

Montgomery County Citizens Review Panel (MCCRP)

September 10, 2024 Meeting

Minutes

Members Present:

Tinuade Akinshola

Laura Brown

Laura Coyle

Kay Farley, CRBC Representative

Stacey McNeely, Chair

Lisa Merkin, CYFS Liaison

Elizabeth Simon

Ms. Stacey McNeely called the meeting to order.

Review and Approval of the Minutes

The draft minutes of the August 13, 2024 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. A typo was pointed out in the draft minutes. Ms. Laura Coyle made the motion to approve the revised minutes. Ms. Elizabeth Simon seconded the motion. The revised minutes were approved.

Agency Update

Ms. Lisa Merkin presented the data for August 2024. An increase in the number of resource home recruitment inquiries was noted.

Data Element	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024	Aug 2024	
Assessment					
Number of calls to Screening Unit	1140	731	603	540	
Reports of Child Maltreatment (referrals)	879	517	472	404	
Number of new Alternative Response (AR) investigations	101	54	47	38	
Number of new Investigation Response (IR) investigations	87	40	48	58	
New non-CPS cases	103	57	76	57	
Number of completed IR investigation findings – allegation indicated	41	56	59	28	
Number of completed IR investigation findings – allegation unsubstantiated	15	21	53	12	
Number of completed IR investigation findings – allegation ruled out	47	53	52	21	
Out of Home					
Number of new out of home placements (entries)	14	8	5	8	
13Total children who left care (exits)	13	8	8	9	
Total out-of-home children in care at month's end	336	336	333	332	
Placement					
Number of children in foster care	233	226	219	219	
Number of children placed with relatives	60	69	72	74	
Number of children in residential placement	43	41	42	39	

Length of Stay					
Average (mean) length of stay in foster care (months)	33	33	33.5	33	
Median length of stay in foster care (months)	27.5	27	27	32	
Resource Homes					
Number of licensed regular foster homes (does not include restricted/relative homes)	113	114	115	116	
Number of newly assigned regular home studies	2	5	1	0	
Number of recruitment inquiries	33	33	26	37	

Sub-panel on Developing a Culture of Support for Agency Staff

Mr. Whalen, chair of the Sub-panel, submitted a written report of his activities. He has done a partial literature review of CPS staff retention publications:

- **New Employees:** Quality of supervision, peer relationships, and professional development opportunities among key retention factors
- **Supervisors:** Quality of peer relationships, quantity of supervisees, and professional development opportunities among key retention factors

He pointed out that at the last MCCRCP meeting the thought was that the support efforts should target all staff members, but the literature suggests there may be benefit in assessing the differential needs of staff based on their position within the organization.

Mr. Whalen also has identified a free CEU opportunity for the agency staff - The Amygdala, Stress and PTSD Conference at USUHS (<https://www.amygdalaptsdconference.org/>)

Ms. Simon interviewed two social workers that work in the New York child welfare system for their thoughts. One take away was a frustration with not feeling that they had the time to participate in supportive activities that were offered.

Ms. Tinuade Akinshola is reaching out to contacts she has that work in the District of Columbia child welfare system.

There was also discussion to clarify the Sub-panel's charge. The consensus was there were two aspects to charge that are intertwined. One is to look at factors that impact retention. The other is to develop concrete activities to support staff and/or reduce stress.

Offering free CEU opportunities is always welcome. The licensing requirements require hours in ethics and leadership in each licensing cycle. Substance abuse and mental health are always topics of interest. Offering the classes virtually is always best. March is Social Workers month. Perhaps, the Sub-panel could target that month for offering a CEU program.

The group brainstormed ideas.

- Human Rights for Children

- How to help parents engage and play with their children during supervised visits
- Reaching out to Zero to Three for possible topics
- The ‘tinkergarten’ concept of incorporating the outdoors in child play

Sub-panel on Support for Transitioning Youth

Ms. McNeely, chair of the Sub-panel, advised that the Sub-panel members met again after the last MCCRPP meeting. A major problem for transitioning youth seems to be who to call when they have problems or need advice. The Sub-panel members agreed to focus on how to increase the options for securing a mentor for these youth. It was recognized that some private agencies are hesitant to offer mentoring services because of the staffing requirements and the high liability insurance premiums.

Ms. Merkin advised that 4 Montgomery’s Kids is starting new program for transitioning youth. The agency will offer a basic guaranteed income for up to 12 months. The program also will offer a person to call (volunteers) if they have questions or problems. The Sub-panel will follow-up on this program.

Ms. Coyle presented themes that she identified in her literature review.

- Success. At a minimum: housed, employed or in an educational program, self-reliant, not entangled with the criminal justice system.
- Subgroups in 2020: resilient (45%) vs. troubled and struggling, parents on public assistance, incarcerated (55%).
- Research. Exploring what transitioning youth need and what programs work in providing for these needs is receiving attention.
 - Qualitative studies necessarily have few subjects and are generally localized, so it may be hard to generalize from these studies.
 - The subjects of qualitative studies may behave differently than they would otherwise because they are research subjects.
 - Potentially the most interesting include studies of youth with better-than-average outcomes.
 - Quantitative studies often rely on the National Youth in Transition Database, but dropout rates by respondents are high, so the data are not always reliable, and data is self-reported.
- Education. Youth that are enrolled in an educational program tend to have better outcomes than youth that are not enrolled in an educational program.
- More than a voucher. Youth need more than just a housing voucher or placement in an educational program to succeed. Ongoing support is critical.
- Mentors. The right kind of mentor is helpful, but youth need more than just mentors.
- Relationships. Healthy relationships with people who support youth are critical but seem difficult to cultivate. After all, it's because children did not have this support that many ended up in the foster system. How do you cultivate those relationships as an adolescent, young adult?
- Trauma. Some researchers believe you need to treat the trauma of having been in foster care before you can expect a young adult to be successful in adulthood.

The Sub-panel will also be summarizing the state and federal policy for transitioning youth and reaching out to other Montgomery County Commissions that may have a shared interest in this issue.

Yearly HHS Committee Meeting

Ms. McNeely advised that Montgomery County's HHS Committee will be meeting in October 16 and 17, 2024. She is scheduled to present the work of the MCCRP on the 16th.

She will draft the one-pager for the presentation and circulate the draft to Ms. Merkin and the panel members for review.

Panel Training Requirements

Ms. Neely reminded members to make sure they have completed the required training sessions and uploaded their certificates of course completions.

Panel Vacancy Notice

Ms. Merkin will work with County to get the MCCRP vacancy posted.

Panel Availability for October 8, 2024 Meeting

Panel members reported on their availability for the next meeting date.

The meeting adjourned.