

**Office of the Child Advocate
Advisory Board
December 18, 2025
11:00am – 12:30pm
Meeting held virtually via Zoom
DRAFT MINUTES – NOT VOTED ON**

Board Members or Designees Present:

Director Mossaides
Undersecretary McGeown (EOHHS)
Justice Ricciuti (Chief Justice of the Superior Court)
Justice Brieger (Chief Justice of the Trial Court)
Commissioner Reardon (DYS)
Commissioner Kershaw (EEC)
Commissioner Oliviera (MCB)
Commissioner Sotonwa (MCDHH)
Commissioner Gagnon (DCJIS)
Commissioner Peterson (DDS)
Acting Commissioner Lucas (DMH)
Ruben Ferreira (DCF)
Brooke Leahy (DTA)
Mark McShera (MDAA)
Brian Pariser (AOPFC)
Arielle Mullaney Poncia (EOPSS)
Jennifer Valenzuela (Children's Trust)
Elaine Fitzgerald Lewis (DPH)
Anna Marie Ritchie (Trial Court)
Michele Cristello (DOR)
Daniel Mahoney (CPCS)
Rachel Gwaltney (CLM)
Elaine Fitzgerald Lewis (DPH)

OCA Staff:

Christine Palladino-Downs
Cristine Goldman
Melissa Threadgill
Audrey Smolkin
Spencer Gurley-Green
Jean Clements
Bessie Pierre

Other Attendees:

Carol Murphy (DMH)
Charlene Zuffante (DMH)
Magui O'Neill-Arana (DMH)

Brent Tracy (Sign Language Interpreter)
Jo Linda (Sign Language Interpreter)

Meeting Commenced: 11:02am

Meeting Materials:

Meeting Agenda
Draft Meeting Minutes from 11/14/2024
OCA PowerPoint Presentation: FY25 Accomplishments
OCA FY26 Strategic Plan

Welcome and Introductions

Director Mossaides welcomed the attendees to the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) Advisory Board virtual meeting. She reviewed the meeting agenda.

Ms. Threadgill took attendance and asked members and designees to introduce themselves.

Review and Vote on November 14, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Threadgill indicated that members had been provided with the draft minutes in the meeting materials. She invited edits or discussion of the minutes. None were raised.

Ms. Threadgill then held a formal vote on the approval of the November 14, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Reardon, Daniel Mahoney, Michele Cristello, Arielle Mullaney Poncia, Anne Marie Ritchie, Commissioner Kershaw, and Brian Pariser all voted in the affirmative. Commissioner Peterson, Jennifer Valenzuela, Beth Lucas, and Mark McShera abstained. No one voted against the meeting minutes.

The meeting minutes for November 14, 2024 were approved.

OCA Presentation: FY25 Accomplishments and FY26 Strategic Plan

Ms. Palladino-Downs began by presenting a high overview of projects and accomplishments at the OCA in FY25. She reviewed the core functions of the Quality Assurance (QA) team. She noted an 88% increase in complaint line inquiries since FY24, likely due to increased youth engagement.

Ms. Goldman provided an overview of key components of the oversight and system coordination functions at the OCA. She noted that these initiatives have fostered positive interagency collaboration and are an opportunity to share best practices and problem-solving strategies.

Ms. Threadgill then presented on major reports published by the OCA. She expressed her gratitude for agencies who provide data for reports and for their partnership in these projects.

Ms. Threadgill shared an overview of programmatic initiatives, highlighting collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Public Health.

Ms. Smolkin then presented on training initiatives through the Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma (CCWT) at the OCA with partner child-serving agencies. She highlighted the broad reach of the training initiatives across state agencies and the Commonwealth which is offered in multiple languages. She also discussed the kickoff of the Training and Learning Collaborative.

Ms. Goldman shared information on the OCA's Mandated Reporter Training. She noted that over 28,000 certificates of completion have been issued through the training and that it will be available through MassAchieve beginning in FY27.

Mr. Gurley-Green presented on internal operations. He added that changes to human resources systems at the OCA are informed by clarity and transparency, expertise and impact, and fairness and consistency.

Director Mossaides asked if there were any questions about the accomplishments presented. None were raised.

Director Mossaides then introduced the FY26 Strategic Plan. She noted that the Strategic Plan is shared with both sister agencies and the public.

Ms. Goldman presented on the annual strategic planning process and noted that the OCA engages an external consultant in its development.

Ms. Palladino-Downs presented on the OCA's Youth Engagement Initiative. She added that the OCA is transitioning this initiative into an ongoing program through the QA team and that the OCA is in the process of hiring someone to manage this work.

Ms. Smolkin then presented on CCWT's partnership with the Executive Office of Education. She added that this partnership will continue in 2026.

Ms. Threadgill presented on the Policy and Implementation Team's work on applying the OCA's research and policy recommendations to legislative advocacy and policy implementation. She highlighted the OCA's partnership with DCF and the Department of Youth Services.

Finally, Ms. Palladino-Downs provided information on contacting the OCA's complaint line.

Director Mossaides asked if there were any questions on the presentation or meeting materials provided beforehand. None were raised.

She then thanked all OCA division chiefs and colleagues for their work. Director Mossaides added that the selection process for her successor is underway, and that a new child advocate will be named in the winter.

Undersecretary McGeown, Commissioner Sotonwa, Commissioner Reardon, and Commissioner Kershaw all individually expressed their gratitude and appreciation for Director Mossaides.

In the chat, Commissioner Peterson, Jennifer Valenzuela, Rachel Gwaltney, and Daniel Mahoney also individually expressed their gratitude and appreciation for Director Mossaides.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Mossaides thanked attendees for joining the meeting and for their ongoing work and collaboration.

Adjourned: 12:06pm

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