

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

**Rita Gulden, MSW = Chair**

**Linda Porcaro = Vice-Chair**

**Tuesday March 15, 2016: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**DCF Commissioners Conference Room**

**50 East State St. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**Trenton, NJ 08625**

**In Attendance- In Person**

Amy Fischer	Administrative Office of the Courts
Rita Gulden	CASA of NJ
Mary Hallahan	Upper Freehold Regional School District/Resource Parent
Linda Porcaro	Somerset Co. Office of Youth Services
Lisa vonPier	DCF Assistant Commissioner, CP&P

**In Attendance- Conference Line**

Mary Jane Awrachow	Foster and Adoptive Family Services
Lori Morris	CASA Mercer/Burlington
Sara Munson	Institute for Families/Rutgers University

**Staff**

Dawn M. Leff	DCF-NJTFCAN SORS
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**Review of Minutes:**

Introductions were made to include the Open Public Meeting Announcement and the January 2016 minutes were reviewed by the members and approved after two minor edits were noted.

***New Business:***

**Review of DCP&P Staff Survey**

Dawn reported copies of the preliminary results were sent out via email and informed the group that the survey was distributed to CP&P staff beginning February 24<sup>th</sup> and was closed the end of business March 9<sup>th</sup>. The cohort of Family Service Specialist (FSS) staff that the survey was distributed to was 3121 with 634 responses for a response rate of 20.31%. Rita thanked Linda Porcaro for all of her effort and work and opened the floor for discussion. Mary Hallahan noted that responses to questions regarding supervisors elicited positive responses and Linda Porcaro also highlighted the positive responses in regards to the questions around training such as the quality, relevance to job and availability.

One area that Linda highlighted in terms of further exploration was the responses for services. Discussion was held regarding that although it appears that staff feel there are positive relationships with community service providers, staff also feel that the services that are available to the families lack of flexibility, are not always accessible and staff may feel stuck with the services they do have. Mary Jane highlighted that there is a positive starting point in question 17 to address logistical issues with service providers such as flexibility of service time (IE nighttime slots, weekends, etc...). This question highlights that there is a sense of strong positive relationships between CP&P and service providers so that this affirmation can be used to negotiate contracts to allow for more flexibility. Rita discussed that if contracts are re-negotiated to include more flexible service delivery- how will this impact staff who are not exempt. Lisa vonPier discussed later on that field staff can and do work overtime and supervisors receive comp time.

Sara Munson highlighted questions 2 & 4 would be beneficial to DCF leadership regarding how communication and information sharing is received. Mary Jane pointed out that question 2 can also speak to staff morale within the agency. Lori Morris cautioned regarding the responses to question 2 can include others with whom a CP&P worker interacts with such as peers, service providers, etc... and that the "people I work with" is not clearly defined in this question. Amy Fischer discussed the potential impact that training of staff may not have taken the full affect and therefore some staff perceives those who have just completed training and are learning the skills may not be as competent. Discussion of climate change within an office as staff become more competent takes time.

Mary Jane discussed the response rate to question 3- "I have too much work to do at work" and how that may correlate to the response rate of question 22- "I have too much paperwork". Discussion was held regarding how much flexibility and overtime staff is allotted to complete their work within a 35 hour work week. Mary, however, pointed out that most staff felt that their caseload was manageable as per the response rate to question 19 which conflicts with the responses to questions 3 and 22. Another conflicting response was to question 12 which highlighted that most staff feels the skills they learned in training they use on the job- this conflicts with those who felt that they have to work harder due to the incompetence of the people they work with- question 2.

Mary Jane also highlighted the positive responses to question 13 regarding prevention and early intervention which shows the commitment of the Department in placing high value in these areas. Everyone agreed that the survey overall showed a positive progression and that the areas that SORS targeted in training, supervision, etc... had positive responses.

Discussion was held regarding CP&P staff availability to do shift work. Lisa vonPier (LVP) discussed the limitations that Civil Service and union contracts pose and that staff who work positions such as intake which accumulate overtime- like receiving overtime compensation. LVP also highlighted that answers to question 1- "those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted" is also Civil Service driven and that Civil

Service and their rules are covered on one full day of new worker training. She discussed that those who are eligible to take a promotional exam are informed and are required to sign off that they received the notification. Once they take the exam they are then ranked with all others who also take the same exam and a list is certified for that title. These lists are then sent to the Area Directors and LOM who then in turn will interview off of the list. She clarified that Civil Service rules enforce the rule of three hiring- a LOM must pick a promotional candidate from the top three eligible staff on the list- even if they want to pick someone higher on the list.

LVP also discussed in relation to some of the responses to question 18 that all staff have a computer and a cell phone however not all staff have a mobile devices to complete work while in the field however this is being worked on and there is a pilot for mobile venues where staff can access connectivity to the SACWIS system as well as handle the security walls. She acknowledged that there are not enough state cars for all staff however there is enough to meet about 75% of the need. In terms of services for families she also acknowledged that there are not enough of the kinds of services that are needed and that there will never be enough of the quality, quantity and accessible services to meet all the needs of the families however this is frequently worked on to expand the service array. LVP highlighted that DCF is currently completing a robust Needs Assessment that is looking at service gaps, contracting, etc...

Rita discussed with LVP that prior to her arrival at the meeting; the group identified some questions as possibly relating to communication or morale issues in questions 1, 2 and 4 however the group and LVP agreed that there are some limitations with the questions in terms of definitions. An example is question 4, it is unclear if staff are speaking to the LO, AO or DCF in general. LVP provided some expectations to include monthly Area Director Meetings where whatever is addressed- they take back to their LOM in monthly meetings who then share it in their monthly LO staff meetings. LVP suggested possibly having Rutgers look into researching some of these areas in their Annual Workforce Report. LVP pointed out that there needs to be an analysis of the questions asked and responses received and she proposed that Sara and herself have a conversation regarding this analysis and Sara invited LVP to participate in the Workforce report work. Rita requested to participate in the Staff survey analysis with LVP and Sara.

Rita discussed the next step would be to send a thank you to all the staff who participated in the survey, highlighting the effort and then outlining that the next steps will be to analyze the results which will be filtered out once complete. Rita agreed she will draft a thank you response and Dawn will submit to John Ramos to distribute to staff.

### **Old Business:**

Review of meeting dates was completed as there were some identified conflicts for DCF representatives for the May, September and November dates due to the DCF Executive

Management meetings have been re-scheduled. The group decided the following alternative dates:

May 25, 2016  
September 22, 2016  
November 22, 2016

The next agenda item was a review of the SORS Annual Report timeline for submission. Rita discussed slotting some time at the May meeting to draft some rough topics.

The next agenda item discussed was the strategic plan. Rita requested at the last meeting for members to think about what the DCF Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner presented on the Sustainability and Exit Plan and looking at what areas would correlate into the SORS priorities. It was discussed that based on the results of the staff survey it appears that goal 2 is accomplished. Rita requested that two outstanding areas from the Office of Training and Professional Development (OTPD) were the test scores and evaluation feedback which was being worked on. The new Director of OTPD was identified as Lisa Gallagher and it was decided to circle back in a few months to give her time in her new position. It was decided that it would be categorized as follow up rather than a goal. It was further discussed that the Case Practice model part of Goal 2 would remain to explore further. LVP suggested in terms of wording to remove the "new" from the case practice model.

Discussion around visitation and how that correlates into those areas To Be Achieved were reviewed. Discussion regarding quality of investigations was done and LVP reported that First Responders training is given to staff who will be investigators and then the quality piece rests in her office. Discussion of FTM's was looked at and it was decided that it was really a timing issue especially for the initial FTM. There is also flexibility to have the subsequent 3 within 12 months as opposed to quarterly. LVP discussed that the initial FTM targets were not evidence based. LVP discussed the adjustments being made to capture the case plan development which will allow for different scenarios such as a formal FTM versus a planning meeting.

LVP discussed the challenges regarding compliance with visitation measures. She discussed that more visitation programs are being developed to assist however there are other barriers to include scheduling, time, staffing, etc... LVP discussed working with each LO to develop what their specific plan is in addressing some of these barriers. She further discussed the pilot in the Morris/Passaic/Sussex area with Family Connections who will be doing transportation for visitation however this is just getting up and running. She discussed that she will not know how much of an impact this will have for another 6-9 months and she is looking into additional funds to replicate the pilot in Central and Southern NJ. LVP discussed that these services have to go through the RFP bid process. LVP reported that she would ultimately like more in-house staff to do transportation and supervision of visits. Rita asked if the results of the Morris/Passaic/Sussex pilot be available to SORS and LVP agreed. Rita reported that visitation should remain on the Strategic Plan.

Another area discussed was placement stability. LVP discussed the work around Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention plan which Colette Tobias did a presentation in November 2015. LVP discussed the pilot in Mercer County where when a child is placed, Mobile Response Services are initiated to assist and assess the child and placement family to help and ensure any concerns, feelings, emotions, service needs, etc... are addressed. Mary Hallahan verbalized a recommendation that the response timeframe should be looked at and LVP reported this is being addressed. LVP reported there is an increase in service needs with CSOC services. Since the pilot began in Mercer there have not been any re-placements so that initial placement remains stable. This pilot is expanding in other counties.

Mary Hallahan discussed areas concerning intake caseloads and does that speak to staffing levels. LVP clarified that an additional 50 staff have been hired to be placed in intake units across the state and this will be monitored with the amount of referrals received. LVP discussed workload of investigations and at times staff could just be waiting on collateral information to complete an investigation versus being fully engaged in the investigative process. It was stressed that the intake supervisor really needs to manage the intake workload.

Rita reported that she will revamp the strategic plan based on today's discussion and charged everyone to review the SEP to come up with suggestions for the strategic plan for the next SORS meeting.

#### **Next Meeting:**

**Tuesday May 25, 2016**

Location: DCF Profession Center  
30 Van Dyke Avenue  
New Brunswick, NJ  
Conference Room- TBA

#### **Announcements & Closure**