

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 03-07

COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT BOARD

WHEREAS, on May 31, 2007, the Child Welfare Review Panel issued a detailed report, pursuant to the direction provided in an Executive Order of November 2, 2006 (“Child Welfare Review Panel and The Department of Human Services”), regarding its review of child deaths since July 2001; its audit of child safety assessments performed by the Department of Human Services; and its recommendation of reforms to policies and practices needed by DHS; and

WHEREAS, the recommendations made in the report should all be implemented in an expeditious manner consistent with best practices; and

WHEREAS, the Panel has recommended creation of an advisory board to assess the progress of DHS in implementing the reforms recommended in its report and in improving Philadelphia’s child welfare system;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, John F. Street, by the power vested in me as the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, do hereby order as follows:

Section 1. Implementation of Recommendations Made By Child Welfare Review Panel

The recommendations of the Child Welfare Review Panel, as summarized in the attached Exhibit “A” hereto, are hereby adopted. The Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (“DHS”) is hereby directed to implement those recommendations and reforms in an expeditious manner consistent with best practices.

Section 2. Creation of The Community Oversight Board

The Community Oversight Board is hereby created as an advisory body in the Department of Human Services (“DHS”). It shall consist of nine members: the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, five appointees of the Mayor and three appointees of the Council President, who shall be appointed by June 30, 2007. Appointees shall be individuals from within and outside Philadelphia who are recognized for their knowledge and expertise about child welfare services and/or represent critical stakeholder interests, including child advocates, parents and foster parents, government agencies and professional organizations with a particular role in the child welfare system. The Board shall be led by the DHS Commissioner and a co-chair, appointed by the Mayor.

Section 3. Role of The Community Oversight Board

The Board shall assess the ongoing progress of reforms to the Department of Human Services' delivery of services to children, families and the community, including DHS's progress in implementing the recommendations of the Child Welfare Review Panel, as summarized in Exhibit "A". The Board shall provide independent assessments, which shall be driven solely by consideration of implementation of reforms that improve the safety and well-being of Philadelphia's children.

Section 4. Information Collection and Departmental Cooperation

All DHS personnel shall cooperate fully with the work of the Board, shall provide the Board with all documents and information requested by the Board in an expeditious manner and shall provide the Board with the resources and assistance necessary to carry out the Board's duties. The Board and its agents shall have access to all DHS documents and files, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the signing of appropriate confidentiality agreements. The Board will seek input and information from as wide a body of sources as deemed necessary and useful, including outside experts, DHS staff, City officials, DHS clients, other stakeholders in the child welfare system and members of the public.

Section 5. Reporting By The Board

In addition to any recommendations made during the course of its assessments, the Board shall provide the Mayor reports regarding its assessments at intervals after June 30, 2007 as follows: 90 days; 180 days; one year; eighteen months, and annually thereafter. The Board's decision-making, findings and recommendations shall be open and transparent and made public to the full extent allowed by state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations, while respectful of the confidentiality of specific information pertaining to families with cases in the DHS system.

Section 6. Effective Date

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Date:

June 14, 2007

By:

[Signature]
John F. Street, Mayor

EXHIBIT "A"

Child Welfare Review Panel Recommendations

Mission and Values

- DHS must develop a mission statement and core values that are centered on child safety.
- DHS core values must embody the following principles:
 - Creating a culture of respect, compassion and professionalism.
 - Enhancing communication with and responsiveness to, stakeholders.
 - Instilling a greater sense of urgency among DHS staff and providers.
 - Providing services that are readily accessible.
 - Fostering a culture of collaboration.
 - Providing culturally-competent services.
 - Creating a transparent agency.
- DHS must align prevention programs and resources with the mission and values developed in Phase One, and also with the core principle of ensuring child safety.
- DHS must align more effectively in-home service programs and their utilization with the mission and values of DHS and with child safety.

Practice

- DHS must implement and use an appropriate Safety Assessment tool.
 - Implement an adequate evidence-based safety assessment tool
 - Conduct a safety assessment for every child within its care.
- DHS must revise its policies around face-to-face contacts with children.
 - Immediate (within 2 hours) face-to-face visits with children 5 and under for whom a report of suspected abuse or neglect is received by the Hotline.
 - Monthly face-to-face contacts with children 5 and younger.

- DHS must implement a team decision making process to determine service plans for all children 5 years of age or younger.
- DHS must ensure that ongoing team case conferencing occurs routinely every three months for cases involving a child 5 years of age or younger.
- DHS must clarify the roles and responsibilities for DHS workers relative to private agency workers, at both the supervisory and the worker level.
- DHS must develop a more comprehensive model for social work practice that is based on DHS's core mission and values; includes a stronger focus on child safety, permanency and well-being; is family-focused and community-based; and allows for individualized services.
- Ultimately, DHS must establish a local office presence in at least one geographic location deemed highly at-risk.

Outcomes and Accountability

- DHS must assume greater accountability for its performance:
 - Develop an annual report card.
 - Develop a comprehensive strategy for internal monitoring of performance.
- DHS must enhance oversight of contracted agencies:
 - Create an annual outcome report card for contracted agencies.
 - Validate that contracted agencies are making face-to-face contact and performing safety assessments.
- DHS must establish a Commissioner's Action Line (CAL).
- DHS must revisit and expand the list of outcomes to be measured.
- DHS must link its performance and the performance of its contracted providers to outcomes of accountability

Leadership

- DHS must establish a mechanism and process to establish ongoing community oversight .
- DHS must ensure ongoing community participation and input into the improvements undertaken at DHS.
- Continue to expand its emphasis on making DHS a more transparent agency.
- DHS must take positive steps to enhance the healthiness of its infrastructure and staff morale.
- DHS must enhance its ability to manage crisis, including strengthening processes related to child death reviews and increasing public access to information.