

## Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel (MCCRP)

June 8, 2021 Meeting

### Minutes

#### Persons Present:

Wilma Brier	Marci McCoy-Roth, 2020-2021 Chair
Laura Brown, Technical Advisor	Stacey McNeely
Angela English, CYFS Liaison	Sarah Stanton
Kay Farley	Chris Plummer, Guest

#### Welcome

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

#### Review and Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the May 11, 2021 meeting were accepted as distributed.

#### Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families

Mr. Chris Plummer, President of the Montgomery County Foster Parent Association (FPA), provided an overview of the FPA activities and shared observations and experiences of FPA membership.

The FPA is currently focusing on partnerships with community organizations to help secure resources for FPA members. For example, FPA has been working with organizations, such as Interfaith and the United Methodist Church, to get clothing for children in foster care. This is especially needed in emergency placements. The donated bags from these organizations generally include 2-3 sets of clothing and hygiene products for the child.

The FPA communicates with all licensed foster parents in Montgomery County through email and use of SharePoint.

The FPA coordinates with the Maryland Resource Parent Association (MRPA). Mr. Plummer participates in the monthly MRPA Board of Directors meetings and reports on the FPA activities. Ms. Jeanette Jumbelick, the Department of Human Resources Resource Parent Ombudsman, also participates in MRPA Board meetings. Her participation in these meetings has proven very helpful to the FPA in understanding new state policies.

The FPA Board of Directors includes the President, Vice President, Outreach Director, Treasurer, Secretary, and a Montgomery County Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) liaison, which currently is Sophie Hotch.

The FPA hosts community events for its members to provide, information, networking opportunities, and support. For example, they have had playground play dates for younger children and summer hikes for older youth. The FPA is considering the idea of movies in the park as another option. The participation levels are good. The community events have drawn 118 – 130 participants. The quarterly

open forum meetings draw about 30 participants. A recent training session on rights and responsibilities of foster parents drew 30 to 36 participants. The FPA is also exploring the idea of appointing mentors for new foster parents. FPA members try to support each other so when problems arise the children in their care do not have to be relocated.

A question was asked about why foster parents close their homes. Mr. Plummer suggested that some do because they were not prepared for the trauma that children coming into foster care have experienced. The FPA is exploring the idea of an exit survey for foster parents closing their homes. A question was asked about what frustrations foster parents have expressed. Mr. Plummer advised that new state policies can cause problems in a variety of ways. The state policies are sometimes written vaguely, which results in confusion, and it can take considerable time to get answers to questions seeking clarity from the Department of Human Services (DHS) state office. The state policies can also be intrusive. For example, DHS is considering issuing a policy that would require every person (adult and child) living in the same household as a foster child under the age of 2 to get a whooping cough vaccine. Such a policy could impinge on the medical and religious rights of the foster parents.

A question was asked about whether kinship providers are members of the FPA. Kinship providers are not excluded, but are not a focus of the FPA. Their experiences are a little different because they are family caring for family members.

The FPA is working to enhance the collaborative relationship with the CYFS. It is helpful to foster parents when there are clear lines of communication and roles are clearly defined.

A question was asked about what the MCCRCP could do to assist with recruitment and retention of foster parents. There is a communication barrier involving the state agency, county agency, and the FPA. Foster parents have been frustrated with the lack of clarity and timeliness of answers to questions. Secondly, DHS and CYFS should be flexible when possible in the implementation of policy when it is in the best interests of a child.

A question was asked about whether DHS and CYFS ask the FPA to comment on draft policy. FPA has been invited to the table to discuss issues on occasion, but there is not formal process for soliciting input on new policy.

A question was asked about how to improve recruitment. FPA would like to have joint booths with CYFS at local fairs and community events.

Ms. McCoy-Roth thanked Mr. Plummer for meeting with the MCCRCP and the information and input that he provided.

Mr. Plummer provided his e-mail for follow-up contact – [president@mocofpa.org](mailto:president@mocofpa.org).

MCCRCP members discussed the possibility of developing a survey for foster parents and working with FPA to distribute it. Another suggestion for future consideration was the development of a welcome packet for new foster parents. There was also discussion about the possible need for a process for foster parents to express concerns or make complaints without fearing a backlash.

***Action Items: Further discuss the possibility of 1) a survey of foster parents related to recruitment and retention, 2) a welcome packet for new foster parents, and 3) a complaint process.***



### **Agency Report**

Ms. Angela English advised that Lisa Merkin is following up with the county on a weekly basis regarding the recruitment of new members to fill the MRRCP vacant positions.

CYFS should have answers to the MCCRP's survey on the policies and practices related to working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) toward the end of June.

### **Annual Report Development**

MCCSP members discussed next steps in the development of the annual report, which must be submitted to the County Council by August 31, 2021.

***Action Items: Members will review the draft report prepared by Ms. Sarah Stanton. Ms. Stacey McNeely will draft a list of activities that should be included in the report.***

The meeting adjourned.

**Next Meeting: July 13, 2021**