

OCA Advisory Committee Meeting

February 28, 2023

Minutes

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

Members Present: Jeanne Milstein, Rudolph Brooks, Toni Boucher

Members Not Present: Shelley Geballe

Update Regarding Outstanding Appointments

There are three remaining appointments. Names have been provided to legislators with open appointments. Christina Ghio will follow up with legislators to ensure remaining appointments are made.

Potential appointments and parameters of the statutory obligations of the advisory board were discussed. The roles of the advisory committee are to meet three times per year, annually evaluate the effectiveness of the Office of the Child Advocate and to prepare and submit a list of candidates for appointment of the Child Advocate.

Meeting Schedule

Reviewed requirements to notify the public of committee meetings. OCA posted notice of this meeting, including providing the link. Once the advisory committee is fully established, can set the statutorily required meetings. For now, would propose fourth Tuesday of March for our next special meeting.

Legislative Updates

The Child Advocate has testified on numerous bills in numerous committees. We have a proposal in Education Committee related to SDE publishing its oversight activities related to special education. We have a proposal pending in Public Health, related to DDS provision of services to children in community-based living arrangements. We have proposed legislation in the Children's Committee related to Children's Report Card and Title IX Toolkit. With regards to Children's Report Card, we have suggested reviving the existing Children's Report Card, staffing that work, and aligning data with federal reporting framework. This is spurred in part because of conclusion of Juan F. progress monitoring. OCA has asked DCF what their plan is. Thus far, they have not proposed a plan. OCA continues to work on that legislation.

OCA issued a Findings Letter last week and there is a legislative hearing tomorrow. DMHAS, DCF, and OCA have been invited to present. OCA will recommend an additional hearing on opioid use and child welfare, including reviewing the opioid settlement language. OCA is hopeful that the hearing will be productive, professional, and solutions focused.

OCA has requested two additional staff people: one to assist with facility investigation and one to assist with child fatality review.