

COLORADO CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING

January 11, 2018

Record of Proceedings

Notice of this meeting was provided pursuant to the
Colorado Open Meetings Law, § 24-6-402, C.R.S.

CONVENE

The meeting of the Child Protection Ombudsman Board was convened in the Ralph L. Carr Judicial Center, 1300 Broadway, Conference Room 1C, Denver, Colorado, 80203 at 8:14 a.m. by Board Member Ms. Darlene Martinez.

A quorum of the Board was present.

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

Board Members

Vice Chairman Simone Jones*

Darlene Martinez

Richard Krugman

Pax Moultrie

Karen Beye

Victoria Shuler

Peg Rudden

Charles Greenacre*

Others Present

Stephanie Villafuerte, Child Protection Ombudsman

Sabrina Burbidge, Deputy Ombudsman

Jordan Steffen, Communications and Policy Director

Karen Nielsen, Administrative Coordinator

Melissa Vigil, Child Protection Systems Analyst

Caroline Parker, Child Protection Systems Analyst

Kristin Pietsch, Child Protection Systems Analyst

** Participated by Telephone*

PRESENT FROM THE PUBLIC

Lucinda Connelly, CDHS

AGENDA ITEMS

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

II. OPENING MEETING REMARKS AND APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Richard Krugman made a motion to approve the minutes of November 9, 2017. Ms. Pax Moultrie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

A. Financial Report

1. Ms. Villafuerte provided the board with the agencies monthly and year to date operating budget report. (See report)
2. Ms. Villafuerte indicated that she and the Deputy Ombudsman presented the FY 18-19 budget to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) on December 11, 2017.

Ms. Villafuerte indicated that the office is asking for an additional increase in the existing budget. The additional funding would be to increase personnel and a one-time infrastructure request to build two offices. Ms. Villafuerte reported that she provided the JBC with a copy of the Adoption Subsidy Report and talked about the resources that are required to provide a report of that quality. She further indicated that caseloads/workloads continue to increase however, the office specifically continues to grow in the systems investigation work.

There was some discussion about the adoption subsidy report and how that report was received by the community. Ms. Villafuerte indicated that the report was favorably received by both the CDHS as well as county child welfare departments. The board indicated that they believed the report was balanced and fair and that there need to be changes in the adoption subsidy program. There was also some discussion about needed legislation and the need for more funding in this area.

Ms. Villafuerte indicated that on March 1, 2018, the JBC Analyst will make his recommendations to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) regarding the CPO's budget request.

Ms. Villafuerte also reported that the CPO submitted a budget amendment for a full-time Division of Youth Services Analyst. This amendment was submitted after the initial JBC presentation. The reason for this was interest by legislators as well as stakeholders in the juvenile justice community. One community stakeholder has complaints that need attention but have not forwarded them to the CPO because there is currently no bandwidth to address the issues.

B. Agency Update

1. Cases

Individual Complaints

Ms. Villafuerte provided the board members with a current Data and Case Summary Report.

Ms. Sabrina Burbidge the Deputy Ombudsman, indicated that the office has accepted 290 complaints this fiscal year; 223 complaints have been resolved and 67 are currently open. She talked specifically about the types of complaints that the CPO continues to receive and how the office handles them. (See Data and Case Summary Report for details)

The board asked if the CPO has a tracking mechanism to determine if agencies are complying with the CPO recommendations. Ms. Villafuerte indicated that there currently isn't a tracking mechanism to do this and that the bigger question is whether the CPO has legal authority and the resources to hold agencies accountable. She stated that the office does work with the CDHS to garner support on emergencies—such as the failure of an agency to respond to a complaint of abuse and neglect but not in other instances. However, she agreed that there does need to be larger discussion on how to make it a more meaningful process and system. Ms. Villafuerte further indicated that she would like to talk to the board about a future working group which would include community members to strategize around this issue. The board agreed that this should be a future agenda item.

Ms. Burbidge directed the board to the section of the report on Investigations. She reported that CPO currently has six pending investigate reports and that a summary of these cases is outlined on the report. Ms. Burbidge highlighted three of these investigations.

Systemic Complaints

A. Investigation #43

Ms. Villafuerte indicated that the state-wide adoption subsidies report was published on December 13, 2017. This complaint alleges inconsistent adoption subsidy negotiation practices and rates across the state.

Ms. Steffen, Director of Policy/Communications, indicated that the report was well received by the media, and the stakeholder community. The brief on the adoption subsidy and El Pueblo report were featured in the Denver Post and CPR (rural paper). She stated that these briefs were further shared with AP, US News and World Report and other rural community papers in Colorado. This media coverage has allowed the office to connect with other stakeholders, organizations and community members from around the state.

B. Investigation #2349

Ms. Burbidge provided the group with a summary about this systemic investigation which addresses concerns around the certification/ decertification of DHS caseworkers. She reported that Colorado has no way to decertify a caseworker who has violated policy and/or law.

The board discussed the issue and the difference between social workers and case workers. The regulation is different depending on the category of professional. Additionally, the board suggested that it would be important to review the Department of Regulatory Agency (DORA) functions in this area. The CPO will continue to research and advise the board on this issue.

C. Investigation #2736

Ms. Burbidge provided the group with a summary about this investigation which involves the monitoring of Residential Child Care Facilities (RCCF's) in Colorado.

Ms. Burbidge indicated that the CPO has completed the data collection phase and will continue to work on the next phase of the systemic investigation which involves stakeholder and agency interviews.

2. Outreach Activities

Ms. Villafuerte directed the board members to her executive director report which lists the CPO's outreach activities for the last two months.

3. Internal Operating Infrastructure

Ms. Villafuerte indicated that CPO has finalized our MOU with the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO). She reported that the changes will update the services that we receive from the SCOA (human resources, payroll, leave management, Westlaw) and will eliminate other services that were listed in the MOU but were not provided (IT, phones).

4. Communications/Public Policy Updates

CPO in the News

Ms. Steffen reported that Ms. Villafuerte submitted an article to the Denver Post about a recent child abuse incident that was in the media. The article has also been well received by legislators, and community members.

SMART Act

Ms. Steffen indicated that the office presented the SMART Plan to the Joint Judiciary Committee on January 8, 2018, and that the report was very well received. Ms. Steffen reported that she walked these members through our website and how they can use it to learn about our agency reports and investigations. She stated that legislators were pleased with the website and see it as a resource that they can use to understand trends in their respective communities.

She further reported that the Quarter Two SMART Act Performance Plan will be submitted later today.

Ms. Steffen directed members to read the reports and contact her if they had questions. She reminded the board member that all the reports can be found on the website.

There was some discussion around the importance of reaching out to rural community media outlets in the future.

Legislative Session

Ms. Villafuerte stated that the office is tracking approximately 12 pieces of legislation. Ms. Villafuerte said the office will continue to focus on adoption subsidies. Additionally, the office is working on a project related to the lack of information sharing between municipal courts and human services departments and the impact this has on caseworker and child safety. The CPO has served as convener and facilitator on this topic.

Ms. Villafuerte told the board that all the legislation the CPO is following in on the CPO website.

IV. BOARD BUSINESS

Ombudsman Evaluation

The board members met (executive session) on December 14, 2017, to finalize the ombudsman evaluation. Ms. Stephanie Villafuerte indicated that she received and reviewed her evaluation. A discussion on the evaluation will take place at the next board meeting.

Out of Town Board Meeting

Ms. Stephanie Villafuerte provided the board members with the 2018 Meeting Schedule.

Ms. Villafuerte reminded the board that per the CPO Statute that there needs to be an out of town board meeting one time a year and proposed that the meeting be held in June 2018. She suggested that the board members start thinking about where that meeting should take place. This will be placed as an agenda item for the next board meeting.

ADJOURN

Dr. Richard Krugman made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Ms. Darlene Martinez. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board formally adjourned the meeting at 9:50 AM.

ATTESTATION

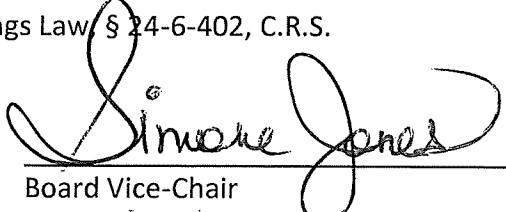
As Board Chair and Board Vice-Chair, I attest that these minutes of the open public meeting held on January 11, 2018, of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman Board substantially reflect the substance of the discussion and action taken related to the matters under the authority of the Board and in compliance with the Open Meetings Law, § 24-6-402, C.R.S.



Board Chair

4/2/18

Date



Board Vice-Chair

4/2/18

Date