

Government Oversight Committee
Summary of Committee Information Requests and Areas for Possible Further Review
Re: Maine's Child Protection System
From GOC Meeting of May 23, 2018

Information Requests

1. OCFS Organizational Chart
2. Current staffing levels showing total # of positions and # of vacant positions in each OCFS unit and for contracted ARP providers
3. Turnover rate for OCFS caseworkers and supervisors by unit and for ARP providers
4. Flow diagram of DHHS Child Protective Process and how outside agencies that are part of the child protective system interact with DHHS' process
5. OCFS policy, process and procedure for establishing whether an adult relative, i.e. kinship, placement is appropriate for a child
6. Current caseloads for OCFS and ARP caseworkers and supervisors
7. OCFS policy and procedures for interviewing a child during a child protective assessment
8. Trends in DHHS referrals to ARP from child abuse/neglect reports
9. Details on ARP contracts, i.e. on what basis are ARP providers paid, what credentials are ARP providers required to have, what contracted responsibilities does ARP have to DHHS especially on when particular notifications are to be made to DHHS on referred cases
10. Trend in budgeted resources and actual expenditures for OCFS for the last 10 years, possibly by unit
11. Statistics on calls received by Intake, i.e. # of calls, avg. wait times (on hold), # not answered or gone to voice mail
12. What is DHHS' role in providing training for mandated reporters and do mandated reporters receive training through a centralized avenue or format?
13. Has DHHS made any changes to the procedure for Intake decisions on truancy reports, specifically whether DHHS is screening out reports based on truancy as inappropriate when school has not yet completed its truancy protocols?
14. What records are typically transferred between schools when children change schools and what records are obtained from out of state schools when children move into Maine?
15. Do ARP providers follow the same policy and procedures for child interviews as OCFS?
16. If a parent refuses to allow a child to be interviewed or if child won't speak during an interview, how does that factor into the caseworker and supervisors assessment of risk for the child?
17. What is a typical weekly schedule for a caseworker?
18. Does DHHS have an anonymous tip line for workers to report issues like those seen by OPEGA up the chain of command or outside the chain of command?

Potential Areas for Further Review/Consideration

- a. Whether the State's truancy laws are too antiquated to serve as effective red flags of potential child abuse/neglect – particularly with regard to the criteria on age of children where younger children enrolled in school are missing substantial amounts of school on unexcused absences but this is not considered truant and, therefore, not appropriate for DHHS action.
- b. Weaknesses in the mandated reporter system from training all the way through to DHHS feedback to reporters on reports made, and to protecting mandated reporters. Examples – mandated reporters may leave a child in a vulnerable situation if they do not know all the less obvious signs of child abuse/neglect to look for or teachers being worried about their own security if they make a report.
- c. Whether information and concerns about a family/child is transferred between relevant entities when a family moves and what barriers/challenges might exist to doing this, i.e. between schools in different regions, between DHHS offices, etc.
- d. Functionality of MACWIS and how that impacts efficiency and effectiveness of OCFS and ARP caseworkers and supervisors
- e. Whether caseloads for OCFS and ARP caseworkers and supervisors are at appropriate/best practice levels
- f. State policy/practice re: reunification prioritized vs best interests/safety of child

Committee Questions that the Director Committed to Responding Back On Regarding the Two Cases

- What school records were transferred from the out-of-state school district to the first Maine school district and then on to the second Maine school district the child attended?
- Were there any reports made to DHHS on the two cases that were deemed inappropriate?