

COLORADO CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING

May 9, 2019

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 Building, Room 1F, Denver, Colorado, 80203 at 8:08 AM by Board Chairman, Kenneth Plotz.

A quorum of the Board was present.

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

Board Members

Chairman Kenneth Plotz
Vice Chairman Simone Jones
Connie Linn
Darlene Martinez
Richard Krugman
Peg Rudden (in person from 8:46 AM until remainder of board meeting)

On the Phone

Victoria Shuler
Charles Greenacre
Eldridge Greer
Karen Beye (on phone at 8:13 AM until remainder of board meeting)
Peg Rudden (on phone from 8:02 AM until 8:45 AM)

Others Present

Sueanna Johnson, Deputy Attorney General
Stephanie Villafuerte, Child Protection Ombudsman
Jordan Steffen, Deputy Ombudsman
Karen Nielsen, Director of Administrative Services
Rebecca Swanson, Director of Public Policy
Sara Embrey, Chief Analyst – Division of Child Welfare
Natasha Mitchell, Chief Analyst – Division of Youth Services
Caroline Parker, Policy and Legislative Analyst

Amanda Pennington, Child Protection Systems Analyst

PRESENT FROM THE PUBLIC

None

AGENDA ITEMS

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 10, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Chair Judge Plotz entertained a motion to approve the final minutes of January 10, 2019 with the following change in language: "Judge Plotz made a motion" to "Judge Plotz requested a motion" to approve minutes. This change needs to occur on page 2 and page 9 of the January 10, 2019 minutes.

Ms. Linn made a motion to approve the minutes of January 10, 2019, with the language change above, and Ms. Martinez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by those in attendance.

March 21, 2019 Executive Session Minutes

Sueanna Johnson indicated that she will send out the Executive Session Meeting Minutes from March 21, 2019, to board members to review and that they can approve those minutes at the next board meeting on July 11, 2019.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

A. Year-to-Date Financial Report

Ms. Villafuerte provided the board members with the CPO's FY 18-19 year-to date operating budget report. She reported that the CPO is currently \$272,000 under budget. She reported that she expects this amount will change significantly before the end of year. She also explained that vacancy savings has contributed to being underbudget.

B. Legal Services Report

Ms. Villafuerte provided the board with a year-to date legal budget report. She reported that CPO's

legal budget had increased this fiscal year and that the CPO has a remainder of \$154 left. She reported that if the CPO goes over budget, the funding does not come out of the CPO's operating budget but rather it comes from the attorney's general's budget. The attorney general's office will then put in a request for additional reimbursement.

IV. PROGRAM REPORT

A. Public Policy

Human Resource Update

Stephanie Villafuerte introduced Ms. Rebecca Swanson as CPO's new Director of Public Policy. Ms. Villafuerte reported that she has hired Ms. Swanson to scale and devise a strategic public policy plan to:

- a. Improve communication methods and increase outreach campaigns to better educate and engage citizens and stakeholders on issues facing the child protection system.
- b. Implement practices that ensure the CPO manages its caseload efficiently and effectively, allotting staff the necessary time and resources to investigate systemic concerns.
- c. Increase the expertise and resources needed to investigate and research systemic issues within the child protection system.
- d. Establish the CPO's Public Policy Advancement Center, which will serve as an objective and innovative space for citizens and stakeholders to discuss and improve child protection systems.

Ms. Swanson introduced herself and indicated that she has public policy experience in the Governor's Office, the University of Denver and within the behavioral health non-profit arena. She states that she is looking forward to assisting CPO in devising this strategic plan and strengthening this part of the CPO program. Ms. Swanson indicated she would like to meet with the board to hear from them about their thoughts on public policy and the direction the CPO should take in this area.

Ms. Villafuerte reported that Ms. Swanson will be sending out a doodle poll later today to the CPO board members to arrange the working group.

B. Child Welfare Division

Human Resource Update

Sara Embrey: Ms. Villafuerte indicated that Sara Embrey has been promoted to the Chief Analyst, Child Welfare Services. She reported that Ms. Embrey has provided a concrete plan on how the division should operate including the need to develop a training and operations manual.

Amanda Pennington: Ms. Villafuerte indicated that Amanda Pennington is the new Child Welfare Systems Analyst. Ms. Pennington introduced herself and reported that she is from Grand Junction with experience in both the child welfare and public health systems.

Individual Complaints

Ms. Villafuerte reported that the CPO has a total 472 individual complaints and a total of 49 for April 2019. She reported that the CPO should have around 600 complaints for the fiscal year which is consistent with previous years even though there have been staff vacancies.

There was some discussion about the individual case numbers and whether the call volume to the CPO has started to plateau. Ms. Villafuerte stated that call volume has remained consistent over the past two years, but she believes that this is because the agency has not had a strong outreach/communications presence. She reported that the CPO plans to roll out a strategic statewide outreach program with the help of Barefoot PR who will be presenting to the board later today.

C. Division of Youth Services(DYS)

Individual Complaints

Ms. Villafuerte reported that the CPO has seen a total of 20 DYS cases year to date.

Ongoing DYS Projects

Ms. Villafuerte stated that DYS has no familiarity with the CPO and that the CPO finds that the barriers and challenges we faced when we started with CDHS-DCW are similar.

Revising the CDHS-DYS/CPO MOU

Ms. Villafuerte reported that Natasha Mitchell our Chief Analyst, Division of Youth Services has started the process of writing an MOU between the CPO and the CDHS-DYS. She stated that this will ensure more effective communication between the two agencies.

DYS Hotline

Ms. Villafuerte reported that Ms. Mitchell also continues to work with DYS leadership to establish a free-phone service inside DYS facilities which youth may use to contact the CPO directly. The phone line has been installed on the Blue Phones within DYS facilities but is not yet in operation.

There was some discussion about how the hotline will work and if there all calls that could potentially indicate abuse and neglect. Ms. Mitchell reported that the hotline will serve a variety of functions, including responding to inquiries from citizens about the DYS and educating stakeholders and the community about the CPO's services.

Ms. Mitchell assured the group that there will be handouts, posters, education and training in the facilities to both youth and staff prior to the roll out.

Sueanna Johnson suggested that the CPO get in touch with the Safe to Tell Program Director in the Attorney General's Office and see if the CPO could also be a resource to them.

D. 2019 Legislative Session

Ms. Villafuerte reported that the legislative session has concluded. She reported that Ms. Parker has been at the capitol full-time this year as CPO's Policy and Legislative Analyst. Ms. Villafuerte reported that this is the first time that the CPO has had a point person at the Capitol and that the position was a success.

Ms. Parker directed the board members to the CPO 2019 Legislative Issues spreadsheet indicating that this is a list of bills that the CPO has been actively monitoring on our website. She reported that the CPO continues to build relationships with legislators. Ms. Parker reported that she and the office will continue to monitor final bill outcomes and will have a finalized legislative issues spreadsheet at the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. Villafuerte also informed the board that Ms. Parker will be leaving the CPO at the end of June to attend law school. Ms. Parker indicated that she is grateful for the opportunity to have worked at the CPO.

Ongoing Projects

Adoption Subsidies

Ms. Villafuerte reported that the Adoption Subsidies Bill passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate. She reported that the CPO is very proud of the stakeholder efforts surrounding this bill. Ms. Villafuerte reported that she believes that the CPO made significant progress in establishing a public policy reputation this year by identifying significant issues in a smart and fair way and working with individuals to solve them. She stated it was a great effort and she will invite board members to attend the bill signing later this month once the date is finalized.

V. BOARD BUSINESS

A. Board Member Terms and Vacancies

Ms. Villafuerte reported that she reached out to the board members whose terms are expiring. She directed board members to the Board Contact List that shows when each board member's term expires.

Judge Greenacre stated that he will not seek re-appointment for personal reasons and thanked his fellow board members, CPO staff, the Ombudsman and Ms. Johnson for their efforts in helping children in the child welfare system.

Ms. Villafuerte thanked Judge Greenacre for all of his efforts on the board.

Ms. Villafuerte also acknowledged the passing of board member Kyle Forti. She reported that the CPO sent a flower arrangement and card to his family. She also reported that she will contact the House Minority Leader to fill this board position.

There was some board discussion about the seven board vacancies that will occur in 2021. Ms. Villafuerte indicated that the board terms are statutorily created so that there is no way to spread the vacancies throughout the year. However, she reported that she is aware of the expiration dates of all positions and she will continue to make sure that appointments are made in a timely manner.

B. Out of Town Board Meeting

Ms. Villafuerte reported that the out of town board meeting is scheduled for August 5-6, 2019 in La Junta Colorado. She indicated that she will begin outreach to stakeholder groups in the area to invite them to the meeting.

The board took a break at 8:55 AM. Meeting resumed at 09:16 AM.

VI. BAREFOOT PUBLIC RELATIONS, LLC

Ms. Villafuerte introduced Cori Streetman and Sarah Hogan from Barefoot PR. Ms. Villafuerte reported that Barefoot PR is developing a statewide communications and outreach plan for the CPO to have a statewide presence to serve our citizens better. She reported that they are here today to talk about their plan to expand awareness and messaging about the CPO and to get the board members participation, opinions, vision and feedback.

Questions from Barefoot PR to the board members included:

- What positive change have you noticed as a result of this office?
- How do you define the work of the CPO?
- When talking about an independent office, what does that mean to you?
- How do you see the office?
- What are you hearing from professionals in the filed about the CPO?
- What is the reputation of the CPO?
- How do you as the board view the culture in the CPO office?
- Who else needs to know or who needs to access the CPO?
- Of those that know about the CPO, whose perception needs to change about the CPO?
- What is one thing people who say about the CPO?

Barefoot PR, Cori Streetman encouraged the board members to reach out to Ms. Villafuerte if they have anything else to add to the discussion. She indicated that the strategic plan for the CPO will

be finalized at the end of June or early July 2019.

VII. Board Business

A. Changing the Review Period for the Ombudsman Annual Evaluation

Ms. Johnson reported that she previously sent out a memo to board members proposing a change to the Ombudsman evaluation cycle. She reported that the State Judicial Department's fiscal year is July 1 – June 30 so it would make more sense to have the Ombudsman evaluation coincide with it.

Ms. Johnson stated that she is aware that this means there would need to be a change in the CPO Board by-laws to make this change. Chair Plotz asked for a motion to amend the by-laws with the proposed changes. Judge Greenacre made a motion to approve the changes to the by-laws. Dr. Krugman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Board Training

Ms. Johnson reminded the board members that they must complete board training at the July 11, 2019, board meeting. Ms. Johnson reported that she will send out the training materials to them in advance.

C. Revised Ombudsman Time Off Policy

Ms. Villafuerte indicated that the proposed revision would require the Ombudsman to get approval from the Board Chair or the Vice Chair for any paid time off which exceeds 24 hours.

Chairman Plotz requested a motion that the revised Ombudsman time off policy be approved. Dr. Krugman made a motion to approve the policy as amended. Ms. Linn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 10:20 AM at the request of Chairman Plotz, Dr. Krugman made a motion to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the Child Protection Ombudsman 2018-2019 performance evaluation. Ms. Darlene Martinez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session was held for the Board to receive legal advice pursuant to § 24-6-402(3)(a)(II), C.R.S.

The Executive Session was recorded in compliance with §24-6-402(2)(d.5)(I)(A), C.R.S

Return to Open Meeting

At 11:14 AM Chairman Plotz returned the meeting to open session.

Judge Plotz called for a motion to convene to have Ms. Johnson and the Ombudsman schedule Board training on HR supervision and evaluation for the September 2019 Board meeting. The motion was made by Ms. Linn and seconded by Ms. Martinez. The motion passed with Dr. Krugman abstaining.

ADJOURN

Chair, Judge Plotz requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Linn made the motion to adjourn which was seconded by Ms. Rudden. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board formally adjourned the meeting at 11:20 AM.

ATTESTATION

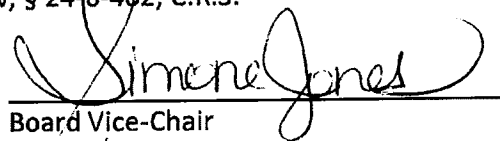
As Board Chair and Board Vice-Chair, I attest that these minutes of the open public meeting held on May 9, 2019, of the Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman Board substantially reflect the substance of the discussion and action taken related to the matters under the authority of the Board and in compliance with the Open Meetings Law, § 24-6-402, C.R.S.



Board Chair

9/12/19

Date



Board Vice-Chair

9/16/19

Date