

From: "Mossaides, Maria (OCA)" <maria.mossaides@state.ma.us>
Date: Tuesday, August 9, 2022 at 3:52 PM
To: June Ameen <junedameen13@gmail.com>
Cc: Jane Lyons <jane@friendsofchildreninc.org>
Subject: RE: DCF Placement Concerns

Jane and June,

I have decided to ignore the offensive tone of your letter and to provide a brief response. It is clear from the accusations that your level of understanding of the issues is not well-informed. The OCA is aware of the placement challenges certain cohorts of children and youth are facing. We are in communication with the residential providers, DCF and EEC around these issues. An OCA staff member meets weekly with other state staff to monitor the situation. We closely monitor DCF case trend data. We have also worked with key legislators on the capacity and other related issues. We are in weekly communication with key committee members and near-constant communication with their staff. They have been briefed on these challenges and the actions that have been taken.

The decision to take a child into custody on an emergency basis is approved by a juvenile court judge. These decisions are based on safety determinations. I can assure you that we concur with the safety concerns for the cases that we review 99% of the time. National and state data have documented the increase in substance use disorder cases and deaths related to the beginning of the pandemic. Children are being taken into state custody because of legitimate concerns. Every effort is taken to place children with kin, and there are additional efforts being undertaken to address the legal barriers to enable more of these placements.

The current placement challenges are the direct result of the staffing problems facing every human and social service provider. The inability to hire the needed clinical and other staff have prevented many of the new programs which were part of the DCF residential RFR to open and have caused other programs to operate below capacity. The OCA is acutely aware of the needs that the two main cohorts exhibit. There are no easy or quick solutions.

I reiterate our standing offer to review, and intervene as appropriate, in any specific matter that you would like to refer to the OCA. Your data requests should be directed at DCF.

I recognize your deep concern and commitment. I am bothered by the implication that the OCA and I as the Child Advocate are not focusing on finding solutions.

Maria

Maria Z. Mossaides, Director

She/hers

Office of the Child Advocate

One Ashburton Place, 11th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

(617) 979-8374 (p)

(617) 979-8379 (fax)



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