



Review of Candidates and Proposed Interview Questions

OCA Nominating Committee

November 25, 2025



Meeting Agenda

Agenda:

1. Approval of November 18, 2025, meeting minutes
2. Review candidates
3. Review interview questions
4. Next Steps



OCA Nominating Committee

Review of Recommended Candidates



Subcommittee Members

- **Thomas McCartney**, Deputy Director for Talent Acquisition (MA EOHHS)
- **Mary McGeown**, Undersecretary of Human Services (MA EOHHS)
- **Honorable Amy Nechtem**, Chief Justice (Juvenile Court Department)
- **Cecely Reardon**, Commissioner DYS
- **Dr. Neha Sharma**, Child Psychiatrist (designated Mass. Psychiatric Society)
- **Kate Shea**, General Counsel SEIU Local 509
- **Dr. Margo Townley**, Child Psychologist (designated MA Psychological Association)
- **Jennifer Valenzuela**, Executive Director Children's Trust
- **Meri Viano**, Director PPAL, MA Association for Mental Health (MAMH)



Review of Recommended Candidates

- ✓ Charles Lerner
- ✓ Crissy Goldman
- ✓ Jacquelyn O'Brien
- ✓ Lisa Goldblatt Grace
- ✓ Marisol Garcia
- ✓ Theresa Wilson



OCA Nominating Committee

Review of Proposed Interview Questions



01 | Introductory and Professional Background

Introductory and Professional Background:

- Could you please introduce us to your background and what led you to apply for the Child Advocate position. In your response, we would like to hear more about the milestones in your career that have prepared you for this role, as well as why this opportunity feels like the right next step for you.
- Please describe in detail your experience working in juvenile justice, child welfare, or other youth systems that give you the skills necessary to be the next Child Advocate, including how you would employ these skills to create meaningful change and maintain a truly independent office.
- Please discuss the different ways you have been able to contribute and expand public service in your profession.



01 | Introductory and Professional Background

Introductory and Professional Background:

Please introduce us to your background and the key experiences that prepared you for the Child Advocate role, including your work in juvenile justice, child welfare, or other youth-serving systems, and explain why this opportunity is the right next step for you and how you would use those skills to create meaningful change and uphold an independent office?



02 | Transparency, Communication and Public Trust

Transparency, Communication, and Public Trust:

- Describe a time when families, youth, or community stakeholders expressed distrust or dissatisfaction with how a system or agency was serving them. How did you approach understanding their concerns, rebuilding trust, and driving meaningful change?
- As the Child Advocate for Massachusetts, your leadership role is dedicated to ensuring that child serving executive agencies deliver timely, safe, and effective services. What are some concrete mechanisms you will use to keep the Office of the Child Advocate's core mission at the center while still holding partners across government, courts, nonprofits, and community groups accountable to shared outcomes?
- How often would you be willing to meet with a group of impacted families? (across all systems)



02 | Transparency, Communication and Public Trust

Transparency, Communication, and Public Trust:

As the Child Advocate for Massachusetts, your leadership role is dedicated to ensuring that child serving executive agencies deliver timely, safe, and effective services. What are some concrete mechanisms you will use to keep the Office of the Child Advocate's core mission at the center while still holding partners across government, courts, nonprofits, and community groups accountable to shared outcomes?



03 | Cross-System Coordination and Complex Cases

Cross-System Coordination and Complex Cases:

- Tell us about a time when a child or family case you or your organization was working on fell through the cracks because multiple systems failed to coordinate. How did you intervene? What did you learn?
- What opportunities do you see for improving cross-agency and cross-secretariat collaboration to improve outcomes for children?
- Given the diverse pathways children and families experience in receiving care and services, how will you ensure that the OCA addresses their needs across all child-serving agencies?



03 | Cross-System Coordination and Complex Cases

Cross-System Coordination and Complex Cases:

How do you approach collaboration across complex systems, and what opportunities do you see to strengthen relationships and improve coordination among agencies and government systems in ways that advance better outcomes for children?



04 | Leadership and Independence

Leadership and Independence:

- Describe a time you were asked to make a recommendation or decision that might have been politically sensitive. How did you ensure your approach remained unbiased and child-centered?
- What has been the hardest decision you have had to make as a leader? How did you work to come to that decision? Please describe the outcome.
- Please describe your experiences with, understanding of, and priorities for juvenile justice-involved youth.
- Please outline your priorities for the first 12 months in this office and what steps you will take to achieve measurable progress.



04 | Leadership and Independence

Leadership and Independence:

Can you describe a difficult decision you have made as a leader, how you approached it, and what you learned from the outcome, and then share how that decision-making style would guide your priority setting in your first year as Child Advocate, including how you would advance measurable progress across key areas such as child welfare, juvenile justice, and youth mental health?



05 | Oversight and Accountability

Systemic Oversight and Accountability:

- Tell us about a time you identified systemic failures within a large organization or public agency. How did you assess the situation and drive reform?
- Share an example of when you faced resistance while pushing for greater transparency or accountability. What did you do to overcome it?
- Give an example of when you worked across multiple organizations or government systems to resolve a case or policy issue affecting children. What challenges did you face, and what was the outcome?
- What is your vision for effective oversight, and what role, if any, do you see for collaboration and innovation in oversight?



05 | Oversight and Accountability

Systemic Oversight and Accountability:

What is your vision for effective oversight, and how would you incorporate collaboration, innovation, accountability, and transparency into that approach?



07 | DEIA and Lived Experience

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access and Lived Experience

- Tell us about a time when you intentionally incorporated the voices of people with lived experience into decision-making. How did that change the outcome?
- Describe a situation when you had to address disparities affecting marginalized groups (e.g., Black, LGBTQ+ youth) within a system. What steps did you take to ensure equity?
- Tell us about a time you led or influenced policy that addressed systemic bias or inequity in child welfare or juvenile justice. What specific strategies did you use?
- The CDC described a number of experiences that can occur before a person's 18th birthday that can have negative effects on their social, emotional, and cognitive development. Can you describe some of these Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and which one or 2 do you feel is likely to have the most detrimental impact? How would this be addressed by the OCA?



07 | DEIA and Lived Experience

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access and Lived Experience

Option 1 (explicitly names lived experience):

Can you share an example of a time when you meaningfully incorporated the voices of people with lived experience into your decision-making, and explain how their involvement shaped the final outcome?

Option 2 (allows candidates to raise it themselves):

Can you describe a situation where you engaged stakeholders in a way that shifted your decision-making, and explain how those perspectives influenced the outcome?



07 | DEIA and Lived Experience

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access and Lived Experience (continued)

- Can you tell us how you envision implementing change in the racial or ethnic disparities for families impacted by unnecessary system harm to change in the Commonwealth?
- Access to resources and geography are Social Determinants of Health. There are more services for children and adolescents in urban and suburban areas than in more rural regions of the state despite DCF, DYS, and other agencies having the capacity to contract for these services statewide. Western and Central Massachusetts lag behind on family preservation services and community-based services that allow children and youth to remain at home while receiving care or to address parenting issues that are not creating imminent risk. What are some ways in which the OCA can begin to address the disparities in available services for children in youth in the Central and Western Regions of the state?



07 | DEIA and Lived Experience

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access and Lived Experience (continued)

What is your understanding of disparities in Massachusetts regarding service access and outcomes for children and families, and what are your ideas for driving equity and improving outcomes?



08 | Trauma-Informed Practice and Data/Communication

Trauma-Informed Practice

- Describe how you have applied trauma-informed principles in your work to shape policy or respond to a child or family crisis.

Data and Communication

- Describe how you have used information and system data to uncover patterns of harm or inequity in a child or family-serving system. What actions resulted from your findings?
- Give an example of how you communicated complex data or findings to the public or policymakers in a way that led to action or reform.
- How would you use data to drive change for child and family services, and what metrics in particular do you think are critical indicators of well-being for families and effectiveness of our child and family-serving systems? What outcomes would you prioritize for setting goals for improvement?



08 | Trauma-Informed Practice and Data/Communication

Data and Communication

Can you share an example of how you have used data or system information to identify patterns or areas of concern in a child or family-serving system, and explain how you used those findings to drive action and measure progress?