

**New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee  
Ceil Zalkind, Esq, Chair  
Rita Gulden, M.S.W., Vice-Chair  
May 24, 2012  
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.  
Minutes**

**In Attendance**

Marygrace Billek	Mercer County Human Services
Kathy Collins	Monmouth Cares
Rita Gulden	CASA of New Jersey
Mary Hallahan	Foster Parent
Debra Jennings	SPAN Inc.
Marianne Majewski	Catholic Charities
Patricia Myers	Legal Services of New Jersey
Nancy Parelo	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Kathy Niedt	DCF-Division of Youth and Family Services
Barbara Rusen	DCF
Clarence Whittaker	DCF-Division of Child Behavioral Health Services
Cecilia Zalkind	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Michele Safrin	DCF – Office of Educational Support and Programs

**Staff**

Adrienne E. Jackson	DCF-NJTFCAN
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**Introduction and Review of Minutes**

Introductions were made and March meeting minutes were approved. SORS agreed to continue the discussion around current child visitation at July's meeting and Adrienne agreed to add this item to the agenda.

**Goal and Objective Update**

Discussion ensued around goal development. It was suggested that the goal be established first and then develop specific objectives and activities. SORS agreed to examine the goal on a multi-level to consider staff capacity, knowledge, ability and child and family outcomes. There was a rich conversation that followed around themes noted in the survey specific to training for DYFS workers and supervisors and support services. Relative to this, it was recommended that SORS look at staff in a broader sense to include quality and capacity in addition to its core objectives. There was consensus to divide the goal in two levels and include language around meeting the needs of children and families. In the interest of time, the subcommittee agreed to work on the goals following the meeting and forward their recommendation to Adrienne. Adrienne agreed to send a reminder following the meeting.

The SORS identified the following issues/areas for follow up: 1) DCF progress around training and support services and 2) issue an abbreviated survey, in collaboration with

DCF, based on issues raised in the 2011 survey to show a connection back to staff feedback.

### **Future Presentation**

SORS reported that they would like to continue to receive scheduled updates and presentation from DCF to help provide point-in-time progress report. Moving forward, presentations will be arranged at the beginning of the meeting to allow the subcommittee time to debrief and discuss the information presented. In addition, the subcommittee would like to review DYFS policy around visitation and explore steps the department has taken to improve outcomes around visitation in advance of the next meeting. Finally, SORS agreed to the following future presentation: Office of Advocacy, Service Mapping, Office of Performance Management and Accountability and the Child Welfare Training Academy. Adrienne agreed to resend OCA 2010 report and the link to the monitor's report following the meeting.

### **Annual Report Update**

Brief remarks were made around the 6<sup>th</sup> annual report. Nancy and Marygrace participated in a productive conference call with the Director of the Child Welfare Training Academy. Based on the training presentation together with some of the results of the survey, "SORS focuses on training child protection workers" will be featured in the annual. A draft of this report was distributed to members for comment and aside from minor edits, same received approval of the members. Nancy and Adrienne will continue to work on the report following the meeting.

### **Presentation on Office of Educational Support and Programs - Michele Safrin, M.S.W., Director**

Michele Safrin provided an update on DCF efforts around educational stability for children in out-of-home placement. She reminded SORS that in September 2010 New Jersey enacted a law that gave children in foster care the right to remain in their home school, if that was in the child's best interest. Michele explained that every local office now has an educational liaison and this liaison has participated in a comprehensive four-day training. It was noted that this four-day training will also be offered to all DCF staff in the near future. Additionally, data around educational stability is now captured in NJSPIRIT and increases DCF efforts to collect and track additional key data around children in out-of-home placement. Relative to this, handouts were provided to illustrate how DCF captures best interest determination, educational history, school district and placement information. In addition to this, SORS received a copy of the educational stability training course outline. A rich discussion continued around children in group home placement. This spirited discussion continued and members noted that DCF has made significant progress in providing children educational stability, however, the conversation raised broader issues around the quality of education and DCF role in how educational needs are being tracked. Towards this end, SORS agreed to continue the discussion at the next meeting and requested another update at a later meeting. Adrienne agreed to arrange a follow up presentation following the meeting.

### **Next Meeting & Announcements**

September 11, 2012