

**INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**  
**Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2023 Interim**  
**November 8, 2023**

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

The 6th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children was held on November 8, 2023, at 1:00 PM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Danny Carroll, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

**Present were:**

Members: Representative Samara Heavrin Co-Chair; Senator Danny Carroll Co-Chair; Senators Greg Elkins, Denise Harper Angel, Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Stephen Meredith, Lindsey Tichenor, and Max Wise; Representatives Shane Baker, Kim Banta, Mike Clines, Jennifer Decker, Ken Fleming, Marianne Proctor, Josie Raymond, Steve Riley, Rachel Roarx, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Steve Shannon, Executive Director, Kentucky Association of Regional Programs Inc.; Elisha Mahoney, Executive Director, External Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Panel, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet; Eric Friedlander, Secretary, Cabinet for Health & Family Services; Lesa Dennis, Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services, Cabinet for Health & Family Services; Kerry Harvey, Secretary, Justice & Public Safety Cabinet; Aundrea Lewis, Chief Executive Officer, Peace Hospital, University of Louisville Health; Jason Staats, Chief Executive Officer, SUN Kentucky; Mark Birdwhistell, Senior Vice President & Chief Administrative Officer, University of Kentucky Healthcare; Ken Marshall, Chief Operations Officer, University of Louisville Health; Abbreial Drane, President & Chief Executive Officer, Bellewood & Brooklawn; Michelle Sanborn, President, Children's Alliance; Denise Lester, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, Purchase Youth Villages & Heart Youth Villages; Paula Garner, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, Maryhurst, Inc.; Rick Wurth, Chief Executive Officer, Children's Home of Northern Kentucky Behavioral Health; Julie Raia, Chief Strategy Officer, Children's Home of Northern Kentucky Behavioral Health; Crystal Leugers, Chief Programming Officer, Children's Home of Northern Kentucky Behavioral Health; and Meghan Ackerman, Chief Innovations Officer, Holly Hill Child and Family Solutions.

LRC Staff: Ben Payne, Logan Bush, Samir Nasir, and DJ Burns.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve the October 25, 2023, minutes was made by Senator Wise, seconded by Senator Elkins, and approved by a voice vote.

## **Kentucky External Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Panel Annual Report**

Steve Shannon, Executive Director, Kentucky Association of Regional Programs Inc., Board Member, Kentucky External Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Panel, gave an overview of the annual Child Fatality and Near Fatality Report including recommendations to help mitigate some of the causes of fatality and near fatalities.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Meredith, Mr. Shannon stated that the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) history of co-occurring issues from the presentation is in reference to cases that either have a prior closed DCBS case or current case within the past 5 years. He stated that he would get the statistics on rural vs. urban and provide those to members after the meeting.

In response to questions and comments from Representative Roarx, Mr. Shannon stated that the cases included in the report are only cases presented to the review panel and not all cases in the state. Elisha Mahoney, Executive Director, External Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Panel, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, stated that only cases suspected of abuse or neglect are referred to the panel.

## **Children in State Custody Placement Challenges and Solutions**

Eric Friedlander, Secretary, Cabinet for Health & Family Services (CHFS), discussed the types of children in non-traditional placement within CHFS, including high acuity youth. Lesa Dennis, Commissioner, DCBS, CHFS, discussed department employees providing care to these children while in non-traditional placement.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Carroll, Kerry Harvey, Secretary, Justice & Public Safety Cabinet, stated that children in Department of Juvenile Justice detention centers are placed there as a last resort. These children are considered to be hyper violent due to mental health issues and cannot be housed around other children.

Aundrea Lewis, Chief Executive Officer, Peace Hospital, University of Louisville Health, discussed current challenges and future solutions to those challenges at Peace Hospital in reference to CHFS cases.

Jason Staats, Chief Executive Officer, SUN Kentucky, discussed the services SUN Kentucky currently provides to CHFS cases and future services SUN Kentucky would like to.

Mark Birdwhistell, Senior Vice President & Chief Administrative Officer, University of Kentucky Healthcare, discussed resources UK can provide to facilities to help with the challenges CHFS has had with placement in particular cases.

Abbreial Drane, President & Chief Executive Officer, Bellewood & Brooklawn, gave an overview of Brooklawn's Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), their PRTF license status, and Bellewood & Brooklawn's current status.

Michelle Sanborn, President, Children's Alliance, discussed areas that need to be developed or redeveloped including therapeutic foster care, PRTF I & II, and high acuity youth inpatient psychiatric services.

Denise Lester, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, Purchase Youth Villages & Heart Youth Villages, discussed staff composition at Purchase Youth Village and challenges of the facility.

Paula Garner, Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, Maryhurst, Inc., discussed the different programs Maryhurst provides including PRTF I and 5 specialized (5S), challenges and proposed solutions.

Rick Wurth, Chief Executive Officer, Children's Home of Northern Kentucky Behavioral Health, gave background information Children's Home of Northern Kentucky Behavioral Health (CHNK). Julie Raia, Chief Strategy Officer, CHNK discussed the organization's partnership with CHFS and the services provided to children. Crystal Leugers, Chief Programming Officer, CHNK Behavioral Health, discussed placement challenges for children in state custody and solutions to those challenges.

Meghan Ackerman, Chief Innovations Officer, Holly Hill Child and Family Solutions, discussed background information on the organization, challenges had with placement from CHFS, and solutions to these challenges for the future.

In response to questions and comments from Representative Fleming, Ms. Drane stated that they have not received a response from DCBS concerning the license suspension since filing the appeal in January 2023.

In response to questions and comments from Representative Decker, Ms. Leugers stated that the acuity of the youth referred to CHNK has gotten more severe in her tenure. She stated that she has seen a reduction in family involvement with the children at CHNK.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Meredith, Secretary Friedlander stated that years ago a child had been placed out of state for 8 months, she was brought back to the state, and suffered due to the placement within the state not being

able to provide the services that the out of state placement provided. He stated many states are experiencing this same problem due to a crisis of the system.

In response to questions and comments from Senator Carroll, Secretary Friedlander stated that the system needs to be overhauled and the primary challenge pertaining to children at the highest acuity level, is having placement available for them.

In response to questions and comments from Representative Heavrin, Secretary Friedlander stated that when a child ages out of the system multiple things can happen. Some of which include becoming homeless and/or obtaining charges and ending up in jail. Commissioner Dennis stated that each child that is in a non-traditional placement are tracked within the system and each worker keeps a log documenting their time with the youth. Secretary Friedlander stated that the system was created to log all this information when non-traditional placement become a necessity. Commissioner Dennis stated that most cases are only in non-traditional custody for one to four days and DCBS is working to ensure services that children need are being provided.

In response to questions and comments from Representative Raymond, Commissioner Dennis stated that children which are noted to have sexualized behavior are housed separately due to the fear of that child acting out on other children, if they are housed together.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:11 PM.