job. Shana B. thanked Theresa G. for her leadership and keeping the group organized and focused and stated that she is looking forward to getting feedback from the other members.

Members gave the following feedback:

- They liked the new title- the action of it. Focuses on what the youth are doing.
- Liked comparing to other jurisdictions
- The group took a broad topic and made it doable
- The group made it clear and concise
- Making it an action is huge as it focuses on what the kids are doing, what the experiences are for children who have to age out of care and don't end up in a forever home.

Pierrea W. shared that she is the Training Coordinator for the GAL program at Children's Law Center and would be happy to help coordinate and get volunteers from there if groups would like her to. She also shared that they have been having a lot of meetings recently around placement, and that there is a demographic of youth who does not have the life skills to live independently; some have even been in upwards of 30 placements due to behavioral issues, so they really haven't had the opportunity to learn independent skills. There are also limited independent living resources. Shana B. asked Pierrea W. what happened to Independent Living programs and could the lack of them be connected to increased homelessness? She asked if anyone at the Children's Law Center other partners have been able to track what happened to these programs?

Margie C. responded that over the years there has been a back -and- forth swing with use of Independent Living programs and that she could share about it another time

Patrick F. stated there are youth who emancipate before 21 because they are tired of bouncing around. Wanda T. expressed interest in knowing about emancipated minors also.

Mattie C. talked about her previous involvement in the SAMHSA PATH program that gave resources and services to youth and questioned if there is still a PATH program in DC.

Group #2 Once In CFSA's Care

Pierrea W. and Wanda T. are the teammates in this group. They told the panel that the title of their working group is now "The Importance of Family Time, Once a Child is removed from the Home." A PowerPoint was presented. Key points:

- Family Time is now the preferred term instead of Visitation which can have a negative connotation. It also is more inclusive of siblings and other relatives.
- There is much research about the value of family time.
- The workgroup wants to examine CFSA's policy and make recommendations based upon social science and other jurisdictions.
- In DC families are entitled to one hour supervised visits and the default.
- This creates a huge discrepancy between hours spent with family before and after removal; this can impact negatively attachment and reunification.
- Family Time is better for children and better for families and should be a right, not earned.
- The group is using for guidance the federal best practices and recommendations issued by ACF in 2020 that relates increased family time to helping to heal the trauma of removal.

- Increased family time keeps attachment stronger which would eliminate the concern about lack of attachment as a barrier to reunification.
- Increased family time can also reduce children's self-blame and ensure them that their parents are ok, ultimately leading to a better adjustment and shorter stay in foster care.
- Increased family time and its acknowledgement of the importance of attachment reinforces the motivation of birth parents to stay involved and assist in decision-making while their children are in foster care.
- Two strong models they found were Georgia and Texas. Both have very developed models.
- DC's policy is over a decade old and does not reflect an assessment or decision-making model for how often families can visit, supervised vs. non-supervised, etc. This leaves it open to subjective opinion by workers not clear criteria.
- Workgroup wants to look at frequency of family time, sites, role of the monitor, the impact of decreased visits during COVID on reunification. They want to develop recommendations based upon social science, updated federal guidance and other jurisdictions. They are also considering developing a poll/survey for social workers, GAL's etc.

Members gave the following feedback:

- Might be good to also look at cities of comparable sizes such as Atlanta, Denver, St. Louis, as well as territories or smaller states like Delaware.
- Question- is there data backing up the impact from the states more progressive on family time? Answer- there is both data on the negative effects of NOT having this time as well as data in the federal member and in the reports of other jurisdictions
- Patrick F. shared that he does pre-service with foster parents and that they are being told to use the term family time. He also offered to share with the group about the class presentation on the foster parent role in the visits as well as best practices.

Group #3 Prevention

The group stated that this is a very large topic and that they need to pick a defined and doable project for the first year that could perhaps be built out next year. They shared that they reviewed the In-Home report from 2019 which raised questions for further exploration. They want to get an update on those recommendations and questions from the report before they charge ahead and redo anything that has already been done.

The group will be requesting clarification on different levels of prevention- what is provided at each level and how to identify the terms and processes for families moving between levels. They want to understand more about the Family success centers such as funding, accountability, outcomes, and the criteria if any for eligibility for services.

They will be requesting an update on in-home statistics including how long families stay in that status/program and what number of families still experience removals after being in this program. They want to understand what other efforts are made to keep families together, what services are voluntary, what constitutes compliance, and the state of service provision. They are especially concerned with services that may be mandated for families but are not available such

as mental health. This is even more significant now with the impact of the pandemic as well as the state of the CFSA workforce on services.

The group also wants to know the guidelines on communication with CFSA, data responses, etc. Margie C. expressed that she is taking another look at the timelines in the MOA because they seem like they may not be totally realistic.

The group expects to review the CFSA responses to their data requests, see what comes back with unanswered questions or problematic results to help guide their focus area. They are very interested in picking up on work already started and seeing it to the next level, focusing on what is critical to prevent removals.

Member Feedback:

- In-Home and Family Success Centers are different populations. Suggest looking at one population.
- The initial report is often the first point of a family's contact with CFSA. What can be done to look at prevention prior to removal? Prevention is based upon stage. What efforts are made to offer services (a) prior to report; or after report to prevent having to open an In-Home case or further involvement in the system? What is their stage model?

The group responded that once they understand the continuum of what happens once a family comes to the attention of CFSA, the issue they will most need to focus on will bubble up to the surface.

Facilitator Report and Updates- Margie C. and Toni C.

1. Parliamentary Procedure (Robert's Rules) Training Portal Margie C. read this statement and will put the following in the minutes:

OOG has partnered with Roberts Rules made Simple to implement an interactive training portal on parliamentary procedure. *The Office of Open Government is reporting to us that it has launched its training portal on parliamentary procedure (Robert's Rules of Order). The Chair, the Secretary, and all other interested members of this public body who wish to improve their ability to run meetings fairly and efficiently, are invited to write to nicholas.weil@dc.gov with the request: "Please enroll me in The District of Columbia Robert's Rules of Order Training Portal."*

2. Update on MOTA

Members can be thinking about new people they might want to recruit so that we can help move them into the process. If volunteers join workgroups that might be a good pool for new members.

3. Website and Board Portal

Toni C. gave a comprehensive overview of the new board portal "Boardspot" She announced that it will serve as "one shop stop" for board members to get board documents, RSVP to meetings, retrieve agendas, minutes of current and past meetings as well work group information. She informed members that they will all be getting an

invite to the portal to sign and begin to use. Margie C. stated that the portal would be a good place to put documents so not to be overwhelmed by multiple articles and resources sent by email. Toni C. also demonstrated the CRP new website and its capabilities and invited members to make suggestions or recommend changes. Margie C. and members acknowledged the significant amount of work Toni C. has done on both the portal and the website and members gave positive feedback.

4. Toni C announced that business cards were ordered for members to use when doing outreach that will be mailed to them.

Member Sharing

Patrick Foley provided member sharing for this meeting. He gave a very meaningful talk about his life fostering/adopting gay teens and his exciting work with DC Family and Youth Initiative coordinating the Open Table Program for youth aging out. Patrick F. stated that it is through his work that we come to know him, and that his passion for helping youth led to his becoming a foster parent as well as a member of the CRP. Patrick F. shared a presentation about the Open Table program and asked members to let him know if they or others they know might be interested in becoming volunteers.

Fiscal Report

Patrick F., Treasurer, shared that for the third quarter there was a total of \$19,368 left in the budget and that the total spent for the fourth quarter was \$11,008. This left the remainder of \$7428 which had to be spent as we could not carry over any money. The summary of expenses include: \$5000 for salaries \$1,610 for gift cards; business cards were \$381.51; stamps \$126.00; Suppliers \$1.06; Website update \$150.00; Constant Contact \$45.00.

Margie C. explained that we had money left this year because we were virtual and also there had been no national conference. Because we anticipate that next year will be tighter, we spent what was left on gift cards for the groups to use for their work. We also purchased a VISA for our panel meet and greet, and we also used some for staff bonuses, as approved by the Treasurer and CFSA. There were no questions, but members were told that if anyone wants more detail it can be found in the portal.

Workgroup convenings

Workgroup convenings were not held during this meeting as time ran out. Members agreed to go through the rest of the agenda. Margie C. stated that the workgroups should convene in the next two weeks.

Public Comments

Shana B. asked for public comments but there were none. She then asked about the time expectation for workgroups meeting again. Margie C. thanked Shana B. for remembering that point. She asked for the workgroups to get together in the next two weeks to come up with the

first step of their proposals based upon the simple abstract that has been sent. Shana B. and Elizabeth M. affirmed this as a good next step. It was acknowledged that the Prevention group will need to wait on more information from CFSA first. Margie C. offered to meet with this group to delve into what they needed.

Pierrea W. asked for the groups to let her know if they want GAL or policy input from CLC and she would be the link to get that.

Margie C. acknowledged how great the group is to work with and members acknowledged Margie C. and Toni C. for helping in organizing and fast turn-around.

Closing and Adjournment

Pierrea W. closed out the meeting by reiterating it was a great meeting and she appreciated everyone. Meeting was adjourned a little early due to the shift in agenda that eliminated the breakout work group convenings.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm

Future CRP Meetings	
Date	*Location
September 12, 2023	Zoom
November 14, 2023	Zoom

Questions: Pierrea Wallace, Interim Chairperson, pierreanaketa@gmail.com