

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

Board Meeting Record

Thursday, June 21, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., virtual meeting & Capitol Court Building

Member Attendance: Anne Lee, Ben de Haan, Bobbe Bridge, Diane Liebe, Katie Biron, Lois Martin, Loni Greninger, Ruth Kagi, Sydney Forrester, Rep. Tana Senn, Co-Chair Rep. Tom Dent

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

Public in Attendance: Kristin Lamson, *Office of the Attorney General*, Shayna Richard, *Light the Way*, Rona Black, *Jury File*

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 July 7, 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) Updates | Felice Upton, Assistant Secretary of Juvenile Rehabilitation; Haley Lowe, Institutional Education Administrator; Andrew Fox, Research Supervisor

Assistant Secretary Upton updated the Oversight Board on changes to JR since the Board last received information on the division in the summer of 2020. A major focus of changes in JR for the last few years includes the implementation of JR to 25 legislation that has transformed the demographics of the JR population. A result of these changes is that the average age of youth and young people in JR is increasing, as well as the average length of stay, while simultaneously admissions and the overall population count are exhibiting downward trends. Data from SFY18-21 illustrates that racial and ethnic disproportionalities continue to exist in the JR population. Assistant Secretary Upton noted that although the overall population in JR is decreasing, the needs of those being served are increasingly more complicated, particular in regards to higher behavioral health needs. The division is being intentional in addressing the unique needs of a growing population of young people ages 18 years old and older.

Assistant Secretary Upton emphasized JR's focus on the experience and well-being of both youth and young adults residing in JR facilities, as well as JR staff. To do so, the division has focused on three main strategies: data-driven decision making, building staff efficacy and resilience, and providing a therapeutic environment. Other areas of improvement and progress in JR were highlighted in descriptions of the Room Confinement Project, the implementation of HB 1186 "Community Transition Services", behavioral health investments, and risk assessment improvements.

Haley Lowe provided a detailed update on work underway to improve educational outcomes for youth and young adults in JR. The passage of HB 1295 provides a roadmap for the agency, in partnership with other state agencies, to create a foundation for all students to succeed with adequate and appropriate supports. With a focus on equity in education, the agency is developing recommendations to ensure students have a clear plan when they exit JR to continue their k-12 or post-secondary education.

Board Q&A and Debrief on Juvenile Rehabilitation Updates | Board

Board members inquired about how JR is measuring progress and outcomes for young people and staff for

each new initiative and project area. Additional questions explored the development process of a new JR risk assessment tool, as well challenges regarding staff turnover and how the agency is addressing those challenges. Board members also praised the progress and changes made under Assistant Secretary Upton's leadership.

Public Comment

Shayna Richard, Light the Way, Shayna made statements regarding the Oakley Carlson case and asked that the Board call for an immediate external investigation of the case. She stated DCYF needs to be more attentive to the child's needs when solely focusing on family reunification and associated metrics. She also stated her opinion that DCYF needs to be held accountable for its perceived lack of response to complaints filed against the child's biological parents.

Rona Black, Jury File, Rona gave an overview of the events surrounding the Oakley Carlson case. She requested that reunification be assessed on an individual basis not as a blanket rule. She also stated the Board should call for an external investigation of the case.

Written Public Comment submissions were received by July 18, 2022 and sent to Board members on July 19, 2022. Please see a summary of them below.

Lisa Kinzel, community member, Lisa provided their thoughts and questions around the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). She asked at what point does an Indigenous American child get assistance from ICWA if their parents are registered, but the child is not. She continued that more clarity around this process including time frame for registering, enrollment rules, eligibility would be beneficial. She also stated that the process for parents to get in front of a judge, or work with OFCO, can be too much of a barrier for already broken parents and can lead them to giving up trying. She stated processes should be more accessible.

Danielle Clements, Light the Way, Danielle wrote about the Oakley Carlson case and stated that there needs to be accountability for DCYF. She also asked if any child welfare procedures have been updated to ensure that this does not happen again.

DCYF Racial Equity & Social Justice Team Updates | DCYF Secretary Ross Hunter, and DCYF Racial Equity Social Justice Administrators: Evette Jasper, and Dae Shogren

Secretary Hunter led the conversation on progress and changes the agency has adopted over the past two years to advance racial equity and eliminate disproportionalities. DCYF has identified "*eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity*" as the agency's top priority in its [Strategic & Equity Plan](#). The agency is operating from the theory that it is fundamental to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in order to make progress on any other strategic priority or legislatively-mandated performance outcome. Secretary Hunter described planning and policy progress to achieve this goal, including: the establishment of DCYF's Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team, the implementation of an agency-wide Racial Equity & Social Justice (RESJ) Policy, and the operations and expectations of an internal DCYF Inclusive Racial Equity Change Team.

Additionally, Secretary Hunter reviewed racial and ethnic data across the system of care and explained to the Oversight Board how the agency is working on being responsive to how data trends are changing. Other specific changes aiding the advancement of racial equity include the implementation of a child-specific licenses, actions and funding to sustain child care through the pandemic, the passage of HB 2050 "Repealing Parent Pay Statute and HB 1186 "Community Transition Services", the closure of Naselle Youth Camp, increased high school graduation rates at Echo Glen, and the Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability's (OIAA) commitment to tracking performance outcomes disaggregated by race.

Board Q&A and Debrief on Racial Equity & Social Justice Updates | Board

The Board asked several questions on racial equity and agency policies regarding the diversity of the agency's leadership, the population being served by Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) with a particular focus on families involved in child welfare and their access to child care, the relationship between the Length of Stay (LOS) in out-of-home care and kinship care rates in King County, and the importance of presenting balancing indicators when focusing on priorities such as safely reducing the number of youth in out-of-home care. DCYF will provide data and follow up responses to the Oversight Board's questions following the meeting.

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for September 1, 2022, from 10 AM – 2:00 PM and will be available in-person and on Zoom.

Adjourned at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 21, 2022