

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE
165 CAPITOL AVENUE, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106**



Sarah Healy Eagan, J.D.
Child Advocate

**OCA Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes - April 25, 2023**

OCA Staff: Sarah Eagan, Child Advocate; Christina D. Ghio, Associate Child Advocate

Members Present: Shelley Geballe, Rudolph Brooks, Jeanne Milstein, Jennifer Collins, and Edwin Colon

Members Not Present: Toni Boucher

1. Budget Update

The state budget includes two positions at OCA. The Child Advocate thanked the Board for supporting OCA in its efforts to obtain two additional staff. OCA will begin to do the footwork now, in the event that these positions are included in the final budget. OCA plans to have one position focus on facility review and have the second position working on child fatality review. There was some discussion about what the likelihood of the positions remaining in the final budget.

A significant issue now with the overall budget is the spending cap and revenue. OCA continues to advocate for increased spending on human services and education.

Christina Ghio provided an update on legislation related to Autism Spectrum Disorder and OCA's concerns about Medicaid reimbursement rates for services for children with Autism Spectrum.

OCA has a number of concerns about the budget and continues to express concerns about behavioral health services, including IICAPS, UCC and crisis stabilization, and Child First. OCA is concerned that UCC and crisis stabilization is based largely on ARPA funds and there is currently no sustained funding in the budget.

2. Legislative Update

OCA continues to work on passage of a bill to establish a Title IX toolkit for school districts. The champion for that bill is Liz Linehan, and we are hopeful that it will move forward.

OCA continues to work on legislation related to transparency for SDE's IDEA monitoring and enforcement. Some, but not all of OCA's language, is included in SB 1200. OCA continues to work on getting additional language to ensure transparency for SDE's monitoring and enforcement related to IDEA.

OCA continues to work on treatment for caregivers with Opioid Use Disorder. That bill came out of committee with our recommendations included. In the wake of child fatalities due to fentanyl intoxication, we have worked with providers throughout the state. OCA will continue to work to move this bill forward.

OCA testified on the need for DPH oversight for healthcare of individuals in the care of DOC and continues to work on that issue.

3. Summary of OCA Activities

The Child Advocate reviewed OCA's April activities in the areas of intakes, conditions of confinement, mental health, education, and child welfare.

The Child Advocate provided an update on child fatality review activities. OCA continues to work on fatality review into the homicide date of 2 year-old Liam Rivera. Concern remains focused on ensuring consistent case practice with highest risk in-home cases, like Liam and like Kaylee, that have been assessed as high need and high risk, and remain in the home. OCA is recommending clear case practice requirements that include expectations for connection to care and a rigorous internal audit structure, on an ongoing basis, to monitor and assess adherence to those expectations, and a framework to transparency and accountability for sharing information with the public on permanency, safety, and will being with the public.

OCA continues to review the homicide death of baby Camilla Francisquini and the death of five children in a car accident on the Hutchinson River Parkway.

OCA is working on public health alert on the analysis of data related to the preventable death of infants and toddlers. Tomorrow's CFRP will review some of our final data analysis for feedback. OCA will continue to meet with agency heads, including some that are not part of CFRP. For example, very few of the children who died were involved in early childhood programs. Over 80% of the children were Medicaid recipients. About 25% lived in a family with active involvement in DCF or involvement within the last 12 months. Most of the infants who died from preventable reasons died due to risks in their sleeping environment. There will be a public health alert with more information and details.

4. Advisory Committee Business

The Child Advocate asked what information the Advisory Committee needs to be able to do its work. Members discussed the deadline for annual evaluation. There is no deadline in the statute. Members discussed the importance of setting a date for completion of the report. OCA puts out its annual report in the summer. That outlines all of OCA's work for the year and may be useful to the Advisory Committee. OCA can continue to provide a monthly activities list. OCA will share our reports, major letters, and public health alerts with the Advisory Committee.

Motion to Go Into Executive Session by Rudolph Brooks. Seconded by Shelly Geballe. All voted in favor.

Executive Session

Discussion regarding confidential information related to Baby Kaylee and Baby Liam.

Motion to return to regular session by Jennifer Collins; Seconded by Shelley Geballe. All voted in favor.

Return to Regular Session

Next meeting

Folks would like to continue to meet monthly, at least until the legislative session is over. Next meeting will be Tuesday May 23, at 5:30.