

Summary of Conference Call

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers
Subcommittee on Education
May 3, 2016

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers (ACFRC), Subcommittee on Education convened for its weekly meeting on Tuesday, May 3, 2016, via teleconference from 12:00 P.M. to approximately 12:45 P.M. The purposes of the meeting were to review the subcommittee's list of topics and to come to an agreement on how to move forward on requesting additional information from ICE.

Attendance:

Subcommittee Members Present for the Teleconference:

- BethAnn Berliner
- Anadora Moss
- Michelle Brané

Others Present:

- Liz Cedillo-Pereira, Senior Advisor, ICE; Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO), ACFRC
- Andrea Washington, Special Assistant, ICE
- Maryam Ali, Special Assistant, ICE

Opening Remarks:

Chair BethAnn Berliner completed the roll call, confirming that all members were present for the teleconference.

General Meeting:

Chair Berliner started the meeting by stating that the goal of the call was for subcommittee members to do another comb through of the matrix of potential recommendations and walk away with a process and a timeline for sending additional questions to ICE.

The Chair asked Vice Chair Anadora Moss and Michelle Brané if the matrix as structured made sense to move forward with, and they both agreed that it worked for them. Vice Chair Moss suggested that a helpful addition to the matrix could be a place to include a checkmark to denote topics that are interrelated to another subcommittee. Ms. Brané concurred with the idea of highlighting where there is overlap with another subcommittee, saying that a new column could be added to the chart. Chair Berliner said that instead of adding a column, which could make the matrix unwieldy, she thought including a check as an icon reference would work better.

Chair Berliner then asked members if they thought there were any issues still missing from the chart or any issues that should be removed from it. Vice Chair Moss said she thought targeting a few more topics in the area of staff training would be beneficial, particularly matters surrounding

core competencies around cultural relevancy and understanding the pathways of detained families. Chair Berliner asked her to elaborate on the latter, and the Vice Chair explained that “pathways” was an umbrella term used to describe how understanding the background of someone in a detention setting can inform the way staff acts toward them. She said that in previous detention facilities she has studied, staff was more receptive to being trauma-informed in their interactions with detainees when they knew the experiences and conditions people had come from and the trauma triggers that could make their current state worse if staff was not sensitive to that.

Ms. Brané added that she participated in a training a few years ago that focused on how individuals who have experienced extreme trauma (torture survivors) react differently than the average person when in certain situations. For example, she said, the average person would be upset if they were awakened at 2:00 A.M. to be taken to an appointment without any explanation; for someone who has suffered trauma, this could be extraordinarily distressing.

Based on this feedback, Chair Berliner said that she believed this subject could be broken into two parts. The first being general awareness of the life circumstances of the families in detention, and the second being how to understand trauma triggers.

Chair Berliner then asked subcommittee members to take the next week to add any additional issues to the matrix. She said if she had everything by close of business on May 10, she could review the chart for missing information and send in the request to ICE to get more background/documentation. She also reminded everyone that there would not be a meeting on May 10 because the ICE staff will be participating in the ICE Leadership Conference.

The Chair continued that in preparation for reconvening on May 17, the subcommittee should start thinking through assignments for taking on the first draft of recommendations. To assist with identifying members’ contributions to the matrix, the subcommittee decided on the color-coding system below.

- BethAnn Berliner = Red
- Anadora Moss = Blue
- Michelle Brané = Green

Moving the conversation to the potential recommendations currently in the matrix, Chair Berliner asked if there were any gut reactions to what she had put together. Vice Chair Moss said she was comfortable with the language and felt engaged reading through the text, noting that she appreciated that there was some granularity in the recommendations. She also said she was particularly interested in how the issue of discipline in the classroom was addressed. Chair Berliner responded that this was actually an area where she had some concern because she has no information on classroom behavior management or school discipline policies and procedures. She stated that she made a very strong case about how discipline should be handled based on best practices about how not to re-traumatize children while managing the classroom, but it is not clear whether or not classroom behavior is viewed as a big issue for ICE or the schools at the family residential centers (FRCs).

Ms. Brané said that based on her experience of sitting in classrooms at the FRCs, the need for discipline really depends. She stated that it should be kept in mind that generally the children in the residential centers are so traumatized and afraid that they do not move around a lot causing problems, so they are not doing a lot that requires punishment except in the extreme cases where a child has reached his/her limits and acts out.

Chair Berliner said the paradigm the subcommittee is attempting to introduce is trying to pull children away from a fixed mindset of being stuck to a growth mindset of how to react when confronted with a challenge. Vice Chair Moss said she was not sure children were in the residential centers long enough for this kind of process to fully take hold. Ms. Brané said that was a good point, but noted that there are children who could be at a facility for a longer period of time.

Ms. Brané then mentioned the new license that was approved for the Karnes County Residential Center and the likelihood that the South Texas Family Residential Center would also receive the same license. She said the details of these licenses should be part of the request to ICE. Chair Berliner asked if the issue of licensing should be included in the detention facility staff professional development bucket, and Ms. Brané said she thought it fit in the category. Ms. Brané added that it would be important to have this information regardless to ensure that recommendations are within compliance of what is stated in the license.

Vice Chair Moss said the license topic brought up the issue the group has talked about before regarding how detention management recommendations are handled by the subcommittee. She asked if a row in the matrix should be dedicated to detention management because that might be a better fit for issues pertaining to license and compliance concerns. Ms. Brané agreed, and Chair Berliner said when she sent around an updated version of the document, the new row would be included with license/compliance issues as a starter subject.

Pushing the conversation to a new subject, Vice Chair Moss said she understood from the tours of the FRCs that there are plenty of opportunities for children to play in the recreation yard. However, she was concerned that there was a lack of structured physical activity for the children. Chair Berliner responded that the education program requires one hour of physical education per day. Vice Chair Moss said that could mean just opening the yard, indicating that she did not believe that should be considered structured recreation. Chair Berliner said the subcommittee could add a recommendation about ensuring children have safe and structured play opportunities every day.

Chair Berliner then shifted the discussion to dividing up the issues for each subcommittee member to own and start the process of drafting the starter recommendation. Vice Chair Moss said some of the issues outlined in the matrix are very specific to education theory and practice, which narrows the universe of who should take the lead on them based on professional knowledge. She proposed that rather than assigning specific topics to each subcommittee member, everyone could go through the list and contribute whatever they can to each topic. Ms. Brané agreed and suggested that everyone take the next week to add their thoughts to the matrix in the areas where they believe they have helpful expertise. Once this was completed, the group

would see where there were still holes for recommendations as well as information needed from ICE.

Pointing to an example of where there might need to be additional background from ICE and more conversation between subcommittee members about granularity and spin-off recommendations, Chair Berliner stated that on the issue of the school schedule, it is her opinion that school should operate on a full day schedule. If it is a half day schedule, she continued, then other facilities at the FRCs should be utilized for assignments. She said that if children are only at the facilities for a short period of time, then that time should be used to promote English language skills and support orientation to transitioning to other U.S. schools. Chair Berliner said children could be given an assignment outside of the classroom such as watching a video in the library about classes in American schools or talking about it with their mothers. She stated that this seemed to be an education black hole.

Vice Chair Moss asked if a reason had been given for the half day of school. Chair Berliner said one had not been given, and she had already denoted the need for more information in the matrix. She said if it had anything to do with capacity issues, there are alternatives like splitting students up between classrooms and non-classroom settings where they can work on projects that still engage them in the learning process. Vice Chair Moss said this could be a topic to add to staff issues, given the potential impact extended educational programming could have on personnel at the residential centers.

As the meeting came to a close, the Chair again reminded everyone that there would not be a call on May 10 and that they should take the week to input their thoughts and requests for more information into the matrix.

With no further issues to discuss, Chair Berliner adjourned the meeting.

Adjournment:

The subcommittee adjourned at approximately 12:45 P.M.