

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

### Board Meeting Record

Thursday, October 21, 2021 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., virtual meeting

**Member Attendance:** Annie Lee, Ben de Haan, Justice Bobbe Bobbe, Charles Loeffler, Dr. Diane Liebe, Sen. Judy Warnick, Katie Biron, Lois Martin, Loni Greninger, Ruth Kagi, Sydney Forrester, Co-Chair Shrounda Selivanoff, Rep. Tana Senn, Co-Chair Rep. Tom Dent

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

**Public in Attendance:** Jim Theofelis, *NorthStar Advocates*; Breanna Oduwole, *community member*; Shauna Magee, *Independent Social Service Worker*; Laurie Lippold, *Partners for Our Children*; Kristin Lamson, *Office of the Attorney General*

*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 September 2, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

### Culture Change Conversation with WFSE Union Representing DCYF Staff | Sandra Toussaint, Washington Federation of State Employees

Sandra, a union representative, spoke on behalf of DCYF workforce union members. In attendance with Sandra were DCYF staff to talk about their experience working for the agency since its creation. Sandra identified four main problem areas in need of resources to ensure the DCYF workforce was supported to fulfill the mission of the agency: (1) behavioral health supports, (2) community based supports, (3) internal staff supports, and (4) overall workload.

Board members had several questions for Sandra and DCYF staff, which informed the Board's discussion during the last agenda item of the meeting.

### An Opportunity for Change: Reflections on DCYF's Exceptional Stay Plan | Carla Arnold, Board President, WA Association for Children and Families; Tara Urs, Special Counsel, Civil Practice and Policy, King County Department of Public Defense

Tara and Carla reviewed DCYF's exceptional stay plan and provided additional suggestions for achieving the goal behind the creation of the plan. The presentation focused on their views of what culture change within child and family services should look like, including opportunities to embrace prevention, long-term strategies, and child-centered models to address the root causes of exceptional stays.

**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 2:18:15.

Shauna Magee, Independent Social Service Worker: Shauna stated that the phrase "culture change" should no longer be used and that it has been a topic of conversation for too many years and nothing has changed. She elaborated that the focus should be more on what is and is not working right now. She feels any current talk of

culture change focuses too much into the future and is ultimately never implemented. She ended that the agency needs to start taking responsibility for what it is or is not doing. More resources can be helpful, but is not a one size fits all solution and does not guarantee accountability.

Breanna Oduwole, community member: Breanna shared a number of concerns around her experience with DCYF during when her child was removed. Her concerns focused around how DCYF hires caseworkers, the strict nature of parent and children visitation, the lack of voice of parents have in foster placements for their children, child safety within foster homes, and changes foster parents make to the children without parental approval.

Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates: Jim stated that the enemy for the way the system currently is, is not DCYF staff, families or community providers. The enemy is those who exploit and benefit from driving youth into street behavior, poverty and systemic racism. He continued by stating the child welfare system is part of that; and there is a culture change that needs to happen within it. He emphasized the need to listen to adolescents who express that their voices are not being heard when it comes to their own placement, adding that adolescents are much more likely to stay in a placement if they are involved in the process.

Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children: Laurie started by saying there should be an update to the child welfare caseworker workload study in order to get a current understanding of what is needed to ensure success for caseworkers. Additionally, this information can describe what kind of job people are wanting caseworkers to be doing. She continued, when asking what parents need as resources in order to be successful, some areas are met, but there continues to be many discrepancies. We need to make sure the resources meet the needs of the families. Laurie discussed the importance of the current movement of family resource centers being moved more into the community and how beneficial that is for access.

## **Board Discussion**

Board members discussed themes that arose from the conversations and any future meeting ideas it brought up for members. Board members made several requests to continue the conversation on exceptional placements, workforce supports, and overall agency culture change. Those requests include the following and will be used, in addition to other priority areas, to shape a work plan for 2022: (1) DCYF workforce analysis including (a) caseload vs. workload, (b) caseworker turnover and exit interview data, (c) distribution of resources and tools available, and (d) challenges filling vacancies; (2) prevention efforts including (a) FFPSA services available in which regions, (b) how the agency assesses “reasonable efforts” made to keep families together, and (c) FAR services availability versus need; (3) Family Time review including (a) need versus capacity, and (b) compliance with HB 1184; and (4) continuing oversight over COVID-19 pandemic impacts on families, providers, caregivers, and the DCYF workforce.

## **Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

The next meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2021 from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm on Zoom.

**Adjourned at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 21, 2021**