

**Office for Children and Families  
Executive Leadership Committee - Advocates  
Meeting Notes – February 5, 2004**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Present</b>
Barbara Riley	X	Crystal Allen	-
Rick Smith	-	Michael Ring	X
Dot Erickson	X	Erika Taylor	-
Peg Burns	X	Doug Stephens	-
Jann Heffner	X	Nancy Neylor	X
Karen Lampe	X	Tom Swindel	Darren Varnado
Cheri Walter	Betsy Johnson	Don Medd	-
Kris Scherer	-	Mark Real	David Norris
Ryan Gies	X	Lucy Cormier	-
Jackie Wilson	-	Jackie Ashby	-
Jessie Cannon	-	Alicia Leatherman	X
Barbara Haxton	Julie Stone	Terrie Hare	X
Gretchen Moore	X	Louanne Leonard	X
Nancy Neylon	X	Linda Ciciretto	X

**Welcome/Introductions**

**Purpose**

The primary purpose of the Advocate meeting was to gather information from them on how best to garner more input on a more regular basis. The ELC function was an outgrowth of the Child Welfare Reform Shareholder's Group. Prior to the ELC OCF had many separate topical groups meeting, including one for SACWIS, Title IV-E, Day Care Advisory Council, etc. There was not one overarching group representing all advocates. However, upon creation of the ELC Advocates function – including quarterly meetings between advocates and directors – attendance was low.

OCF gathers information from advocates/shareholders via the CFSR process, the clearance process, to name just a few. The goal is to not have any “surprises” at critical moments of the rules/policy making processes – including JCARR, legislation, internal policies. OCF wants advocates/shareholders to be involved in the creative/development stages of the process in order to seamlessly carry out our functions as mandated by law.

*How best do we do this? The advocates/shareholders provided the following comments:*

The only time we have discussion is at the point of crisis. We need an ongoing vehicle before the crisis. Groups need to include all players – including PCSA child protective/child care staff. The OCF has a compartmental way of talking about issues, including providing state meetings only with counties, and this relays negative perceptions to the shareholders. Everyone needs to be together at the same time to lessen levels of paranoia and distrust. This will enhance greater chances of decision making.

Why didn't prior format work? The county low attendance at the advocate/shareholder meetings lead to paranoia.

The meeting with county agency staff was just information sharing and a misuse of time. Advocates/shareholders were not asked for input. A pre-dated agenda with specific timeframes

for discussion would be nice. Meetings should be divided between child care and child protective services so that individuals interested in child care could only attend the meeting for that portion of the agenda.

Franklin County has a good model for meeting with child care providers, and it is a model that OCF may want to borrow. It is very provider driven and it's been good for Franklin County. It has also been good for the child care providers because they understand the position of the county, and vice versa.

Have a Heart Ohio is another good model. They have a very diverse membership and they provide a listserv where members can discuss issues. A listserv would be beneficial to OCF shareholders for those times when issues arise and there is no meeting scheduled.

There is a timeliness issue – when to meet? Quarterly? Monthly? By video conference? It is difficult to travel to Columbus, especially direct service providers. The listserv is a good idea.

If agendas were topic specific, association staff could send the appropriate person.

OCF should host an annual meeting of all shareholders/advocates to discuss future initiatives. OCF should prepare agenda ahead of time and distribute it to allow for more discussion. Monthly or quarterly meetings could occur to follow up on these initiatives.

*When asked about having direct access to direct service providers or children and families, the advocates/shareholders stated the following:*

Associations are more appropriate avenues as, for example, OFCA has over 20,000 families. Associations can guide OCF on how to bring families aboard. However, there is no opportunity for family input – unlike the Child Welfare Reform Shareholders Group.

Families and direct service providers could be invited to all meetings – as shareholders – and they could decide if they wanted to attend. The purpose is the point of invitation. Also, families and direct providers could be accessed through email.

When asked about who from ODJFS/OCF should attend these meetings, the shareholders stated the following:

Depends on topic, for example, if the topic of conversation is foster care licensing, then someone from that program should attend. If the topic of conversation is the budget, then the Deputy Director or Assistant Deputy Directors should attend.

Nobody knows the program contacts for each program. The website does not provide this information and it is very difficult to access the appropriate person.

*When/how should advocates/shareholders come to the table regarding rules?*

Before rules were written, department would sit down with advocates and there would be negotiations and agreements. These would all be worked out before the rule was even written or put through the clearance process.

For the most previous child care rule process the above model didn't happen and when input was requested, rules were already developed. Prior involvement would have helped a lot regarding the impact of the rules on the providers.

Department has to know what direction they want to go before the rule is written.

Department has become much more rule driven. Energy ought to be spent on determining what rules are actually needed and focus most energy on actual delivery of services.

The first step should be to define the problem, assemble the workteam (a best representative group), and define scope. The department should be responsible for all of the legwork. The rules/policy then goes through the courts and justice distribution. Problems are taken care of before JCARR.

Develop a set group of people to tap. There could be workgroups.

*Other Comments:*

Invite everyone and let advocates decide who should attend meetings.

Invite associations versus membership – point is to get information from OCF and let associations decide who should attend.

One place to house all information is needed on the website. Contacts for each issue need to be identified.

What about quarterly child welfare manager meetings? These could be structure differently to meet the OCF shareholder involvement needs.

AdoptOH changes – another example of how not having private provider input led to consequences. OCF could have accomplished the end without collateral damage.

The drive-time for a one hour meeting won't happen.

Quarterly meetings – solicit questions, thoughts and topics to address prior to meeting.

There are enough "hot issues" to have a 3 hour meeting.

An agenda is very important – as well as the follow up meeting notes.

Video conference equipment needs to be utilized to allow more direct provider input.

Meetings need to have good leadership and facilitation to move the agenda forward.

No talking heads – need to enforce dialogue.

Facilitation is desired – a lesson learned from the Day Care Advisory Council is that ODJFS would come to them with a set rule and ask for their "rubber stamp".

To be an advocate – advocates need to advocate.

OCF should do a Child Welfare Reform Shareholders update. A progress report to publicize our implementation of its recommendations.

We need to disseminate best practice.

Maybe create an advisory council on adoption, foster care, etc. and have agenda sent accordingly.

Need a Day Care Advisory Council format for child welfare.

**Ideas to Consider:**

Annual meeting – first one regarding 2006/2007 budget

Agenda be topic specific

Research possibility of listserv