

**Office of the Child Advocate  
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
June 30, 2015**

**Board Members or Designees Present:**

Chair: Elizabeth Armstrong (OCA) for Judge Gail Garinger (ret.) (absent)  
Peter Forbes (DYS)  
Sean Faherty (EEC)  
Barbara Kaban (CPCS)  
Mike Dsida (CPCS)  
Suzin Bartley (CTF)  
Anne Berry Goodfellow (ESE)  
Ron Benham (DPH)  
Ann Reale (EOE)  
Cheri Rolfes (EOPSS)  
Patti Mackin (EHS)  
Amy Nechtem (Juv. Ct. Dept)  
Ilene Mitchell (Probate Ct)  
Ruben Ferreira (DCF)  
Jeff McCue (DTA)  
Gloriann Moroney (SCDAO)  
Joan Mikula (DMH)

**Other Attendees:**

Christine Palladino-Downs (OCA)  
Jane Lee (OCA)  
Heather Porriello (OCA)  
Mete Habip (The Ripples Group)

**Meeting Commenced: 3:05**

**Welcome from The Office of the Child Advocate (Elizabeth Armstrong)**

The Deputy Director, Elizabeth Armstrong, welcomed attendees in Judge Garinger's absence. OCA staff, Board members, and other attendees introduced themselves.

**Fiscal Year 2015 Special Projects**

***Outside Budget Section 219 OCA Review of DCF Office Management***

The OCA, in consultation with the Office of the Inspector General, is conducting an emergency review and analysis of the office management, recordkeeping, and background check procedures of DCF pursuant to Outside Section 219. A contract was finalized with The Ripples Group, who will finish the review in place of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). The final report, originally due June 30, will be filed with the Legislature on to November 2, 2015.

Both the Employee Survey and Parent Guardian Survey have been completed. Jane Lee mentioned the OCA's collaboration with Ruben Ferreira, Assistant Commissioner of

Continuous Quality Improvement and Professional Development; and explained that the OCA submitted the results of the Parent and Guardian Survey, as well as recommendations to improve the survey methodology, to the Legislature on June 23, 2015. The survey yielded an effective response rate of 67%, and over 75% respondents expressed favorable opinions of DCF workers and services. The findings of all the surveys will be included in the final management review, as well as data and interviews with staff and management at all levels for a comprehensive review.

#### ***Line Item 1599- 7771 Fair Hearing Evaluator***

In FY15 the OCA was tasked by the Legislature to select an independent evaluator to assess DCF's administrative hearing process. In October 2014, the OCA selected the Ripples Group, an independent management consulting firm, to complete this evaluation. All four reports have been submitted to the Legislature: Initial Progress Report (October 31, 2014); Second Quarterly Progress Report (January 31, 2015); Preliminary Report (March 16, 2015); and Final Report (June 29, 2015). All completed reports can be found on the OCA website, <http://www.mass.gov/childadvocate/reports/>.

#### **The Ripples Group Presentation – Mete Habip**

Mete Habip provided a PowerPoint presentation of the findings of the Fair Hearing Evaluator project to the Board. Over a period of seven months, the Ripples Group conducted an in-depth, fact-driven assessment of DCF Fair Hearings. In conducting this assessment the Ripples Group utilized DCF databases, expert interviews, a survey of appellants, DCF internal documents, personal observations, and recordings of Fair Hearings. Three key areas addressed in the report were timeliness, fairness, and independence. The complete PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

#### **Sexual Abuse Prevention Task Force Update – Christine Palladino-Downs**

The OCA and Children's Trust co-chair the Sexual Abuse Prevention Task Force. The Task Force is made up of a diverse group of members from child-serving organizations across Massachusetts. The members will work together to come up with guidelines for agencies to prevent sexual abuse and create a protocol on training. The Task Force recently had their third monthly meeting where David Finkelhor was invited as a guest speaker to discuss child sexual abuse prevention. One point that was discussed was the incidence of youth on youth sexual abuse. Final recommendations made by the Task Force will be delivered by December 31, 2015.

#### **2015-2016 Pending Legislation Involving the OCA**

Attendees received a handout summarizing a number of pending bills that involve the OCA. Further discussion was deferred on this topic due to time constraints and Judge Garinger's absence.

#### **Leadership and Staff Changes**

Judge Garinger, the Child Advocate, is planning to retire late in the summer. Patricia Mackin from EOHHS provided an update on the process of searching for a new Child Advocate. The nominating committee held their first meeting on June 29, 2015 and plans

to send out the job description by the end of the week. EOHHS will be accepting all resumes and has encouraged a large pool of applicants.

Heather Porriello, the OCA's Program Assistant, will be leaving the OCA in August to attend the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Interviews to find her replacement will begin in July.

Jane Lee, the OCA's Research and Policy Analyst, will be leaving the OCA in September to move to New York City.

### **Wrap-up and Discussion**

**Adjournment: 4:20**