

Office of the Child Advocate
Annual Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 16, 2020
2:00 p.m.- 3:30 p.m.

Council Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides, The Child Advocate, Chair
Secretary James Peyser (EOE)
Undersecretary Ann Reale (EOE)
Undersecretary Katie Mick (EOHHS)
Commissioner Linda Spears (DCF)
Commissioner Brooke Doyle (DMH)
Commissioner Peter Forbes (DYS)
Commissioner Samantha Aigner-Treworgy (EEC)
Commissioner Edward Dolan (MPS)
Nina Marchese (DESE)
Lindsey Tucker (DPH)
Michele Cristello (DOR Child Support Enforcement Agency)
Michael Dsida (CPCS)
Susan Levin (MCB)
Suzin Bartley (CT)
Joseph Ayoub (Public Designee)
The Honorable John D. Casey (court?)
The Honorable Amy Nechtem (court?)

OCA Staff:

Jean Clements
Crissy Goldman
Karen Marcarelli
Kelsey O'Sullivan
Christine Palladino-Downs
Kristine Polizzano
Alicia Raphalian
Alix Rivière
Melissa Threadgill
Melissa Williams
and Mary Kay Leonard, Consultant

Members of the Public:

Nicole A. Dorn
Two individuals joined by telephone

Meeting Commenced: 2:03 p.m.

Welcome and Introduction from the Child Advocate:

Maria Mossaides welcomed the attendees to the Office of the Child Advocate's 2020 annual Advisory Council meeting, held as a virtual meeting via Webex. She acknowledged the attendance of council members and designees and reviewed the proposed agenda.

Presentation of Stakeholder Interview Feedback:

Ms. Mossaides indicated that the OCA, like other agencies, performs an annual exercise of looking at issues concerning the health and safety of children and examines programs and initiatives of the past year. It being her fifth year as Child Advocate, Ms. Mossaides explained that she wanted to do a more comprehensive review of the agency's strategic plan and set priorities for upcoming years. The OCA welcomed consultant Mary Kay Leonard to facilitate the strategic framework planning process and conduct stakeholder interviews, the results of which were presented on-screen and described by Ms. Leonard. (PowerPoint file attached.)

At the conclusion of Ms. Leonard's presentation Ms. Mossaides invited the Advisory Council members to share any thoughts or comments; no one commented during the session and Ms. Mossaides encouraged the attendees to provide additional feedback at their convenience.

Ms. Mossaides provided a comparison of the size and scope of the Massachusetts' Office of the Child Advocate relative to similar agencies in other New England states and throughout the rest of the country. She indicated that most states' OCA-like organizations focus only on their version of a Department of Children and Families, with only a handful having oversight over more than one agency. Massachusetts has the largest OCA with the widest range of responsibilities and legislative mandates. Ms. Mossaides also stated that representatives of other states' agencies are astounded at the level of cooperation and collaboration achieved among the Massachusetts state agencies.

Presentation of OCA's Strategic Framework:

Ms. Mossaides reviewed the OCA's Strategic Framework document which was presented on-screen and had been emailed to Advisory Council members in advance of the meeting. Regarding the prioritizing criteria for projects the OCA would consider, Advisory Council member Mike Dsida suggested that the volume of impact, i.e. the breadth of the impact of the project, be included as a consideration. Ms. Mossaides thanked Mr. Dsida for that helpful point.

Brief discussion followed Ms. Mossaides' presentation, with Council members Nina Marchese, Catie Mick, Suzin Bartley, and Ann Nechtem commenting on the quality of work accomplished, in particular the aspects of the cross-agency collaboration for which the OCA has become known. Ms. Mossaides stated that the agency's successes are a testament to the working relationships we have, making the Massachusetts OCA "the envy of our peers."

Thank you and Closing from the Child Advocate:

Ms. Mossaides indicated that Ms. Leonard's PowerPoint presentation would be shared via email with the attendees. She expressed deep gratitude for the participation of Council members and other stakeholders in the interview and evaluation process, stating that the feedback received has been incredibly helpful.

Ms. Mossaides referred to a discussion from the 2019 Advisory Council meeting in which the ongoing purpose of an advisory board for the OCA was debated, noting that other OCA's do not have advisory councils. She indicated that the OCA did informally convene a group of Advisory Council members in early 2020 to brainstorm the issue further, and that a possible future course of action could include inviting representatives from organizations outside of state government to form an advisory board/committee. Ms. Mossaides encouraged Council members to continue conversations that assist the OCA in its commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement.

Ms. Mossaides thanked everyone for their time and noted that the meeting was finishing ahead of schedule.

Adjournment: 3:10 p.m.