

**New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)**

Rita Gulden, MSW = Chair

Linda Porcaro = Vice-Chair

Tuesday January 19, 2016: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

30 Van Dyke Ave.

New Brunswick, NJ

Conference Room 105

In Attendance- In Person

Stephanie Albanese	Senate Designee for Senator Vitale
Mary Jane Awrachow	Foster and Adoptive Family Services
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County DHS
Rita Gulden	CASA of NJ
Mary Hallahan	Upper Freehold Regional School District/Resource Parent
Lori Morris	CASA Mercer/Burlington
Sara Munson	Institute for Families/Rutgers University
Linda Porcaro	Somerset Co. Office of Youth Services
Aubrey Powers	DCF Assistant Commissioner, PMA
Matthew Schwartz	Youth Representative
Lisa vonPier	DCF Assistant Commissioner, CP&P

In Attendance- Conference Line

Patricia Myers	Legal Services of New Jersey
----------------	------------------------------

Staff

Dawn M. Leff	DCF-NJTFCAN SORS
--------------	------------------

Review of Minutes:

Introductions were made and the November 2015 minutes were reviewed by the members and approved.

New Business:

Presentation: DCF Sustainability and Exit Plan

DCF Commissioner, Allison Blake along with DCF Deputy Commissioner, Joseph Ribsam provided a presentation on the DCF Sustainability and Exit Plan. Commissioner Blake thanked the group for the opportunity to give an overview of the plan. Commissioner Blake began the discussion with importance of the agency as well as all stakeholders to never lose sight of where DCF started and stressed those discussions with all DCF and stakeholders begin with the notion that no one wants NJ to return to that point. Commissioner Blake transitioned into where DCF is now with a comparison of accomplishments in areas such as out of state placements, children in

out of home placements, resource home availability as well as community resource availability and reported that NJ has become a National Model in several areas. Some notable accomplishments include a 41% reduction in the use of foster care and that 85% of the children that are served by DCF are served in their own homes. When NJ began the lawsuit NJ had over 14,000 children in foster care and to date it stays around 7100 children. NJ had several thousand children in out of state placement, most due to behavioral health treatment. To date there are no children placed out of state for behavioral health treatment. Commissioner Blake highlighted that in 2013 roughly 16,000 children with developmental disabilities transitioned from DHS to DCF and that some of these children (approximately 50) are in out of state developmental placements. Commissioner Blake reported that these children are not part of the consent decree however work is being done to ensure these children are in the correct placement setting while working on establishing community resources in NJ. Commissioner Blake discussed the youth who used waited in detention for residential/behavioral health treatment and that weekly tracking system would have hundreds and to date there are 1-2 children at any given time. Most treatment services can now be accommodated within the youth's community. Commissioner Blake reported that NJ now has 2 times the amount of foster care beds then children who require placement. This is a testament to the investment of the specialized resource care units that were established. Commissioner Blake stressed that recruitment will always be an important aspect of the DCF work.

Commissioner Blake discussed some reasoning behind why DCF renegotiated. Through collaboration with other states, Child Welfare and data experts and feedback from staff and other stakeholders to review all the aspects of the MSA, progress made as well as areas where DCF plateaued. It was determined by data experts after reviewing real time data is that as the reform progressed the group of children that DCF worked with changed and that the measures established would no longer work for this case mix change. This was brought to the attention of the Monitor who also spoke with the experts and it was agreed that a new framework needed to be done.

Commissioner Blake transitioned to the way forward and reported that to sustain the infrastructure it has to remain resourced and that all stakeholders need to maintain a voice to support those resources once DCF exits out of the plan. Discussion was held that concerns are noted as to what can happen once the MSA is gone and Commissioner Blake stressed that she has told the Governor and the legislature that the only savings that there is to be had once the DCF exits is the payments to the monitor and the plaintiff. Mary Jane Awrachow stressed that all need to be vigilant in supporting the partnering relationship between DCF and service providers so that those partnerships do not slide back to how they were before the original lawsuit was filed.

Commissioner Blake discussed there is a focus away from compliance and a more focus on the quality of the interaction with families. This shift will focus on quality and outcomes and transition to evidence supported services such as housing initiatives for youth, expansion of Mommy and Me programs, Keeping Families Together etc... Commissioner Blake discussed defining the DCF narrative through public accountability

and transparency through several reporting measures/reports. One published example given was the Workforce report that covers what used to be the workforce measures in the MSA. Commissioner Blake also provided an example of the Commissioners Dashboard which will be produced monthly on the DCF website on the DCF performance in several areas. This data will be available to the public so that the public will hold the system accountable. There will also be several annual reports that will be published on the DCF website as well.

Commissioner Blake discussed the basic principles of the original reform have not changed and appear in the new plan verbatim. The biggest change begins with the Foundational Elements which speak on the framework and how the accountability will be managed. These elements represent what was phase one of the original consent decree and speaks to the accomplishments of DCF. One example is the State Central Registry (SCR) and the functionality. Commissioner Blake discussed how DCF would continuously report to the monitor several measures that spoke on the functionality of SCR. All parties acknowledge that SCR is a fully functioning operation where reporting can shift away to other outcome measures. This also can be said for training of staff where in order for the monitor to verify, DCF would provide the training transcripts of staff to the monitor who would review them. Since this is a verified operational system, providing those transcripts is no longer necessary. Commissioner Blake emphasized that these functioning foundational elements are the building blocks of a healthy NJ child welfare system where the monitor will no longer need to verify as DCF will be publishing reports that speak on the functionality of these elements. An example given was the Workforce report which speaks on areas such as the attrition rate where NJ is significantly below the National average at 7%. Other areas will be an adoption report, the Commissioner Dashboard and an annual report on the DCF Work with Children and Families. Commissioner Blake reported that even though the monitor will no longer verify these elements, there is language in the new plan that provides accountability should the monitor identify an area needing improvement in the foundational elements. For instance should there be a budget cut for training, the monitor has the ability and legal right to move a foundational element back into regular monitoring. Commissioner Blake discussed how DCF is becoming a self-monitoring organization thanks to the work through the Research Evaluation and Reporting (RER) under PMA. RER has the ability to evaluate data beyond the MSA measures and identify trends happening not only statewide but at a local level as well. Lisa vonPier discussed how RER reviews the Key Performance Indicators and if they see an outlier in a particular CP&P local office they will bring it to Lisa's attention immediately so that issues can be addressed in real time. Commissioner Blake discussed that the Office of Quality also assists in delving into the practice side of any issues that are identified through data analysis.

Deputy Commissioner Ribsam transitioned the discussion into how the new plan really focuses on moving the framework from a monitoring framework to a public accountability framework with data transparency. This is through the reporting on the foundational elements as well as those areas in the new plan that fall within the To Be Maintained category and To Be Achieved. Between both categories there are 48 remaining measures. He highlighted that in the old MSA there were 55 measures that

were counted and DCF was meeting 20+ of those measures. However there were several sub measures that were not separated out but needed to be achieved in order to get credit for the entire measure. With the help of national data experts it was determined that DCF needed to meet 161 measures in total and were actually meeting 75% of them. The remaining 25% needed to be adjusted as some of them were not achievable or sustainable and were not meeting best practice. The 25% left is what makes up the To Be Maintained and the To Be Achieved categories. He gave a few examples of those items in the To Be Maintained and began with an area that began the lawsuit- abuse and neglect in foster care. In the beginning of the lawsuit NJ was ranked one of the worst performing states. The MSA target was set that no more than .49% of children will be victims of abuse/neglect while in out of home care. Last year the states performance was at 0.17% and this has been sustained. Since this was identified as an important measure it remains in the agreement but in the To Be Maintained section with the understanding that should the states performance declines, the monitor can move it into the To Be Achieved category. Mary Jane Awrachow asked if the percentage of abuse/neglect incidents is higher in kinship care homes and Commissioner Blake responded that this is being looked into however preliminary findings indicate there is not a difference. Another example given was the multiple child health process measures are now collapsed into one area as performance on those measures continued to be sustain the targets.

Deputy Commissioner Ribsam transitioned the conversation to the To Be Achieved section of the new plan. He referenced that this section is most similar to the MSA and these are the areas that the state has not yet met the specified targets or may have recently met given the new negotiated targets but will continued to be reviewed and reported by the monitor every six months. As the state achieves these measures they will then shift into the To Be Maintained category. He provided a few examples to include Family Team Meetings (FTM) where some changes occurred in terms of the targets. He discussed how this is an engagement process with families and within the case practice model there are no specified time frames nor is there any evidence based practice that specify time frames. Lisa vonPier discussed how the practice with families is an on-going engagement process that cannot always be measured in specific timeframes. Nor is there a specific formula that will work for every family. Lisa discussed the process around FTM to include meeting with the family participants, meeting with their identified formal and informal supports to discuss the purpose and their role in the meeting, scheduling the meeting to accommodate the family and their team. Attempting to accomplish this within the first 30 days was very challenging, especially if the circumstances which brought the family into the child protective system included removal of the child(ren). Extending the window from 30 days to 45 days to allow additional time for engagement was seen as reasonable to meet families where they are in the process. Lisa emphasized that if workers are able to complete initial FTMs in 30 days they are encouraged to do so. Deputy Commissioner Ribsam discussed that some targets were also reduced to allow that natural progression of work with families, meets their needs and makes sense for them.

The next example he gave discussed intake worker caseload standards. He explained that caseloads are looked at two different ways: office average which looks at office caseload carrying staff in comparison to cases served in an office and then individual worker assignments. The change in the new plan for intake caseloads looks at the lowering of the target to 90%. This is in response to spikes in intakes in certain peak months such as October and March. This allows some latitude for front line supervisors to assign intakes during spike months. The other area of change is shared or secondary assignments. The new standard allows for additional shared assignments in addition to the assignment standard. Investigation timeliness changes were discussed in that the target to complete in 60 days was lowered to 85% to allow for certain circumstances such as law enforcement prohibiting contact, collateral reports that take longer than 60 days, etc... In addition there is a measure to allow for investigations completed in 90 days with a target of 95%. Question was asked about where performance on these measures was in 2003. Discussion was held that the variability of length of time to complete varied from county to county. Commissioner Blake reported that in renegotiations with the plaintiff it was helpful to understand that some targets were set because there was no baseline data to inform performance.

Other examples explained included maltreatment post reunification which the target was changed to accommodate the change in case mix as well as the finding system changes in 2013 to a four tier system. Lisa vonPier also discussed some of the challenges that CP&P has in terms of when the courts reunify children against the division as well as working with families where substance abuse has been a risk factor but they may present as sober upon reunification only to relapse later. Commissioner Blake stated that one of the reports that will be produced will have outcomes data and contextual information. Changes in the timely permanency outcomes targets were also discussed.

Lastly Commissioner Blake discussed that revisions to the Qualitative Review process and that this will be a big part of the work moving forward in that it will be expanding the evaluation of the quality of the work being done. She suggested that in the next couple of months to have DCF return to provide a presentation on those changes. She discussed that the next monitoring report will be a one-time hybrid report which will include some of the new measurements. When all the measures have moved into the To Be Maintained and sustained for 12 months before DCF exits the monitoring plan. The Commissioner stressed that DCF will continue to be accountable and called upon the stakeholders to hold the legislature accountable in supporting and sustaining the DCF budget. Commissioner Blake and Deputy Commissioner Ribsam thanked the group for the opportunity to present.

Rita discussed with the group about ensuring there is an understanding of the new plan to identify the areas to monitor and incorporate into the SORS strategic plan. Discussion about the survey and incorporating the results into the strategic plan will occur as well. The strategic plan will be the focus of the next meeting. Sara suggested that SORS is part of telling the story and that should be incorporated into the strategic plan.

Old Business:

Tabled due to time restraint

Next Meeting:

Tuesday March 15, 2016

Location: Commissioners Conference Room
50 East State St. 2nd Floor
Trenton, NJ 08625

Announcements & Closure