

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES – These meeting minutes have not been voted on by the DWG as this was the last public meeting convened.

Office of the Child Advocate
Data Work Group co-chaired by the Department of Children & Families
Friday, December 2, 2022
2:00PM-3:30PM

Meeting held virtually via WebEx pursuant to the Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, s. 20 signed by Governor Baker on March 12, 2020.

Data Work Group Members and/or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides, OCA Director, Co-Chair
Linda Spears, DCF Commissioner, Co-Chair
Ruben Ferreira, DCF
Representative Michael Finn
Danielle Allard, Office of Senator Adam Gomez
Susan Elsen, MLRI
Mike Dsida, CPCS
Julie Wilson, Harvard Kennedy School
Rachel Gwaltney, CLM

Staff:

Emily Hajjar, DCF
Cristina Tedstone, DCF
Lian Hogan, DCF
Ryan FitzGerald, DCF
Kristine Polizzano, OCA

Other Attendees and Members of the Public:

Mary McGeown, MSPCC
Bob Gittens, Cambridge Family and Children's Service
Lisa Rosenfeld, Office of Representative Finn
Caitlyn Letourneau, Office of Senator Velis
Debra Bercuvitz, DPH
Kate Lowenstein, Citizens for Juvenile Justice
Kate Nemens, Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
June Ameen, Friends of Children
Other members of the public on the phone who did not self-identify

DWG = Data Work Group
OCA = Office of the Child Advocate
DCF = Department of Children & Families

Meeting Commenced: 2:02pm

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Mossaides welcomed the attendees to the virtual meeting. Ms. Mossaides recognized the presence of a quorum of Data Work Group members in the session. A roll call was not held due to the number of participants in the virtual meeting; members of the public were asked to identify themselves in the Zoom chat room.

Approval of Minutes:

Draft minutes from the January 25, 2022, meeting of the Data Work Group were provided to members via email in advance of the meeting to facilitate approval. Ms. Mossaides invited questions or concerns with the draft minutes as proposed and hearing no objection she asked members to vote on their meeting minutes via roll call.

Maria Mossaides, Linda Spears, Mary McGeown, Bob Gittens, Michael Finn, Danielle Allard, Mike Dsida, Rachel Gwaltney, Julie Wilson all voted in the affirmative. No members abstained or voted no.

The January Data Work Group meeting minutes were approved.

Discussion and Vote on Legislative Report

Ms. Mossaides told members that the goal of this meeting was to review the group's legislative report, which includes a minority report written by MLRI and CPCS. The full report was sent to members in advance of the meeting. No DWG members had and questions or additionally feedback on the draft. Ms. Mossaides then asked the designees from MLRI and CPCS if they wanted to address the group regarding their minority report.

Susan Elsen (MLRI) introduced the minority report and acknowledged that while the DWG did make some improvements in child welfare system reporting, the minority report details the position that the group did not fulfill its legislative mandate nor complete their work. Ms. Elsen went on to summarize the minority report positions and recommendations.

Mike Dsida (CPCS) then spoke about the history and timeline of the DWG. He thanked Mr. Ferreira on his team's hard work fulfilling this group's data requests over the years. He noted that post-pandemic the group did not make progress on the remaining aspects of the work (referred to by the group as "parking lot" issues), and he perceived a lack of collaboration and interest on behalf of the co-chairs. Mr. Dsida noted examples of other government-led commissions that have been successful in their charge and stated that the termination of this group was a missed opportunity that will be to the detriment of children and families in Massachusetts.

Ms. Mossaides opened the floor to general questions or discussions regarding the minority report. No members had follow up questions or thoughts. Ms. Mossaides asked any members wishing to sign on to the minority report (in addition to CPCS and MLRI) to say so at that time. No other members wished to sign on to the minority report.

Next, Ms. Mossaides held a roll call vote to submit the report and minority report as written to the state Legislature. The vote was recorded:

Maria Mossaides, OCA Director, Co-Chair –Yes
Linda Spears, DCF Commissioner, Co-Chair–Yes
Ruben Ferreira, DCF–Yes
Representative Michael Finn–Yes
Danielle, Allard, Office of Senator Adam Gomez–Yes
Susan Elsen, MLRI–No
Mike Dsida, CPCS –No
Julie Wilson, Harvard Kennedy School–Yes
Rachel Gwaltney, CLM –Yes

Ms. Gwaltney also said CLM supported the minority report.

The report was approved for submission.

Ms. Mossaides share with the group that the report will be finalized and shared with the Legislature and posted on the OCA’s and DCF’s website in the coming days.

She reminded the group that after the FY22 DCF Annual Report is published, the OCA will reach out to organizations asking them for recommendations and reactions to the report. The OCA will share the feedback with DCF as well as the chairs of the Joint Committee for Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities. The OCA plans to hold this “open comment” period annually to continue to improve the state’s child welfare system data reporting.

Concluding remarks:

Ms. Mossaides thanked the group for their hard work over the years, and highlighted the improvements made to the Department’s data reporting since this group began meeting.

Commissioner Spears also thanked the group for their hard work and for members giving their best effort over the course of the groups’ time. She announced that the DCF FY22 Annual Report would be out soon and was looking forward to people’s feedback and thoughts.

Adjournment: 2:27PM

Addendum Added Post-meeting 12/5/2022:

Ms. Gwaltney emailed the following statement to the DWG to clarify her vote at the 12/2 meeting:

“I’m emailing you all to clarify CLM’s position from Friday’s vote at the Data Work Group meeting. CLM is voting in favor of the majority report as submitted. We believe that the DWG has driven great progress in improving our data reporting and we are supportive of the recommendations made in the majority report.

My statement in support of the minority position was only meant to express my personal hope that the work of the group will continue long term, and that it will continue to incorporate data from

additional sources to expand our understanding of the implementation and effect of child and family services.”

DRAFT