

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

Board Meeting Record

Thursday, November 17, 2022, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., virtual meeting & Capitol Court Building

Member Attendance: Ben de Haan, Justice Bobbe Bridge, Sen. Claire Wilson, Diane Liebe, Sen. Judy Warnick, Lois Martin, Ruth Kagi, Shrounda Selivanoff, 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*, Katrina Justis, *community member*, Tates Nunez, *Light the Way*, Lucas Benoit, *community member*, Victoria Pohto, *community member*, Krista Carlson, *foster parent*, Kjersta Smith, *community member*, Heidi Worlton, *community member*, Deidra Van Every, *social worker*

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. instead of 9:30 a.m. due to an initial lack of quorum. Co-Chair Representative Dent started the meeting and roll call of DCYF Oversight Board members was taken. The October 20, 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

Final Legislative Report Review | Crista Johnson

Crista Johnson reviewed the final draft of the DCYF Oversight Board legislative report with board members.

DCYF State Auditor Findings Q&A | Ross Hunter, Secretary of DCYF

Secretary Ross Hunter answered questions from the board focusing on the State Auditor's report findings regarding Child Care and Development Fund administered by DCYF.

Co-chair Elections | Board

Representative Dent proposed to delay the co-chair elections to April 2023 to allow time for the Office of the Governor to nominate new members to the Board. Justice Bobbe Bridge made a motion to approve this proposition and Ruth Kagi seconded the motion. All board members present voted "aye" on the matter.

Final Legislative Report Review Cont. | Crista Johnson

Crista Johnson completed the review of the DCYF Oversight Board legislative report. Ruth made a motion to approve the report for submission with the edits given throughout the review process. Justice Bobbe Bridge seconded the motion. All board members present voted "aye" on the matter.

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

Tates Nunez, Light the Way, Tates made statements regarding the Oakley Carlson case and asked that the Board call for an immediate external investigation of the case.

Katrina Justis, community member, Kristina expressed frustration around the lack of support from DCYF for social workers and their safety. Katrina shared that her sister, a caseworker, fell victim to this lack of support

recently when a 16-year-old in care attacked her. It was stated this youth had conducted additional assaults on staff. She ended stating that all aspects of the system have failed not only her sister, but also the youth in care.

Lucas Benoit, community member, Lucas shared that their children were removed 15 years ago and still not returned. Lucas continued that their child has reached out to them requesting help and removal from their current placement. Lucas stated that they have worked with DCYF many times over the years to achieve reunification but claim they have not been helped.

Victoria Pohto, community member, Victoria stated that DCYF does a lot of good in some circumstances, but there are still many kids that are left out by “one size fits all” policies. She continued that the goal of reunifying all families may result in removing children in care from loving homes and placing them back into potentially dangerous environments with their bio parent.

Krista Carlson, foster parent, Krista stated she has been a foster parent for years. She continued that reunification is ideal in a perfect world, but currently reunification at all costs is sending kids home to abusive and unsafe homes. Krista also discussed how the retention of foster parents has been impacted by this, as well as the impact on children’s behavior who experience removal more than once. She ended saying foster parents are treated like a tool, not like the important people in the system that they are.

Kjersta Smith, community member, Kjersta spoke about the attack of the social worker from the 16 year old youth in care. Kjersta stated these professionals are in danger and they are not appropriately trained, armed or equipped to handle these dangerous scenarios. She stated that this incident was a failure of the state.

Heidi Worlton, community member, Heidi spoke about the attack of the social worker from the 16 year old youth in care. She stated that people wonder why retention for social workers is challenging when DCYF does not do more to support their workers in these situations. Heidi ended saying that the social worker was unfairly being blamed for the situation.

Deidra Van Every, social worker, Deidra stated she was the social worker who was attacked by the 16 year old youth in care and thanked her sisters for advocating for her. Deidra said she is a supervisor in the Adoptions Unit in Region 5 and they have all felt the brunt of systemic failure. Deidra continued that during the attack there was a security guard present, but he was unable to effectively intervene. She stated this youth has had over 100 placements this year alone. She ended stating that this youth will end up being an adult and the lessons he has learned going into adulthood is violence goes unaddressed.

Written Public Comment submissions were received by November 11, 2022, and sent to Board members on November 15, 2022. Please see a summary of them below.

John Gjovik, community member, John provided comments and suggestions for consideration on the DCYF Oversight Board legislative report. Specifically, action items for the section regarding Juvenile Rehabilitation.

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

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

The next meeting is being tentatively planned for April 2023 following the completion of legislative session.

Adjourned at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 17, 2022