

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

Board Meeting Record

Thursday, March 17, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., virtual meeting

Member Attendance: Anne Lee, Annie Blackledge, Charles Loeffler, Claire Wilson, Diane Liebe, Katie Biron, Lois Martin, Loni Greninger, Ruth Kagi, Co-Chair Shrounda Selivanoff, Sydney Forrester, Co-Chair Tom Dent

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

Public in Attendance: Kristin Lamson, *Office of the Attorney General*, Shannon Anderson, *community member*, Laurie Lippold, *Partners for Our Children*, Jim Theofelis, *NorthStar Advocates*, Shayna Richard, *Light the Way*, Dr. John DeGarmo, *Foster Care Institute*, Shauna Magee, *community member*, Angela Kramer, *community member*

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 roll call of DCYF Oversight Board members was taken. The January 20, 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

FFPSA Implementation Status | Maria Zdzieblowski, DCYF Family First Prevention Services Administrator; Steven Grilli, Assistant Secretary of Prevention & Client Services

DCYF provided an update on the implementation of the state's Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) plan that was approved on October 1, 2020. Several elements of the plan have been fully implemented: Kinship Navigator System, Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), and Licensing Standards. Other recent progress made includes the hiring of the FFPSA implementation team, the initiation of Motivational Interviewing training for the child welfare workforce, and integration planning with other major child welfare initiatives. DCYF acknowledged implementation challenges with FFPSA including significant IT changes needed to meet eligibility requirements for the JR and Home Visiting systems, as well as issues regarding field workforce readiness given the number of compounding changes as a result of a number of recent initiatives impacting child welfare work duties.

Oversight Board members asked DCYF questions about several facets of Motivational Interviewing training for DCYF staff and the agency's prevention strategies beyond FFPSA. The next DCYF Oversight Board meeting on 5/26/2022 will focus on the agency's prevention strategies across the continuum of care.

Prevention Provider Panel | Megan Harp, ChildStrive & Homeward House; Marcia Wright-Soika, FamilyWorks Food Bank; Family Resource Center; Pamela Williams, Start Early; and Angela Kraemer, Angela's Family Services

When DCYF was created, prevention was identified as a major priority of the new agency. During this portion of the agenda, four panelists who work for organizations that serve children and families across Washington state discussed prevention needs within their communities, potential solutions for expanding services and their organizations overall experience and relationship with DCYF to provide these services. Main themes that

arose were related to housing, transportation, and language access. A service gap of particular concern is for families at-risk of a CPS referral who are currently not eligible for services.

Public Comment

Shannon Anderson, community member, Shannon has been a licensed DCYF caregiver for 13 years and has served over 45 kids in her family home. Shannon stated that every decision made around foster youth should be made in their best interest and decisions made using imminent risk as a determination is not compatible with that statement. She continued that kids were sent back to live with their biological parents after the Family First Initiative and it can be frightening for the foster parents. After six months of monitoring there are no requirements for biological parents to continue using the services offered by the agency. She stated that some of these kids are sent back to abusive households and kept there because it is determined there is “no imminent risk” until they are eventually removed again and sent back to her household. She also touched on the need for better mental health services for children, and stated police aren’t allowed to intervene unless a child is harming themselves. Shannon ended her comment stating how hard foster parents have to work and more support is needed.

Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children, Laurie stated that the information heard from the panel around what parents and workers need is consistent with a survey from 2008 and it would be beneficial to have that survey updated. She continued, FFPSA is great and should be used as a first step, it doesn’t go far enough, and we need to allow for flexible resources. FFPSA as a whole needs to allow for more flexibility on resources based on family’s needs, it doesn’t all need to be through a highly structured program. Laurie ended stating her happiness with the amount the legislature was able to accomplish this session and hopes the board will continue to follow the implementation of the bills related to DCYF.

Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates, Jim expressed some thoughts around FFPSA. He stated motivational interviewing has been around for a very long time and has some conflicting data around how culturally relevant it is. He continued, it is important when implementing this to have training for staff to adapt to different cultures and children with different cognitive abilities when interviewing.

Shayna Richard, Light the Way, Shayna provided an overview of the case around Oakley Carlson’s disappearance and asked that the Board call for an immediate review of her case from DCYF. She stated if the department has followed all protocols, then there should be nothing to hide and they can release all the information they have around the case.

Dr. John DeGarmo, Foster Care Institute, Dr. DeGarmo spoke about Oakley Carlson and family reunification reform. He stated there is a lack of new foster parents and retaining them is challenging, as well as understanding case workers are overworked, but the Oakley Carlson case could have been prevented. He continued by stating that reunification is not always the answer, unfortunately parents are not always ready.

Shauna Magee, community member, Shauna stated she was happy to hear about DCYF’s plan around motivational interviewing but is doubtful of the agency’s ability to make this plan happen. Her main reason for doubting is due to the agencies difficulty to hire and retain workers, current culture change practices, and the lack of evolving the agency has been able to do. She ended stating she wants to be hopeful but is not hearing anything yet that makes that a reality.

Angela Kraemer, community member, Angela expressed concern over the relationship between foster care providers and DCYF. She stated that it often feels like there is nowhere to express concerns to about the agency without receiving retaliation from the agency. Angela continued, whether a child is reunified with a family or not should not be a decision made based on the social worker. She ended that more visitation areas

need to be created as well as expanding the hours they happen to include weekends which is when families tend to be available.

Board Discussion | Board

Due to the amount of time taken by the previous agenda item, time for the Board discussion was limited. Additional discussion time will be provided during the May meeting and the meeting duration will be expanded to four hours instead of three to ensure ample time for the Board to reflect and discuss next steps.

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for May 26, 2022, from 10 AM – 2 PM and will be available in-person and on Zoom.

Adjourned at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 17, 2022