

Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Oversight Board

Board Meeting Record

Thursday, October 15, 2020 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., virtual meeting

Member Attendance: Ben de Haan, Bobbe Bridge, Charles Loeffler, Jeannie Darneille, John Braun, Katie Biron, Lois Martin, Loni Greninger, Ruth Kagi, Shrounda Selivanoff, Sydney Forrester, Tana Senn, Tom Dent

Staff in Attendance: Crista Johnson (*Executive Director*), Nickolaus Colgan (*Administrative Coordinator*)

Public in Attendance: Ross Hunter, *Department of Children, Youth, and Families*; Kwesi Booker, *Department of Children, Youth, and Families*; Ray Deck III, *Skookum Kids*; Jim Theofelis, *A Way Home Washington*; Erica Hallock, *Family Impact Network and Ounce*; Stacia Hollar, *Attorney General's Office*

Only public attendees who chose to identify themselves in the chat box during the meeting, or who made public comment, are recorded in the official meeting minutes.

Welcome, Roll Call & Opening Remarks

The meeting was called into order at 10:00 a.m. Crista Johnson introduced ground rules for engaging on the Zoom. Roll call of DCYF Oversight Board members was taken.

Ruth Kagi made a motion to approve the September 17, 2020 meeting minutes. Bobbe Bridge seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

DCYF Update on Hotel Stays Strategy | Ross Hunter, Secretary of DCYF & Kwesi Booker, Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare Field Operations

Secretary Hunter and Assistant Secretary Booker discussed the uptick in hotel and office stays for foster care youth recently reported in the media. Secretary Hunter stated the impact of returning youth from out-of-state placements, a decrease from 83 last year down to 14 by the end of October 2020, along with the complexities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and finding placements. Strategies presented include the utilization of a SAMHSA grant for treatment foster care beds being implemented this fall, options for increasing funding to support placements, recruitment and retention methods for specialized foster homes, increasing kinship placements and DCYF workforce culture change to support sustainable change and outcomes.

Public Comment

Ray Deck III, Skookum Kids: Ray shared with the Board two recent events regarding partnering with DCYF as a provider. The first event regarded hotel stays strategies. Ray shared a story about DCYF approaching his organization to provide beds for placement. The partnership was there, but due to restrictions regarding upfront funding, Ray's organization had a limited opportunity to provide the service and although there was an attempt to be creative, Ray expressed that the department did not exhibit flexibility to help support him as a provider in making this service available. A second event regarded changes to his current contract with DCYF that he was not made aware of. He caught the changes and determined they were not major concerns, but the concern was that changes were not transparently communicated by the department and that impacted provider relations. Ray encouraged

the Oversight Board to continue to engage providers and ask about their experiences working with DCYF.

Jim Theofelis, A Way Home Washington: Jim expressed appreciation for the Oversight Board, its leadership and DCYF's leadership. He stated that culture change in a system the size of DCYF is challenging, but worthwhile. Jim emphasized the need for the Department to see and treat providers as partners. Jim re-emphasized the patterns providers experience across all DCYF's service lines regarding licensing, equity and problem-solving. Additionally, Jim stated that he believed oversight could be advocacy and can play a role in furthering the needs of children and families.

Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children (submitted written public comment): Thank you for the opportunity to submit a comment. I'm sorry I can't be there and am grateful you are having a discussion about the role of the Oversight Board. It seems important to be grounded in what the statute calls for in terms of the role of the Board and figure out how to prioritize the various responsibilities given to the Board. While I think all of the responsibilities are important, those that focus on stakeholder input and reviewing existing surveys should rise to the top. I also think that overseeing the implementation of laws (recognizing that these would need to be prioritized!) is a key role for the Board.

Oversight Strategy Subcommittee Report Out & Discussion | Subcommittee & Board Members

Subcommittee members had their first meeting on October 9th. Subcommittee members include Annie Blackledge, Loni Greninger, Ben de Haan, Ruth Kagi, Diane Liebe, Lois Martin, Shrounda Selivanoff. The subcommittee members made initial recommendations to the Board for future meetings, including, but not limited to, increasing public engagement through panels with providers, parents, youth and other stakeholders; balancing between acknowledging DCYF's successes as well as holding the agency to account with expectations; distinguishing between oversight and advocacy; and increasing the board's flexibility in scheduling meeting topics. The subcommittee's next meeting is scheduled for December 3rd.

Board Legislative Report Review and Discussion | Board Members

Crista Johnson presented the latest version of the DCYF Oversight Boards 2020 Legislative Report. The members provided their feedback for staff to incorporate.

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2020 from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm on Zoom.

Adjourned at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 15, 2020