CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY
CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL
CRP Meeting
September 8, 2026 – 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE:

CRP Members present); Pierrea Wallace (Chair); Andy Miller (Treasurer); Theresa Gibson; Dr. Wanda Thompson; Deborah Kale; Emily Bloomfield, Amanda Quiroz-Guajardo, Chrissy Weeks
Absent CRP Members: Elizabeth Mohler (Vice Chair) Dr. Tyra Moore, Whitney Miller, Meg Marcelli.
Workgroup Member: Rick Bardasch
Facilitator Team: Margie Chalofsky, Toni Carr

AGENDA ITEMS:

Welcome and Introductions:
Pierrea Wallace opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the September CRP Meeting. Given that a guest (from Children's Law Center) was expected later in the evening, the group decided to hold formal introductions until the guest arrived. Margie Chalofsky noted that Elizabeth was unable to join due to an emergency

Determination of Quorum & Public Notice
Pierrea W. confirmed that quorum was met for the evening and that public notice requirements had been satisfied. 1 No public observers were present

Approval of Minutes
A vote was called for approval of the July 2026 minutes. Members raised their hands in favor, and the minutes were approved.

Member Announcements
Margie C. invited member announcements, noting that a lot was going on and members might have something to share. No formal announcements were made; members noted the end of summer

Facilitator Report – Margie Chalofsky

Membership Update

- No movement on MOTA (Mayor's Office of Talents and Appointments) appointments.
- Margie C. had a conversation with Christian Washington from the council side, who suggested it would be appropriate to reach out to the presumptive mayor-elect, as she is already meeting with stakeholders, to flag the MOTA issue.
- Andy Miller and Amanda Quiroz-Guajardo volunteered to help plan outreach to the presumptive mayor-elect.
- Margie noted that Shana Bartley would no longer be able to participate due to travel schedule but has not yet submitted her resignation, and that certain decisions about how to count active members could be made internally.
- Members were encouraged to suggest candidates for open panel seats.

Strategic Planning

- Margie C. expressed a preference for keeping current energy focused on workgroups, which are at crucial points, before launching a full strategic planning effort.
- suggested a small group could begin laying groundwork now — looking at infrastructure needs, appointment process, onboarding, public outreach, and the panel's relationship with the council — and bring findings back to the full panel later.
- Pierrea W. agreed and suggested incorporating voices of members with limited bandwidth through surveys.
- Chrissy Weeks also volunteered to participate in strategic planning discussions.
- A tentative October timeframe was proposed for an initial strategic planning conversation, with Amanda Q, Pierrea W, and Margie C. as initial participants.

Public Outreach

- Pierrea W. and Dr. Wanda Thompson have been the primary participants in the Public Outreach Committee, meeting on the first Monday of each month at 3:30 PM.
- They developed a 60–90 minute introductory CRP presentation designed to be replicated at community events.
- Amanda Q. proposed creating an outreach toolkit — including talking points, FAQs, and a standard feedback collection method — so more members could represent the CRP at events.
- Margie C committed to rejoining the public outreach meetings going forward.
- Wanda T. emphasized the importance of community involvement and encouraged members who sign up to follow through.

Fiscal Report (Andy Miller)

Andy Miller (Treasurer) presented the fiscal report covering **July and August 2026**:

- Total grant amount: $50,000
- First payment received: $12,807.35 on July 20, 2026
- Second and final payment: $37,192.65, to be invoiced on October 1st 1
- July expenditures: $3,955.36 (salaries: $3,749.99; Zoom storage/renewal: $185.30; website maintenance: $20.07)
- August expenditure: $3,780.36 (salaries: $3,749.99; supplies: $10.30; website maintenance: $20.07)
- Total spent to date: $7,735.72 | Remaining balance: $42,264.28 (not including the second payment of $37,192.65) Correction was noted after the meeting that there was an error: (Correction and now reads: Including the second payment of $37,192.65 which we will receive in October 2026. This correction has been made on the full accounting expenditures which is located in the portal)

Work Group Updates

Prevention Workgroup (Amanda presenting for Elizabeth Mohler)

- Focus remains on the mandated reporter survey examining experiences with hotline reporting, screened-out calls, communication, and resources for families.
- 24 survey responses received to date — movement in the right direction, but a larger and more diverse pool is needed before identifying meaningful trends.
- Recent dissemination efforts:
    - Dr. Tyra Moore connected the survey to the DBH unit managing DC School Social Workers.
    - Chrissy reached out to DCPS contacts and is pursuing charter school connections.
    - Emily Bloomfield and Chrissy are coordinating school-based outreach across DCPS and charter communities.
- Strategy shift: rather than broad organizational outreach, the group is moving toward direct, school-level contacts to improve response rates.
- Wanda T. suggested reaching out to hospital social work departments and offered a contact at Children's National Hospital (Dr. Allison Jackson, head of the Child and Adolescent Protection Center).
- The full panel was asked to identify organizations employing mandated reporters to help expand survey reach.

Youth Aging Out Workgroup (Theresa Gibson)

- 35 surveys completed surveys obtained, thanks to:
    - A vision board and pizza event co-sponsored with OYE, attended by Andy M, Carolyn W, Deborah K , and Megan M.
    - Surveys distributed by Children's Law Center GAL's and coordinated by Pierrea W.
- Goal is 50 youth surveys; approximately 15 more are needed.
- A workgroup meeting was scheduled for Thursday at 7 PM to plan next steps, including potentially returning to OYE for additional surveys.
- Foster parent surveys are also needed — a target of 50 foster parent surveys was set; Andy M. is pursuing contacts through FAPAC, CFSA and NCCF.
- A national best practices research component (comparing national standards to what CFSA offers) was identified as a remaining task, originally led by former member Maddie.
- Pierrea W. offered support for research on national best practices between meetings.

Family Time Workgroup (Pierrea W. & Wanda T.)

The workgroup is approaching the drafting phase of its report.

Background & Focus:

- Family time is viewed as essential to maintaining children's relationships and attachments during out-of-home care.
- DC's reunification rates remain significantly below the national average — between 35–39% from 2020–2024, ranking among the five lowest jurisdictions in 4 of those 5 years.

Focus Groups:

- All social worker focus groups are complete.
- GAL focus groups have one scheduled the following morning and another the following week.
- Judge focus groups will be completed by October 7th.
- Parents and parent counsel have been the most difficult to recruit — only two parents confirmed so far.
- Parents receive a $50 gift card for participation and must complete an eligibility survey.

Emerging Themes:

- Social workers need additional support due to time and workload demands — one hour per week of family time per case is often the maximum feasible.
- There is no clear, consistent clinical guidance for increasing or decreasing family time; practices vary significantly by supervisor.

- Family time is sometimes treated as a reward or punishment rather than a right, depending on the supervisor.

Case File Review:

- Originally planned for 50 cases, reduced to 10 due to significant limitations in CFSA records. 1
- Key challenges: family time plans are not live documents, data is dispersed throughout case notes, records contain inconsistencies and inaccuracies, and there is no clear way to measure quantity or progression of family time.
- The workgroup will not expand to 50 cases and will instead document limitations and incorporate them as a finding — noting that the difficulty tracking family time in the case record is itself an important finding.

Next Steps:

- Finalize all focus groups by end of October.
- Complete transcriptions of focus group recordings (potential support from CLC).
- Begin drafting skeleton report outlines.
- Finalize report and recommendations by end of November; prepare for CFSA's response to the first draft by end of 2026.

Guest Presentation: New DC Child Welfare Legislation (Megan Conway, Children's Law Center)

Click Here for the Presentation Slides

Megan Conway, filling in for CLC Policy Director Tami Weerasingha-Cote presented an overview of recently passed laws related to the child welfare system, largely driven by Councilmember Zachary Parker's package of approximately 13 laws.

Statutory Neglect Amendment Act

- Substantively amends DC Code Section 16-2301 (definitions of neglect) for the first time in many years.
- Developed over two years by a working group including the Office of the Attorney General, Children's Law Center, and CCAN panel members representing parents.
- Key goals:
    - Reduce ambiguity in definitions (e.g., separating abandonment and abuse from neglect).
    - Distinguish physical discipline from physical injury.
    - Focus on the status of the child, not the fault of the parent.
- Unwilling caregiver provision: Clarified to focus on whether a child has a willing caregiver, rather than inquiring into parental ability — a change welcomed by parents' attorneys.

- Poverty defense: Removed a problematic catch-22 where being eligible for public benefits was used to deny the poverty defense.
- Homelessness alone shall not be a reason for finding a child neglected.
- Amanda Q. raised the question of what systems are in place to connect families who don't meet the CFSA threshold to prevention and support services — Megan C. noted there is no dedicated funding allocated alongside the law.

SOUL Family (Support, Opportunity, Unity, and Legal Relationships)

- Adds a fifth permanency goal to DC child welfare cases, alongside reunification, adoption, guardianship, and APLA/independent living.
- Designed for youth over age 16 who have strong connections with multiple adults but no single adult who can meet all legal guardianship needs.
- A judge can issue an order establishing the SOUL family and close the case; the same subsidy as adoption/guardianship applies — if the youth is over 18, the youth receives half and the caregiver receives half.
- Youth voice and decision-making are central to the process; a youth capacity building plan is part of implementation.
- Amanda Q. raised the concern about balancing youth voice with youth burden — ensuring young people are empowered without being overburdened with creating their own family structure.

Empowering Parents in CFSA Investigations

- Requires CFSA to **inform parents under investigation** of their right to an attorney when/if they go to court, and to provide available legal resources at that time.
- Megan noted limited legal resources exist for parents prior to a court case being opened

Other Legislation Highlighted

- Safe pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum care for youth at DYRS.
- Promoting parental engagement at DYRS — requires documented attempts to contact parents.
- Increasing support for grandparent and close relative caregivers — increased subsidy rates extended until the child reaches age 21, closing the gap between formal and informal family arrangements.
- Child Fatality Review Committee will now include the relevant council committee member.

CRP Takeaways from the Presentation

- Amanda Q. suggested the CRP's role may be to monitor whether these legislative intentions are being implemented in practice for people experiencing the system.
- Margie C. noted that workgroups — particularly Youth Aging Out — could explore whether youth understand and are benefiting from the SOUL family option going forward.
- Megan C. agreed to share slides and offered to return for a follow-up presentation.

Public Comments

There were no public comments

Closing and Adjournment

- Pierrea W. closed the meeting by noting the recording would be available for members who had to drop off early.
- Margie C. reflected that having more to discuss than time allows is a positive sign for the panel's work
- Next Meeting scheduled for November 10, 2026
- Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:26 PM

Action Items

- **Margie, Andrew, Amanda, Pierrea** — Plan outreach to the presumptive mayor-elect (one offline conversation to coordinate approach).
- **Margie, Amanda, Pierrea, Chrissy** — Convene a strategic planning subgroup in **October.**
- **Margie** — Rejoin Public Outreach Committee meetings (first Monday of each month, 3:30 PM).
- **All members** — Identify organizations employing mandated reporters and share with Amanda to expand survey dissemination.
- **Wanda** — Share Dr. Allison Jackson's contact at Children's National Hospital with Amanda.
- **Andrew** — Continue pursuing foster parent survey contacts at FAPAC and CFSA.
- **Youth Aging Out Workgroup** — Meet Thursday at 7 PM to plan next steps on surveys and national best practices research.
- **Family Time Workgroup** — Finalize focus groups by end of October; complete transcriptions; draft report by end of November.
- **Megan Conway** — Share presentation slides with the panel; consider returning for a follow-up session.