



CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN of COLORADO

COLORADO CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING

April 15, 2022

Record of Proceedings

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

CONVENE

The subcommittee meeting of the Child Protection Ombudsman Board was convened via Zoom teleconference at 9:01 a.m. by Ombudsman Villafuerte.

A quorum of the Board was not required.

INTRODUCTIONS

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

Board Members on Zoom

Judge Ken Plotz
Judith Martinez, Interim Vice-Chair
Jerene Petersen
Victoria Shuler
April Lane
Wendy Buxton-Andrade

Others Present

Stephanie Villafuerte, Ombudsman
Jordan Steffen, Deputy Ombudsman
Karen Nielsen, Director of Administrative Services
Janna Fischer, Assistant Attorney General

PRESENT FROM THE PUBLIC

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

OPENING REMARKS

Subcommittee members, Office of Colorado's Child Protection Ombudsman (CPO) staff and Janna Fischer, Assistant Attorney General participated via Zoom teleconferencing.

Ombudsman Stephanie Villafuerte welcomed everyone. She stated that the CPO continues to look at how to engage youth impacted by the child protection system and to increase CPO services provided to youth clients. She stated that she appreciated the board members who volunteered for the subcommittee to share their experience and perspectives on improving the agency outreach efforts to serve youth.

Ombudsman Villafuerte stated that she would like the conversation to focus on how the agency educates youth in our communities that the CPO is here to serve them. She asked: How does the agency serve youth in age and culturally appropriate ways? How does the CPO capture youth voice for the purposes of the agency's systemic/policy work?

OVERVIEW OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

Assistant Attorney General Janna Fisher discussed the functions and structure of the subcommittee. She reminded members that the meetings are open to the public and any formal action would require a vote by the full board.

Deputy Ombudsman Jordan Steffen thanked the subcommittee members for their suggestions and solutions prior to today's meeting. She gave an overview of the CPO's charge, scope and duration of the subcommittee, as well as discuss the intention and goals for the subcommittee's work.

REVIEW OF CPO WORK AND ONGOING EFFORTS

The subcommittee reviewed the CPO youth outreach and education efforts to date, as well as discussed new and ongoing efforts by the agency.

Deputy Ombudsman Steffen stated that these CPO outreach efforts include, developing one-page flyers, posters in English and Spanish and a webpage for youth clients. This webpage is dedicated to informing youth living in Division of Youth Services (DYS), youth centers and out-of-home placements about the CPO and the services the agency may provide them. The webpage includes an informational video that was produced specifically to connect with youth in Colorado.

The CPO also developed a unique complaint form on the CPO website for youth clients. This form was designed to help guide youth clients through the CPO's intake process, while also helping client services analysts gather more information so they may address youth concerns faster and more efficiently. She reminded the group that the CPO website can be translated into any language and that the agency contracts with LanguageLink for interpretation services.

Deputy Ombudsman Steffen also stated that the CPO also designed and printed one-page flyers, in English and Spanish for youth living in DYS youth centers, youth living in out-of-home placements and parents of youth in such circumstances. Additionally, contact information for the agency has been distributed in DYS youth centers, residential facilities, foster homes, group home and other organizations that serve youth. She reported that DYS administrators have been receptive to hanging the CPO's posters in youth centers and distributing materials to parents of youth in DYS youth centers. The CPO has also worked with DYS to ensure the CPO's toll-free number has been programmed in the DYS Blue Phones and that CPO information is included in the DYS youth and family handbooks and on DYS youth centers' websites.

The CPO most recently has designed and printed one-page flyers and posters for unaccompanied immigrant children living state-licensed residential treatment facilities. She reported that they are in three different languages and that the CPO's toll-free number has also been programmed in the Blue Phones at those facilities as well.

During the past fiscal year, Deputy Ombudsman Steffen stated that the CPO prioritized connecting with and learning from youth partners. While the ongoing pandemic limited some of these opportunities, the agency was able to participate in two outreach meetings with representatives from the Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center's project Foster Power and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Youth Partnership for Health. These conversations allowed the CPO to engage with youth and gather valuable insights about their concerns and how to best connect with them. Some key takeaways that were shared include concerns that youth in foster care do not have the same access to technology as their peers who live at home and ensuring youth are educated about their rights while they reside in foster care.

Deputy Ombudsman Steffen reported that Jerene Petersen put her in touch with Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap program and the possibility of bringing on an intern to help guide the CPO's work. The CPO is interested in the idea but would need to have designated funds for this person and would consider putting in a budget request for next year.

Ombudsman Villafuerte reported that she had the opportunity to appear on a panel with Sixto Cancel, CEO with Think of Us (TOU), which operates as a research and development lab for youth impacted by the child protection system. She stated that TOU are writing a proposal for the CPO to engage in a strategic plan to work with the CPO during the remainder of the fiscal year.

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

The discussion focused on the subcommittee's thoughts regarding the CPO's materials and how to ensure the CPO's outreach materials reach the children, youth and parents the agency serves. The subcommittee suggested the CPO consider an actual youth voice to narrate the CPO's youth informational video, focus groups with youth, organize presentations and brainstorming sessions directly with youth. The also suggested that the CPO have youth review language on all the CPO youth flyers and posters and even consider a secondary name for the CPO that is more relatable to youth.

The subcommittee discussed expanding the CPO's outreach to stakeholders in new disciplines, such as education settings that include Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL), Single Point of Contact (SPC), school resource officers, self-help resource centers and other existing youth organizations, and does the CPO needs to put in a budget request in the fall for the youth outreach project.

Ombudsman Villafuerte reported that the CPO does not want to create our own internal youth group. She stated that there are great community organizations that are doing great work and we want to utilize those youth and raise their voice up.

The subcommittee also suggested inviting other members of the public to contribute to the conversation, as well as doing presentations for the sub-group in different topic areas. The CPO can also prepare information and can have conversations with other agencies in advanced to be more efficient at the next meeting.

The group discussed next steps and homework assignments, as well as scheduled meetings for the month of May, June and July 2022.

CLOSING REMARKS

Ombudsman Villafuerte and Interim Vice-Chair Martinez thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion.

The next CPO Board Youth Voice Subcommittee meeting will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 12, 2022, via Zoom teleconference.

ADJOURN

The Board subcommittee formally adjourned the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

ATTESTATION

As Board Chair and Board Vice-Chair, I attest that these minutes of the open public meeting held on April 15, 2022, 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.

Ann M. Rean

Board Chair

5-18-22

Date

Judith Martinez

Board Vice-Chair

5-18-22

Date

