

Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel (MCCRP)

December 13, Meeting

Minutes (Draft)

Persons Present:

Laura Brown
 Laura Coyle
 Ron Whalen

Stacey McNeely, 2022-2023 Chair
 Lisa Merkin, CWS Administrator
 Shaoli Katana

Welcome

Ms. McNeely called the meeting to order.

Review and Approval of the Minutes

The draft minutes of the November 7, 2022, meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. Ms. Coyle made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Brown seconded the motion, which was approved.

Agency Update

Data

Ms. Lisa Merkin reviewed the agency's data for October 2022.

Data Element: Screening & Assessment	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Total	
Number of Calls to Screening Unit	599	604	1011	1109	3323	
Reports of Child Maltreatment (Referrals)	386	383	628	696	2093	
Number of New Alternative Response (AR) Investigations	57	38	75	111	281	
Number of New Investigation Response (IR) Investigations	57	47	64	72	240	
New Non-CPS Cases	49	56	67	68	240	
Number of Completed IR CPS investigation Findings- Allegation Indicated	45	29	28	38	140	
Number of Completed IR CPS Investigation Findings - Allegation Unsubstantiated	35	29	14	5	83	
Number of Completed IR CPS Investigation Findings - Allegation Ruled Out	41	45	30	45	161	
Data Element: Foster Care Entries & Exits	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Total	
Number of new out of home placements	3	10	5	9	27	
Total children who left care	3	6	13	4	26	
Total out-of-home children in care at month's end	347	351	343	348	347	
Data Element: Out of Home	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Avg / month	
Number of children in foster care	206	218	220	230	219	
Number of children placed with relatives	76	73	70	67	72	
Number of children in residential placement	65	60	53	51	57	
Average (mean) length of stay for children in foster care (months)	33	33	34	34	34	
Median length of stay for children in foster care (months)	29	30	30	29	30	
Data Element: Resource Homes	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Total	
Number of Licensed Regular Foster Homes (does not include Restricted/Relative Homes)	130	128	129	128	129	*AVG
Number of Newly Assigned Regular Home Studies	4	4	0	4	3	*AVG
Number of Recruitment Inquiries	45	44	44	37	170	

The increase in calls to the Screening Unit and reports of maltreatment relates to schools being back in session. Historically, the greatest number of calls and reports occur in October and November, although Ms. Merkin said that December also been very busy.

Staff Vacancies

As noted at the last meeting, two supervisor positions have been filled, but because they were promotions from within the Agency, this resulted in two new social worker vacancies. Openings also remain for two manager positions. It is typically difficult to hire people in late December/early January. The market for licensed social workers at all levels continues to be very tight.

Given the ongoing difficulty with hiring licensed social workers, the Agency is experimenting with hiring contractors with a background in child and family services who are not licensed social workers. These contractors focus on family support and wraparound services. Currently thirteen contractors from various fields, including psychology, education, developmental studies, and family science, are working for the Agency and the arrangement is working well. As a result, the Agency is reexamining its hiring strategies.

Foster Parent Survey Summary

To better understand how Panel members could support staff in recruiting and retaining resource families, the survey assessed resource family satisfaction on a wide range of topics. In March 2022, the FPA sent the survey to its membership of approximately 150 members with 49 foster families responding.

Prior to the meeting, the panel received a summary of the survey. Results were broken out by tenure of service to understand whether the needs are different for new versus more experienced foster caregivers. The survey questions and answers are available for review.

The survey covered the following topics:

- Inclusion and Communication with the department staff
- Support provided by staff
- Relationship with birth families
- Financial Concerns
- Recruiting New Families
- Foster Parent Training

Some results were not surprising. For example, the affordability and availability of daycare/childcare is one of the greatest frustrations for both groups of foster parents. Nonetheless, the survey provided insights into a variety of other challenges, and the foster parents had many useful suggestions for addressing them. Ms. Merkin said the survey would be useful.

Asked whether the Agency uses an exit survey for foster families leaving the system, Ms. Merkin explained that although no formal survey exists, exiting foster families are interviewed and asked why they decided not to continue. She asked if she could share the summary with the person who manages the exit interviews and asked if the panel would like to have her come speak to the group. The panel said yes to both.

Committee Business

[Training](#)

Montgomery County Ethics Law Training is now required for all panel members, in addition to Maryland Open Meetings Act Training and Montgomery County Parliamentary Procedure Training. Ms. Merkin will provide the training status of each panel member.

MCCRP Committee Vacancies

Two people have applied for the vacancies, and Ms. Coyle, Mr. Whalen, and Ms. Farley offered to participate in interviews. Ms. Merkin's administrative assistant will be in touch with scheduling.

Spring Forum

Ms. Merkin has not yet received the date, topic, or title for the Spring Forum. The panel was unclear about what audience is being targeted and what outcomes the organizers desired. Mr. Whalen agreed to be the liaison. He plans to attend the January meeting about the Forum to obtain more information.

Follow-up items

To follow up on interest in collaboration with the Panel Ms. Neely reached out to:

- Montgomery County Board of Social Services
- Montgomery County Mental Health Advisor Committee (contact – Diane Linder)

She also made a more general inquiry to:

- Montgomery County Collaboration Council regarding the MoCo Re-Connect drop-in center (contact - Elijah Wheeler, Jr.)
- NaCO regarding its work related to aging-out youth (contact - Rachel Mackey)

She has not heard back from anyone yet.

The meeting is adjourned.

The next meeting is **January 10, 2023, 7pm.**