

Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel (MCCRP)

October 13, 2020 Meeting

Minutes

Persons Present:

Wilma Brier
Laura Brown
Angela English
Kay Farley

Marci McCoy-Roth
Stacey McNeely
Lisa Merkin
Sarah Stanton

Welcome

Marci McCoy-Roth called the meeting to order.

Review and Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the September 8, 2020 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. Wilma Brier made a motion to approve the minutes. Sarah Stanton seconded the motion, which was approved.

Agency Report

Lisa Merkin advised that the Washington Post had recently published an article about The Tree House, which is a Child Advocacy Center in Montgomery County. The article focused on three issues – personnel problems, misrepresentation of numbers served, and a data breach. An internal investigation of these issues began at The Tree House beginning in June 2020. The Office of the Inspector General is also investigating the matter. The Tree House Board of Directors issued a public statement regarding the situation and reaffirming its commitment to its mission. DHHS continues to closely monitor the situation. CWS will continue to make referrals to The Tree House.

The Washington Post article alleged that 40 youth have been left with no therapy. This number is not accurate and the 4 children in foster care-related cases have been re-referred for services.

The article was also not clear that The Tree House is a not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) entity. Three years ago it became an independent agency with a governing Board of Directors. The Tree House was set up to be a one-stop-shop for child abuse/neglect assessments and services. There are multiple services co-located at the Calhoun site: The Tree House, CWS, the police, and mental health to ensure a seamless service delivery to children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect.

Child Welfare Report

Angela English reviewed the Child Welfare Report. They are now drawing the data from CJAMS. The in-home services number for June seems low as many new cases are being funneled to in-home family preservation services. The agency is still not getting many school referrals. A question was asked about whether the agency will investigate when children are not attending virtual classes. The agency can only investigate if someone makes a report. A question was also asked about whether any special guidance had been provided to teachers. The agency meets quarterly with the Pupil Personnel Workers (PPW) school counselors and has given the PPWs training on when to contact the agency. Additionally, the agency social workers have introduced themselves to the PPWs for each of the children in their caseloads. The agency has also developed a new dashboard, which provides the agency social workers with real-time grades for the children in their caseloads.

<i>Data Element</i>	<i>June 2020</i>	<i>YTD Total</i>	<i>Average</i>
Calls to Screening	654	12,607	1,050.6
New Alternative Response (A/R) Investigations	21	768	64.0
New Information and Referrals (I/R) Investigations	42	928	77.3
New Non-CFS [previously New Requests from Other Agencies (ROAs)]	47	727	60.6
Children/Youth in Out of Home (OOH) Care	432		426
Families Receiving In-Home Services	101		93
Resource Homes	218		199
Resource Home Applications	3	70	
Resource Homes Closed	4	23	

Housing

Ms. English advised that Lisa Merkin was able to get the Rockville City Housing Program to accept housing vouchers. With these new 18 slots, MCCSW now has approximately 25 housing slots for transitioning youth. At this time, this number of slots is adequate to meet current needs.

Committee Projects for 2020-2021

At the September 8th meeting, 3 issues were identified.

- Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention
- Housing for Aging Out Youth
- Mental Health/Addiction

Given the above report, there was consensus to take Housing for Aging Out Youth off the list.

Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention

At the prior MCCRCP meeting, members expressed interest in understanding the flow of the process, the points where people drop-out of the process, and data available on why people drop out. There was also interest in comparing Montgomery County data with Maryland state data.

New Comments

- It would be interesting to know what attracts people to become foster parents. What are the commonalities? What things don't work?
- It would also be interesting to consider people who aren't usually thought of as prospective foster parents, e.g., older adults, retirees, Spanish speakers, the LGBTQ population, etc.
- It would be helpful to have written agency materials that MCCRCP members could review before the November 10th meeting.
- The Maryland Foster Parent Association might be a source for getting feedback from foster parents regarding their experiences with recruitment and retention.
- The agency has a lot of foster parents who have been around a long time and most have adopted a foster child. It would be interesting to look at longevity data.
- In other fields, predictors for longevity relate to (1) training and realistic expectations and (2) supervision and engagement with the agency.

- The agency had an audit that looked at strengths and weaknesses. An area of weakness was engagement with the foster fathers. The agency has implemented some changes to address this.

Next Steps for November 10th Meeting

- Ms. English will invite the agency recruitment staff to meet with the MCCRCP on November 10th. If the staff aren't available, Ms. English and/or the unit supervisor can provide information.
- Ms. English will provide MCCRCP members with relevant documentation, including the business process, copies of the foster parent newsletter, and information from the strengths/weaknesses audit.
- Ms. McCoy-Roth asked MCCRCP members to review the materials on foster parenting located here: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/CYF/CYFFosterCareMeetings.html> prior to the November 10th meeting.

Mental Health/Addiction

The MCCRCP previously talked about hosting a mental health-related educational event for the agency social workers in December 2020

Possible topics include mental wellness (self-care) and meditation.

Next Steps for November 10th Meeting

- Consider potential topics and speakers
- Review information on Tara Brach's mini-workshop in mediation - <https://www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/>

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: November 10, 2020