**Office of Ombudsperson for Families**

**OBFF Joint Meeting of Community-Specific Boards**

**Tuesday, February 25, 2025**

**4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.**

This meeting was conducted [via WebEx video](https://minnesota.webex.com/recordingservice/sites/minnesota/recording/f75f300755fc4015955bd34e1fd7fbbe/playback)/audio

*Mission: To ensure that children and families are protected by law in all child placement proceedings conducted by public and private agencies.*

# Board Members Present:

African American Board: Gina Washington

Asian Pacific Board: Thanh Glasco, Brook Mallak, Julie Le, Derek Kuns

Spanish-Speaking Board: none

# Board Members Absent:

African American Board: Ella Gross, Jean Webb-Bradford, Roger Clarke, Imogene Koehler, Glenda D. Rooney

Asian Pacific Board: Yi Li You

Spanish-Speaking Board: Juan Linares, Sonia Davila Williams, Jesús Villaseñor

**Staff Present:** Muriel Gubasta, Ann Hill, Manuel Zuniga, Beth Chaplin, Katie Heilman, Rachel Lovejoy

**Guest Speakers:** Laura Gapske, Marissa Kirby-Stofferahn, Rachel Johnson, Windy Ross

# Call to Order

A Joint meeting of Community-Specific Boards was conducted via WebEx video/audio on February 25. The Meeting was convened at 4:33 pm by Brook Mallak, board chair for the Asian Pacific Advisory Board.

Adoption of the Agenda
The was no formal adoption of the agenda because there was not quorum – no board members were present from the Spanish-Speaking Board. The meeting was continued as an educational opportunity.

# Board Matters:

1. **Introduction of new Deputy Ombudsperson, Beth Chaplin.**
2. **Laura Gapske, Child Safety Consultant, Children’s Justice Act Task Force:** Gapske and colleagues Marissa Kirby-Stofferahn and Rebecca Johnson presented on the task force’s work with law enforcement officers to create a proposal for mandatory child removal training.
3. **Windy Ross, Department of Children, Youth, and Families:** Ross presented on updates on the Minnesota African American Family Permanence and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (MAAFPACWDA).
4. **Other matters:** Chair Mallak suggested the API Leadership Summit on April 21 as a learning opportunity.
5. **Adjournment**
With no further discussion, Brook Mallak, Chair of the meeting’s sponsoring advisory board adjourned the meeting for 5:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Heilman

Int. Office Administrative Specialist, Office Manager

## Introduction of new Deputy Ombudsperson, Beth Chaplin

* 1. Deputy Ombudsperson Chaplin gave an introduction of herself and discussed her previous experience with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families’ Child Safety and Permanency division.

## Laura Gapske, Child Safety Consultant, Citizen Review Panel and Children’s Justice Act Task Force

1. The proposal for a legislative bill for mandatory child protection training for law enforcement was not picked up for this current legislative session. This presentation covered the work that has been done leading up to today, as well as what the Children’s Justice Act Task Force will do in the meantime.
2. All ombuds have direct appointment seat on CJA Task Force.
3. The 2022 Office of the Legislative Auditor report on Child Protection Removals and Reunifications included a recommendation for the Department of Human Services to put together a working group to see what a training would look like. [Read the full OLA report](https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2022/childprotectsum.htm) for more details.
4. Working group sessions started in 2023. In Minnesota, law enforcement officers are the authorized entity to conduct emergency removal of kids in child maltreatment.
	1. Trainings needed to include certain elements in order to be effective, so the task force reached out to the Department of Public Safety to help co-lead for expertise with law enforcement officer training.
	2. The group made sure to broaden their reach to make sure the training is reflective of the community and people disproportionally impacted by child removals.
	3. The statute within peace officer standard is to have a standard training license, the proposal to include training on child protection removal wasn’t brought through for governor’s proposal this year.
		1. Child removal training would be part of the hours they already do (not in addition to them).
5. Listening session insights:
	1. The sessions included rural and urban jurisdictions and different service deliveries (street patrol, in leadership, investigatory).
	2. Law enforcement knows very little about ICWA.
	3. Folks were transparent about their lack of training and importance of collaboration with child welfare agencies.
		1. A law enforcement officer in a listening session said he learned more in the listening session vs his actual training.
		2. Law enforcement wants a robust partnership with child welfare and would never make decision about child placement without consulting with child welfare first.
		3. The sessions demonstrated a desire to model collaboration and the importance of removals minimizing potential harm and trauma, allowing for the best possible option with reunification.
		4. DCYF is working on a report of the findings from those sessions and will share with OBFF and boards.
6. Multidisciplinary team training: the partnership between law enforcement, child welfare, and attorney is crucial.
	1. County-specific models mean every county does something different. 58% of counties didn’t know or did not have agreements between each other about how to collaborate when child removal situations happen across county lines.
	2. The majority of counties are using scholarship funds for training, but this funding is inconsistent because it is not guaranteed.
7. Law enforcement officers agreed that there is a need for mandatory training.
8. The task force will continue to work on this as a proposal and advocate for it to be included in 2026. Other stakeholders are invested, so it may come through in other ways with different partners.
9. The current goal is to have regional multidisciplinary team trainings, including law enforcement, medical, and MDT. This would not be a full-blown conference, but a micro-learning situation, and a chance to get feedback from law enforcement which the task force can use to support eventual training.
10. Laura Gapske put the group’s contact information in the chat and encouraged meeting attendees to reach out for one-on-one meetings if they would like.
11. Questions and comments on the presentation:
	1. Ombudsperson Zuniga is happy to meet one-on-one, as this is a high priority.
	2. Brook Mallak agreed and would like to know what the OBFF can do in the interim.

## Windy Ross, Director of Child Safety and Permanency Division, Department of Children, Youth, and Families

1. Ross gave a presentation on updates with the implementation of MAAFPACWDA.
2. The legislation was introduced in 2021, passed in 2024.
	1. The key components are being implemented and staggered for the next 2 years, from 2025 – 2027. The deadlines for each aspect of the act are in the legislation itself.
		1. Active efforts for standard removal as opposed to reasonable efforts.
		2. Cultural competency training – using cultural relevance training
			1. Caseworkers, supervisors, judges, guardians ad litem, and attorneys
		3. Online compliance and feedback portal.
		4. State working group made up of members from specific agencies.
		5. Family Preservation Grants, program to keep families together.
	2. Additional requirements include the permanent establishment of an African American Child Wellbeing Unit and advisory council.
3. Counties will be required to use child removal outcomes to review MAAFPACWDA cases.
4. Current status of the compliance portal: inquiries are going to the Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) that was already in place prior to the legislation. The inquiries will be streamlined to the appropriate team to address.
	1. Feedback and complaints for the African American Child Wellbeing Unit will be directed to the team via a workflow in the system.
5. Current status of the State Working Group:
	1. There were over 80 inquiries to participate in the statewide working group. This group is capped at 25.
	2. The commissioner is making selections at the moment, and denial letters have gone out.
	3. This week is the deadline for those who were chosen to be notified. The goal was to make sure the whole population is represented as much as possible.
	4. DCYF is in the process of hiring the staff member who will oversee the workgroup.
6. Ross identified active efforts training as the priority for the phase-in counties. The training with community partners was developed in a 4-month time frame, making sure to teach the difference between reasonable and active efforts to child protection workers, and for this to be ready by the act’s implementation on January 1, 2025.
7. Updates on the cultural relevance training: The assessment was completed with Hennepin and Ramsey with Prof. Robert O’Connor, professor at Metro State. Ross emphasized the importance of bringing in professionals to make sure it is done well.
8. DCYF will continue to provide guidance to Hennepin and Ramsey counties during this phase-in period. The relationship building has gone well, and Ross believes this has given them the opportunity to communicate more frequently when needed.
9. Questions and comments:
	1. Rebecca St. George mentioned that despite the act’s title, it is not exclusive to African American families, but any family disproportionately impacted by out-of-home placements.
		1. BM expressed concern over out-of-date statistics from DHS.
	2. Ross added the policy areas involved: Training team at academy, placements, permanency, leadership, family preservation, courts, agency oversight – there are over 60 members in DCYF working internally on the process.
10. Announcements:
	1. Brook Mallak suggested the API Leadership Summit on April 21, [learn more online](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aapi-rising-identity-resilience-leadership-summit-2025-tickets-1138392274939).
11. Other business
	1. None.

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 p.m.