

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

**Rita Gulden, MSW = Chair**

**Linda Porcaro = Vice-Chair**

**Thursday July 16, 2015: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**Foster and Adoptive Family Services**

**4301 Route 1 South**

**Monmouth Junction, N.J. 609-520-1500**

**In Attendance- In Person**

Mary Jane Awrachow	Foster and Adoptive Family Services
Maura Dughi-Somers	Child and Family Advocate
Amy Fischer	Administrative Office of the Courts
Rita Gulden	CASA of NJ
Mary Hallahan	Upper Freehold Regional School District/Resource Parent
Patricia Myers	Legal Services of New Jersey
Linda Porcaro	Somerset Co. Office of Youth Services
Aubrey Powers	DCF Assistant Commissioner
Lisa vonPier	DGP&P Assistant Commissioner

**In Attendance- Conference Line**

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 and the May 2015 minutes were reviewed. Linda Porcaro made a motion to accept the minutes with Pat Meyers making the second motion. Minutes were approved.

**Old Business:**

Tabled to focus on Annual Report

***New Business:***

**Annual Report:**

Dawn Leff reviewed the timeline for submission. Rita discussed maintaining the same outline of the Annual Report but adding a consideration of any recommendations. Rita

discussed as the group reviews the information to consider whether there may be any recommendations as it relates to educational stability since there was a heavy focus over the past year. One possible recommendation could center on group homes/residential homes. Rita reported that there was not enough information presently to form a recommendation regarding staff training as the Office of Staff Development and Training is currently undergoing new software to assist with electronic review and notification of when staff pass and fail courses to streamline the notification process. This systemization is scheduled for the fall at which time the subcommittee will look to request an update on the enhancements to determine if any further recommendation would need to be made. The final area of concentration noted was the Staff Survey activities.

It was determined that the Introduction and the Subcommittee Proceedings can remain the same with the identification of the meetings dates from the past year.

Review of the Summary of Activities concluded with the topic areas from presentations to include Nancy Parillo from ACNJ report on Educational Stability, DCF Commissioner on the Commissioners Dashboard data, Robert Ring from the Office of Training and Professional Development regarding training updates and new initiatives, as well as Lisa vonPier from CP&P on educational stability with input from Lisa Nemeth. The group would like to have aggregate data regarding the number of children in residential/group home setting by age for the next meeting.

Rita asked for Linda Porcaro to write up a paragraph to present in the priorities section of the Annual Report about the workforce survey process. It was further determined that Rita will construct a paragraph regarding the SORS work with the Office of Staff Development and Training and Mary Hallahan will construct a paragraph regarding the SORS work around Educational Stability. This information will be provided to Dawn Leff by July 27<sup>th</sup>.

It was determined for Issues for Follow Up section for 2015-2016 would include the workforce survey; follow up with the Office of Training and Professional Development in the spring of 2016; disproportionality/racial makeup of staff as it pertains to the population served; have the Essex Model Court come and complete a presentation on their work on disproportionality and any child welfare system inclusive recommendations they may have. Discussion continued around disproportionality in which Lisa vonPier discussed the child welfare systemic challenges to include accessing service providers that can meet the needs of the diverse population served. Rita suggested that this topic ultimately become a recommendation for the Task Force to look at given their broader scope. The group further discussed that an underlying correlation of disproportionality is poverty and disability and a shrinking of services for this population. Lori Morris agreed that poverty is interrelated to disproportionality but also highlighted that studies have shown that minority children are placed at a higher rate and remain in out of home care longer and suggested that the Division ensure that they monitor this. Lisa vonPier agreed and guided the discussion into the priorities of her staff and security is a high priority given the recent incidents of violence against

staff, how this impacts capacity and their ability to engage with families versus safety. Lisa discussed that the Department has implemented several safety initiatives to include the hiring of a Director of Safety and Security; safety workgroups; optional training on safety awareness and self-defense is currently available at the DCF Professional Center. Lisa vonPier clarified the support CP&P receives from the Human Service Police (HSP) which are now dispatched from three central locations. The amount of HSP support remains the same but they are located in a different area. Lisa further reported that staff have and continue to rely on local police as a support in the field if needed and additional safety support added includes armed security with electric wands at every Local Office. Lisa discussed that the pending legislation proposed by two legislators includes several recommendations that have already been initiated. One recommendation from this legislation includes having a Human Service Police Officer in every local office. Lisa discussed the realistic capacity impact as some offices may need more than one as well as how it will be funded. Amy Fischer discussed that the safety issues impacting CP&P staff are also present for court staff such as family probation officers who are now equipped with safety precautions such as mace, buddy system and bullet proof vests.

Rita guided the discussion in raising the awareness of the safety issues and gaining support for resource dollars. Rita suggested having the SORS make a recommendation to the Task Force to promote that support. The group discussion also centered on quality recruitment and how worker safety can impact that. It was determined that further exploration with the SORS on worker safety can be geared towards recruitment and it was suggested that Linda will explore if there were any further questions regarding worker personal safety on the original workforce survey that can also be included in the updated survey. One current question touches upon personal safety and the group acknowledges that there will be a heightened sensitivity to worker personal safety questions on the survey. Discussion also focused on how staff has to balance engagement of families versus personal safety and the safety of the children. The group determined that in support of the work completed by DCF on worker safety and to assist DCF moving forward the SORS group would like to look into supporting DCF over the next year in bringing any suggestions to the Task Force. Lisa vonPier suggested bringing in the new DCF Chief of Staff who will be overseeing the activities related to worker safety to provide an update within 6 months and she will provide updates/information to the group.

It was agreed upon by the group that the four areas of focus for the 2015-2016 year would be:

1. Workforce Survey
2. Update from the Office of Training and Professional Development
3. Request presentation from Essex Model Court on Disproportionality with statistics from DCF
4. Workforce safety

Linda Porcaro discussed her experience with attending the DCF Data Fellows presentation and proposed having a representative from the Data Fellows program come and present an overview to the SORS subcommittee. The group agreed it would be a beneficial experience.

Rita shifted the discussion into reviewing the SORS Strategic Plan- statement, goals, activities and measures. One area Rita identified that the SORS group needs to improve upon is review and discussion of the monitor's reports. Discussion was held that DCF, as seen through the work of the Data Fellows is a learning organization that is engaged in continuous quality improvement. It was determined to table the discussion on the Strategic Plan to the September meeting to give participants an opportunity to review and reflect upon ideas.

Discussion moved to reviewing the New Year meeting dates and location. Most participants agreed to vary the meeting location and that conference calling assists with participation. The next meeting will be held in Trenton however Dawn will identify another location that will accommodate conference call. Dawn will also provide the group with an updated membership list as well as the calendar of meeting dates.

Linda discussed having the survey finalized as an agenda item for the September meeting. The draft survey will be sent to members to review and respond with final comments/edits to Dawn and Linda by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Finalized edits if any as well as logistics will be discussed at the September meeting. Sara questioned whether the survey needed to go through the DCF Research Protocol and Aubrey reported he will look into it and let the group know.

Mary Hallahan discussed a follow up topic from the previous meeting in May in regards to resource home bed availability versus CP&P counts of availability of beds. Lisa vonPier discussed that she will get clarification from the Office of Resource Families in that the beds are counted by how many children the resource provider is willing to take not by what they are necessarily licensed for. Lisa will look into getting a geographical mapping of resource beds and also have Michelle Adams and Colette Tobias come to a future meeting to present statistics, licensing capacity and recruitment and retention efforts. The group decided that this would be a good agenda item for the November meeting.

Lisa vonPier identified a meeting conflict that will affect both her and Aubrey Power's ability to attend the SORS meetings as the DCF Executive Management meetings have been moved to the second Tuesday of each month going forward. The group decided beginning in September and moving forward the SORS meeting will be held on the Third Tuesday of the month. The September meeting will be moved from September 8<sup>th</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>.

Rita requested that in preparing for review of the SORS Strategic Plan that participants think about specific mapping for the year as to what topics the group will review, who

they would like to ask to provide information/participate as well as mapping out the dates for those participants to attend.

**Next Meeting:**

**Tuesday September 15, 2015**

Location: 20 West State Street  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room 219  
Trenton, NJ 08550

**Announcements & Closure**

Mr. Aubrey Powers gave a formal introduction to the subcommittee and stated that he looks forward to participating as a member.