

Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel (MCCRP)

October 12, 2021 Meeting

Minutes

Persons Present:

Wilma Brier

Laura Brown, Technical Advisor

Laura Coyle

Angela English, CYFS Liaison

Kay Farley, CRBC Representative

Marci McCoy-Roth, 2020-2021 Chair

Welcome

Ms. Marci McCoy-Roth called the meeting to order.

Review and Approval of the Minutes

The draft minutes of the September 14, 2021 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. Ms. Wilma Brier made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Laura Brown seconded the motion, which was approved.

Agency Report

Ms. Angela English reviewed the agency's data for FY 2022 from the Supervisor's Briefing – Data Update report. She advised that the social workers handling assessments are currently responsible for 40 cases each, which is much higher than normal and exceeds state and federal practice standards. This is a result of staffing shortages. Between the 2 units handling assessments, they have about 20 vacancies.

Staffing shortages remain a problem in Montgomery County, statewide, and nationally. The agency is not receiving new applications for employment. Social workers are able to find other jobs where the work is done virtually. Other agencies also are offering higher salaries.

Data Element	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct- 21
Assessment					
Number of calls to screening unit	834	837	705		
Reports of Child Maltreatment	499	434	388		
Number of New Alternative Response (AR) Investigations	85	69	61		
Number of New Investigation Response (IR) Investigations	74	62	56		
New Non-CPS	76	75	59		
In-Home					
Number of Families Receiving In-Home Services	83	80	77		
Out of Home					
Number of new out of home placements (entries)	6	16	16		
Total children who left care (exits)	14	14	13		
Total out-of-home children in care at month's end	377	379	382		
Number of children in foster care	240	237	238		
Number of children placed with relatives	82	84	84		
Number of Voluntary Placement Agreements @ EOM	2	3	2		
Number of Voluntary Placement Agreement Requests	8	2	5		
Number of Resource Homes	186	184	182		
Average length of stay for children in foster care (months)		33.5	33.5		

Screening calls are up due to the re-opening of schools. They are also getting reports from hospitals and are seeing an increase in cases involving mental health issues.

The agency is increasingly using Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM) instead of Family Involvement Meetings (FIMs) to improve family engagement. Biological parents and the foster parents are participants in the FGDM meetings. Montgomery County has received federal funding for training biological parents and foster parents on this process. Montgomery County is one of five counties in Maryland to receive this Center for Excellence (CFE) funding. (The other Maryland counties are Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, and Prince Georges.) Through the grant funding, biological parents and foster parents participating in the project receive a stipend as an incentive for their participation. The CFE funding is client-based.

The agency is not seeing as many children coming into care, but are seeing more sibling groups.

The agency is expecting to see a reduction in the number of resource homes. A number of adoptions will be finalized in the coming months. Some of the adoptive parents are the foster parents of the children to be adopted. Once the adoptions are finalized, it is likely that 8 or 9 resource homes will be closed as their families are complete.

The agency is also likely to see some resource homes close due to the implementation of a new state policy, which mandates that foster parents be vaccinated against the flu, tuberculosis, and mumps, measles, and rubella (MMR). The new policy brings Maryland into compliance with federal policy.

The average stay in care rate is up. This is mainly due to older youth staying in care beyond age 21 because of COVID. The agency received \$245,000 in federal funds to assist these older youth. The agency spent \$188,000 on 75 youth to help get them stabilized. It is unknown at this time whether the unspent funds will be extended or renewed.

LGBTQ Subcommittee

The Panel reviewed the agency's responses to the questions submitted to the agency by the Panel regarding the agency's handling of LGBTQ youth. Agency supervisors were asked to answer questions related to agency practices.

Next Steps: A subcommittee of Ms. Katy Dunn, Ms. Stacey McNealy, and Ms. Laura Coyne will draft a whitepaper comparing agency practice against state policy, identifying any gaps in practice, and identifying best practices. The response chart prepared by the agency can be an appendix to the whitepaper.

Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee

The Panel reviewed the draft survey. The following suggested edits were made.

- It would be helpful to ask foster parents about their comfort and willingness to engage with the biological parents.
- For questions related to comfort, there should be space to allow the person to explain why they are not comfortable.

- The specific questions related to support should be asked before a general question related to support. (This concept of starting with the specific questions and ending with the broader questions would also apply to other categories of questions.)
- If support is not adequate, there should be space to allow the person to explain what would be helpful.
- A question should be added related to who the person goes to when they need help.
 - This might be two questions – who do they usually go to and all that they might go to

Next Steps: A subcommittee of Ms. Brown and Ms. Brier will develop a new draft based on the discussion. The next draft will be shared with Mr. Chris Plummer, President of the Montgomery County Foster Parent Association, for his input and assistance in circulating the survey.

MCCRP Interview Panel

Ms. McCoy-Roth asked for volunteers to assist with interviews with prospective MCCRP members. Ms. Brier, Ms. Coyne, and Ms. Kay Farley volunteered.

December Event for Agency Staff

Ms. McCoy-Roth asked for ideas for an event that the Panel could host for the agency staff in December 2021. Another session related to self-care might be helpful for staff. Ms. Coyne offered to also explore the possibility of a speaker from the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: November 9, 2021