



Citizen Review Panel

District of Columbia

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

Tuesday, March 12, 2024
6:30 to 8:30 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Pierrea Wallace, Chair; Shana Bartley, Vice-Chair
Panel members: Theresa Gibson, Wanda Thompson, Mattie Cheek, Elizabeth Mohler, Emily Bloomfield, and Meghan Schott
Absent members: Patrick Foley, Treasurer
Facilitation team: Margie Chalofsky and Toni Carr
Potential new members: Andy Miller, Whitney Miller, Carolyn Woods
Community workgroup member: Rick Bardach
Presenters: Petrina Jones-Jesz, OFC, William Thomas, OFC, and Natalie Craver, CFSA

Welcome/Introductions

Panel members, facilitation team, potential new members, presenters, and public observers introduced themselves. The quorum was met, as was satisfaction of public notice. Minutes from January 2024 were approved with no edits. The agenda was modified before the meeting to amend that Toni Carr will do the fiscal report in Patrick Foley's absence.

Presentation: Ombudsperson for Children (OFC)

Petrina Jones-Jesz/ Ombudsperson and William Thomas/ Deputy CFSA Ombudsperson

Ms. Jones-Jesz and Mr. Thomas presented on the history of the Ombudsperson's office its purpose and their investigative process. They talked about their efforts to get the word out about the office through meeting with CFSA and other government agencies as well as community organizations. They presented data about the complaints they have received since the process began, where the complaints originated from and how many cases were resolved versus those still open. They discussed the focus on cross-over youth that is in the legislation as well as which positions listed in the legislation remain open.

The office can receive complaints from members of the community online; by phone; in person; by email and through the on-line form through their website. All their systems are connected into a data management system. When they finish an investigation, they complete a findings form with recommendations and send notification of conclusion letter to the complainant.

The power point for the Ombudsperson presentation is [linked here](#).

Dr. Meghan Schott asked whether a concern about a child served by another DC government agency would go to them or to someone else. The response was that if the concern involved a CFSA child (as defined by a child who is currently or *previously involved* with CFSA), they could take the complaint.

Mattie Cheek expressed that she is impressed that the office has done so much so soon and asked what else was being done to reach out to the community. The response was that they will continue to reach out to community organizations all over the city.

Emily Bloomfield asked about patterns of complaints and whether most complaints were required resolution or were mostly people feeling upset but not a specific action needed? The response was that their mandate is to monitor Administrative Law, Best Practice and Policy and that most of their complaints do not relate to that so many have not resulted in a finding of wrong- doing. Although they do receive calls about feelings of not being treated fairly, professionalism, feeling harassed such as in a CPS investigation, some of these calls are about the caller's confusion around practice and policy and so the office has an educational function for those calls. Since the new law was enacted related to taking names off the CPR registry, they are also receiving calls about that. In those cases, they give people the information as to how to apply for removal themselves.

Theresa Gibson asked if they outreach to schools. The answer is that they have reached out to central offices of both public and charter schools but not individual schools. However, they think that is a great idea. They shared that when they get concerns from schools it is mostly around the calls schools make to CPS that get screened out and they don't know why or see improvements in the situations of the child they called about.

Dr. Wanda Thompson pointed out that Far Southeast Collaborative only serves Ward 8 so for outreach to Ward 7 they need to go to East River Collaborative.

Andy Miller said that he remembered when the Ombudsperson was internal to CFSA and asked about that background. It was explained that the office took over all the Ombudsperson functions that had been internal. Margie Chalofsky volunteered to share the history with Andy M.

Please also see the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children Annual Report FY 2023
<https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/RC25-0115>

Presentation: Warm Line

Natalie Craver/ Deputy Director Office of Thriving Families/ CFSA

Ms. Craver explained that the Office of Thriving Families was formerly the Office of Community Partnership. They are responsible for prevention services, including the Collaboratives and the Family Success Centers and the Family First and Keeping DC Families Together initiatives.

She explained that CFSA is in the first cohort of the federally approved Family First initiative and is working on their vision to move to a new system that centers families and trusts them with their own decisions. Over the last 2 ½ years they have been working to build that vision with their Lived Experiences Advisory committee. She explained that CFSA is often viewed as the “system” instead of the “agency” and that what is needed is a unified approach throughout DC that builds a system city-wide based upon what a thriving family looks like. To align with this vision, the Agency is making many changes, including revising the Neglect statute, changing the expungement policy as well as a review of Mandatory reporter rules.

Ms. Craver gave a comprehensive overview of the history of the (211) Warm Line, its scope, the services offered and the data from the soft launch these past months.

The power point for the presentation is [linked here](#).

The presenters answered questions by members:

Emily Bloomfield shared a scenario and asked if the financial needs of the family she was speaking about be able to have been helped by services through the warm line. The response was positive.

Shana Bartley asked if the warm line could help families who are already connected to services but need other services. The response was that the data is not collected cross systems at this point. They are meeting with their partner agencies to understand each other’s systems so they can give a warm hand off to families and try to break down some of the silos. Long term the “no wrong door” would be a goal.

Whitney Miller asked about turnaround time, metrics for success for the warmline and how it is funded. Ms. Craver shared that Doris Duke was looking for jurisdictional partners to explore cash assistance to families and chose DC, Kentucky, Oregon, and South Carolina. She explained that DC is more progressive than many child welfare systems in their focus on upstream prevention work. They are unusual in that they have a full prevention division that is well built out to do this from a project management as well as from a leadership perspective. Doris Duke will be providing \$3 million dollars for each three years for the cash assistance as well as technological assistance. In terms of turnaround time, she explained that their service level agreements (SLA) state that services should be provided in seven days at the latest but that they are addressing most of them more quickly. Finally, on the metrics question, she shared that they are currently looking at what metrics to use, as currently there are different measures of success that are used by different collaboratives, families, the agency, etc. It is an active conversation to develop standard definitions of success.

Elizabeth Mohler asked how the warm line would link with screened out calls from the hotline. Ms. Craver responded that they are figuring that out and receiving assistance from Doris Duke and Harvard. One option is that the warm line could receive basic contact information of families who have screened out calls - they would not receive any CRS information - and they could do a cold call offering services that families could “opt in” to receive. It is the plan to keep 211 separate from CFSA.

Mattie Cheek asked if they coordinate with the Ombudsperson's office. The response is that they communicate and can refer in both directions but are not connected.

Margie Chalofsky congratulated Ms. Craver on this comprehensive approach. She asked if there will be any next step to advocate for the unmet needs such as housing that emerge from the data. Her response was that they will follow the trends of unmet needs through the data and that housing is a very hard issue as much of it is out of government control.

Pierrea Wallace asked if CFSA tracks families who get support but then still find themselves in care and also whether there might be any difference with families who have multigenerational involvement. Ms. Craver responded that in the long term they would like to assess if upstream services prevent child welfare involvement, but they are not there yet. Data privacy will also need to be considered. Pierrea W. also asked the question as to whether they are doing any targeted or intentional work on the racial disparity in child welfare in DC. Ms. Craver responded that they have a DEI subcommittee for all the city-wide work and that they are using an equity assessment tool and plan to use it to assess not only the agency but also their provider community.

Dr. Wanda Thompson asked who follows up on referrals and if it is known when a family calls if they have called before. Ms. Craver said that they are not yet following up on referrals but that it is in the planning to do so for those families who would want that. She also responded that their data system can't yet track if someone has called before but they are building a system that could.

Due to time restraints, we amended the rest of the agenda. We skipped the facilitator report. We noted that the fiscal report is on the portal. Pierrea Wallace shared that CFSA changed its position about member access to FACES; that their legal counsel said there couldn't be access but that they would provide any needed data. Pierrea W. also asked if the workgroups have to do a report in April. Margie Chalofsky replied that she thinks it is only the facilitator annual report that is due. Shana Bartley confirmed that when they looked at the authorizing documents, the only true due date is the annual report and that the workgroup reports become part of the record when they are completed and become part of the next annual report. Margie C. thanked Shana B. for being the institutional memory for a new team!

Member Sharing

Emily Bloomfield shared about her extensive career that started in economic development. She always cared about education, was on a School board in California and then the DC public charter board. Understanding that both schools and caring, consistent adults were predictors for kids in care, Emily founded Monument School which is a weekday boarding school with a house parent model and a non-exclusionary approach to discipline. She talked about helping a family member who became a kinship provider to obtain resources and support.

Emily B. shared that she had been the interim Director and is now on the Board of DC 127 and is involved in social justice through her church. This led to her interest in the CRP which she sees

as having a role that bridges being a friendly critic with being a champion. She shared that respite is a big gap in the city and a challenge for a mom she was working with who needed to admit herself to a psychiatric hospital but couldn't because she didn't have anyone to watch her children. CFSA told her that the mom could self-report, but she would then have a CPR record and it could impact her job. Meghan S. that maybe the change in DC CPR law might help with that issue and that it is a big challenge in MD and VA also.

Margie C. stated that there is amazing knowledge putting everyone together in this group.

Public comments: There were no public comments.

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm

Future CRP Meetings	
Date	*Location
July 9, 2024	Zoom
September 10, 2024	Zoom
November 12, 2024	Zoom

*Location subject to change

Questions: Pierrea Wallace, Chairperson pierreanaketa@gmail.com