

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

Board Meeting Record

Thursday, October 20, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., virtual meeting & Capitol Court Building

Member Attendance: Ben de Haan, Justice Bobbe Bridge, Charles Loeffler, Sen. Judy Warnick, Katie Biron, Lois Martin, Loni Greninger, Ruth Kagi, 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*, Jim Theofelis, *NorthStar Advocacy*, Tates Nunez, *Light the Way*, Mark Pohto, *community member*

Only public attendees who chose to identify themselves 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 September 15, 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

Draft Report Review | Crista Johnson and Board

The board was presented with the latest version of their report. Crista walked through sections and asked the board for feedback and recommendations. Due to a lack of quorum for a portion of the meeting the board was unable to get through all the sections and will resume review at the November 17 board meeting.

Public Comment: The following are summaries of public comment participant contributions. To observe full public comment remarks, [please view the meeting recording](#).

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.

Mark Pohto, community member, Mark appreciates the transparency that the DCYF Oversight board provides. He commented on DCYF's responsibility regarding an increase in child fatalities and near fatalities. He recommended more root cause analysis be done to figure out how to proceed and improve child safety.

Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocacy, Jim was appreciative of many of the efforts going on in DCYF including their work on reform bills, building a "kinship culture," and the establishment of the adolescent unit. Jim shared recent changes at DCYF including an upcoming re-organization that would dismantle the Adolescent Programs Unit as it currently existed. Jim encouraged the Board to ask DCYF questions on its reasoning, strategies and metrics moving forward to ensure adolescent outcomes remains a priority for the agency.

Written Public Comment submissions were received by October 17, 2022 and sent to Board members on October 18, 2022. Please see a summary of them below.

Shayna Richard & Tates Nunez, Light the Way, Shayna and Tates sent a written comment which contained the same remarks as her public comment.

Mark Pohto, community member, Mark stated that following the current broad law will be devastating in the fight to gain custody of his grandchild. He continued with a list of concerns regarding his grandchild's bio parent and fears his grandchild will be placed back in that home.

Chelsea Burroughs, DCYF Child Protective Services, Chelsea provided an email she sent to Sec. Ross Hunter clarifying comments he made at the September 15 DCYF Oversight Board meeting. She also expressed great concern over caseloads and how it leads to not being able to provide each child equal attention.

Jeanette Obelcz, DCYF Mixed Program Supervisor, Jeanette expressed concern over child welfare workforce retention and how it leads to social workers getting too many cases. She also expressed objection to Sec. Ross Hunter's statement that pay was not a significant factor in retention. She specified it is one issue among many that lead to workers leaving the field.

Heather Mimms, DCYF Adoption Unit, Heather brought up a concern about pay increases for CPS and CFWS workers, but not adoption workers. She continued that she does similar work to her counterparts and sometimes even more challenging as she gets the hard to place youth and should receive that same pay raises.

Gabrielle Thorne, DCYF Clerical Supervisor, Gabrielle expressed concern at seeing how both clerical and field workers are stretched thin making people leave, which continue to pile work on others. She continued she would like to see consistency from Sec. Ross Hunter on what is causing these issues and how to address them.

Suzanne Large, DCYF Adoption Supervisor, Suzanne wanted to share the importance of recognizing adoption workers as CFWS workers when it comes to the recent pay change. She continued that adoption workers are currently left out and that needs to be addressed.

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2022, from 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM and will be available in-person and on Zoom.

Adjourned at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, 2022