

Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

1:00PM-2:00PM

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

Board Members or Designees Present

Maria Mossaides, The Child Advocate, Chair

Secretary Marylou Sudders (EOHHS)

Undersecretary Ann Reale (EOE)

Commissioner Margret Cooke (DPH)

Commissioner Amy Kershaw (EEC)

Commissioner Jane Ryder (DDS)

Commissioner Opeoluwa Sotonwa (MCDHH)

Commissioner David D'Arcangelo (MCB)

Acting Commissioner Cecely Reardon (DYS)

Deputy Commissioner Michele Cristello (DOR Child Support Enforcement Agency)

Deputy Chief Counsel Michael Dsida (CPCS Children and Family Law Division)

Executive Director Jennifer Valenzuela (Children's Trust)

Diane Beswick, designee of The Honorable John D. Casey, Probate and Family Court

Nina Marchese, designee of Secretary James Peyser (DOE)

Megan Nicholls, designee of Acting Commissioner Mary Sheehan (DTA)

Government Associates

Susan Lavin (MCB)

OCA Staff

Christine Palladino Downs, Senior Director of Quality Assurance

Jessie Brunelle, Legislative and Communications Director

Melissa Threadgill, Director of Strategic Innovation

Edie Rathbone, Consultant

Karen Marcarelli, Program Assistant

Renee Franzis, Quality Assurance Supervisor

Meeting Commenced: 1:05PM

Welcome and Introduction from the Child Advocate

Ms. Mossaides welcomed the attendees to the Office of the Child Advocate's 2022 annual Advisory Board meeting, held as a virtual meeting via Zoom. She acknowledged the attendance of board members and designees and reviewed the agenda.

FY22 Highlights & Updates on FY23 Projects

Ms. Mossaides briefly spoke to the staffing challenges experienced by the OCA due to medical leaves and personnel departures. She reported on funding by the Legislature that is supporting the launch of the OCA's mandated reporting pilot for teachers. She also briefly spoke about the statewide expansion of a housing pilot to support youth aging out of DCF care.

Ms. Threadgill shared the results of an evaluation conducted by Commonwealth Medicine on the OCA's Transition Age Youth Housing Stability and Support Project. She presented on the process and project highlights of the OCA's Strategic Innovation Team. She also presented on the OCA's 2022 Commission reports, the work of the state Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma (CCWT), and the Diversion Learning Lab initiative.

A member asked if the CCWT does work to address trauma associated with children's removals from the home in child welfare cases. Ms. Threadgill explained that the CCWT does not focus on the root causes of childhood trauma, but rather gives child-serving practitioners the tools they need to be trauma-informed and responsive. Ms. Threadgill also spoke to the CCWT's engagement with DCF.

Ms. Mossaides then presented on the OCA's clinical work. She highlighted the increase in complaint line calls to the OCA, along with the full implementation of recommendations from the OCA's report on the David Almond case.

Ms. Brunelle presented on the OCA's engagement with the Massachusetts Legislature. She explained some of the OCA's legislative priorities and encouraged attendees to subscribe to the OCA's newsletter and follow the OCA's social media accounts.

A member asked how we can prevent future tragedies to children with disabilities like Harmony Montgomery. Ms. Mossaides said we need to ensure that a child's individual needs and best interests are properly presented in court.

Approval of Minutes:

Draft minutes from the September 30, 2021 meeting of the OCA's Advisory Board were presented to the members 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.

Maria Mossaides, Michael Dsida, Nina Marchese, Michele Cristello, Ann Reale, Amy Kershaw, and Jane Ryder all voted in the affirmative. Marylou Sudders, Margret Cooke, David D'Arcangelo, Cecely Reardon, Jennifer Valenzuela, and Megan Nicholls, and Diane Beswick all abstained. No members voted in the negative.

The September 30, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Mossaides thanked the attendees and the OCA's staff. Secretary Sudders thanked Ms. Mossaides for her efforts to keep kids safe.

Adjournment: 1:58PM