

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

Board Meeting Record

Thursday, September 2, 2021 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., virtual meeting

Member Attendance: Katie Biron, Annie Blackledge, Justice Bobbe Bridge, Ben de Haan, Co-Chair Rep. Tom Dent, Sydney Forrester, Diane Liebe, Charles Loeffler, Lois Martin, Co-Chair Shrounda Selivanoff, Rep. Tana Senn, Sen. Judy Warnick

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

Public in Attendance: Patrick Dowd, *Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds*, Stacia Hollar, *Attorney Generals Office*, Rae Newman, *registered nurse*; Julie Schroath, *Creative Kids Learning Center*; Jim Theofelis, *NorthStar Advocates*; Gail Neal, *Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center*; Kathy Carman, *Smokey Point Daycare*; Luc Jasmin III, *Parkview Early Learning Center*; Jean Mollenhauer, *Our Inn-Spiration Childcare*

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. Co-Chair Representative Dent started the meeting and provided opening remarks along with Co-Chair Shrounda Selivanoff. Roll call of DCYF Oversight Board members was taken. The July 15, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

DCYF Leadership Engagement on Current Issues | Jenny Heddin, Chief Finance Officer, DCYF

Secretary Ross Hunter was asked to attend as a follow up to the July 15 meeting, he was not in attendance, but Jenny Heddin was present to answer questions in his stead. Jenny Heddin presented to the Board research conducted in partnership with DSHS's Research and Data Analysis Division, on the complexities of high-needs youth needing placement. In addition, Jenny Heddin presented DCYF's plan to eliminate the use of hotel and office stays by November 1st. This plan was produced in response to US District Court Order No. 2:21-eve-00113-BJR. In addition to the presentation, Jenny Heddin answered medical consultation questions submitted to DCYF by the Oversight Board in preparation for the meeting.

Public Comment: Due to the extended time provided for public comment at this meeting, the following are summaries of participant contributions. To observe full public comment remarks [please view the meeting recording](#) at starting at time stamp 2:00:17.

Rae Newman, registered nurse: Rae stated she works with the Office of Public Defense on medically complicated cases and when families get sent to her they are usually struggling and confused. She continued, social workers and case managers are incredibly powerful and they need to have a proper training to ensure that power is being used appropriately. She stated that they are not knowledgeable in basic medical problems, which is difficult when they are the ones making recommendations about families, and this leads to parents not being heard. She suggested that DCYF needs to provide services to those families who are involved in medically complex cases.

Julie Schroath, Creative Kids Learning Center: Julie read an email she received from a childcare provider about recent updates regarding employee background checks. She continued that with the update her current staff are not able to be on the premises until the background checks are cleared. She stated that the child care

industry cannot survive this kind of hiring barrier. She recommended the background check process have a turnaround time within 24 hours, which can be done through the state patrol.

Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates: Jim thanked Jenny Heddin and her team for the proposal they presented and appreciated the amount of stakeholder engagement they did. He continued that it seems the only way to elevate the needs for the adolescent program is when an issue arises, or it makes the news. He stated that when dealing with an adolescent it is difficult to say if their behaviors are due to them being in the system, or started beforehand, multiple placements repeatedly is detrimental.

Gail Neal, Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center: Gail added onto the previous comment about the background checks. She stated that an issue with not allowing a hired provider on the premises until the background check is complete severely delays an employee's ability to start working. She continued that when a provider is hired they have to take 36 classes before they are alone with students, not allowing them to start those classes right away will make for additional delays.

Kathy Carman, Smokey Point Daycare: Kathy expressed her strong support of the two previous public comments around the background check changes. She stated this will affect all providers across the state at one point or another. She continued, if she has to tell a new hire they can't start for up to four weeks, they won't take the job and will go somewhere else.

Luc Jasmin III, Parkview Early Learning Center: Luc continued the support the public comments around background check changes. He stated this is a major equity issue for those in rural places without access to finger print facilities as well as people of color who already face a number of employment challenges.

Jean Mollenhauer, Our Inn-Spiration Childcare: Jean echoed all the previous public comments around child care background checks. She stated that like many child care facilities, they are barely hanging on. She continued that they have done their absolute best to navigate all the changes the last few years. She stated it is a crisis in many facilities. She mentioned the example of having a staff member quarantine after exposure to a person with COVID-19 and having a newly hired staff member unable to come in to help earlier since his/her background check is still being processed.

Board Discussion

Board members discussed themes that arose from the conversation presented by both DCYF's exceptional placements plan and the public comments made about the challenges in creating a stable child care workforce. The Board acknowledged that further discussion should investigate workforce needs and challenges across the continuum of care under DCYF's authority, as well as additional discussion and exploration of the agency's prevention efforts under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2021 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on Zoom.

Adjourned at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 2, 2021