

**New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)  
Rita Gulden, MSW = Chair  
Linda Porcaro = Vice-Chair  
Tuesday September 29, 2015: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.  
50 East State St. 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room 478  
Trenton, NJ 08625**

**In Attendance- In Person**

Stephanie Albanese	Designee for Senator Vitale
Rita Gulden	CASA of NJ
Mary Hallahan	Upper Freehold Regional School District/Resource Parent
Linda Porcaro	Somerset Co. Office of Youth Services
Aubrey Powers	DCF Assistant Commissioner
Lisa vonPier	DCP&P Assistant Commissioner
Lori Morris	CASA Mercer/Burlington
Sara Munson	Institute for Families/Rutgers University
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County DHS
Mary Coogan	ACNJ

**In Attendance- Conference Line**

Mary Jane Awrachow	Foster and Adoptive Family Services
Patricia Myers	Legal Services of New Jersey
Maura Dughi-Somers	Child and Family Advocate

**Staff**

Dawn M. Leff	DCF-NJTFCAN SORS
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**Guest Speakers**

Michelle Safrin, DCF Administrator: Office of Educational Support & Programs  
Tracy Newell, DCF Administrative Analyst 2: Research Evaluation and Reporting

**Review of Minutes:**

Introductions were made and the July 2015 minutes were reviewed. Marygrace Billek made a motion to accept the minutes with Mary Hallahan making the second motion. Minutes were approved.

***New Business:***

Michelle Safrin and Tracy Newell presented updates to Safe Measure screens that record data on education stability status and education history status. Tracy Newell gave an overview to include handouts of Safe Measure screenshots of each. Tracy explained that the education stability status screens tracks the best interest determination completion within the first five business days of a child's placement.

Tracy explained that this screen tracks the number of placements within a specific time frame not specifically number of children as a child may have multiple placements within a timeframe. However the timeframe will only capture those placements which lasted more than five business days. Michelle Safrin clarified that these screens capture just the documentation efforts but is not a reflection of the actual work. Michelle also stated that her office works with the local educational stability liaisons and lists are sent out on those that have not been completed or not completed within the appropriate time frames. Michelle also reviews data to track trends to address with local leadership. There was discussion around documentation issues being reflective of some of the non-compliance within five business days. Lisa vonPier discussed the different technologies that have been tested to assist field staff with documentation however at present time staff has to input the documentation from their desktop. Discussion was also held around documentation of the discussion on the best interest, progress in school, etc... It was clarified that those types of discussions/conferences are documented in narrative form on a contact activity note and are not tracked as compliance data. Michelle discussed staff training around educational stability and elaborated that it is incorporated into new worker training which she herself is the trainer at this time. She also partners with staff from RER to work with the Educational Stability liaisons to train them on the data. They in turn are the point persons for LO staff to assist them in how to enter the data correctly. Michelle reported that 80% of children are being maintained in their same school district.

Tracy also reviewed the Education History Status screens in safe measures. These screens capture whether an education record has been completed on a child in placement for the current school year. This is also a compliance screen to determine whether an education record has been documented. Key items regarding the education record to include classification and current grade level are documented however specific individual information such as progress, academic grades, etc... are again captured in narrative form through collateral contacts, conference notes, etc... Michelle highlighted that the example screenshots are for last school year 2013-2014 where in the safe measure screens were relative new and staff were in the process of being trained. Michelle reported there continues to be on-going efforts to enhance documentation as well as collaborative efforts with school districts to get electronic copies of school records as currently staff needs to request them and house hard records to include IEP. Discussion was held about Federal Legislation around electronic education data being available to child welfare agencies. Michelle reported that she has a staff position currently open who will be looking at the trend data to see what areas are doing well and how that can be replicated in the areas that are not. There was discussion about whether additional screens can be created to capture or enhance an educational record to notify staff on areas where a child can be doing better, (IE attendance, academic grades, etc...). It was discussed that with the pending Federal Legislation it would logistically make sense to wait to determine what the legislation will call for and create screens around that. Michelle reported that the school placement determination can be re-evaluated at any time. An example would if a child's permanency plan changes from reunification to permanent placement with placement caregiver but the child is in the educational setting of origin, their educational

placement determination can be re-evaluated. Michelle also clarified that a child can remain in their district of origin until their adoption is finalized. Michelle reported that staff has worked with school districts to have the child remain after finalization if the change would occur in the middle of a school year to promote stability. Michelle discussed that for youth who come into care due to homelessness, the McKinney Homeless Act covers their educational placement and staff works with the school district homeless liaison for best interest determination.

Lisa vonPier discussed that the holistic work that staff complete are not always captured in the screens and are more likely to be captured in on-going narrative forms such as case plans, FTM's, collateral contacts, visitation, etc... so that the work is not static within NJS screens. Lisa further reported that schools have been asked to the table via FTM's however experience has shown that they have declined. Lisa reported that staff is having contacts and conferences with schools separate from FTM's and again that is captured in narrative form. Michelle discussed working with a pilot in Camden for electronic data with 25 data elements and there is hope of the Federal Legislation gets passed will allow all school districts to provide electronic data. Hearty discussion was held around collaboration of all child welfare systems to make education a priority. Michelle and MaryJane discussed that there are over 400 children in placement who are attending college through the NJ Foster Scholars which highlights that educational well-being is a priority. Michelle asks the group to see how the collaboration with Camden works before approaching the Board of Education for any changes. Michelle reported that the first exchange of data will be in November. MaryJane thanked the DCF Administration for the commitment with the NJ Scholars program.

### **Old Business:**

Staff survey was discussed. Dawn Leff reported two minor corrections. It was noted that the DCF Research Protocol committee will need to review and Dawn has submitted the application on behalf of SORS. Aubrey will discuss with the research committee and will attempt to fast track it through.

Rita discussed data for children who are not covered under the educational stability law. It was determined that the Children's System of Care oversees these children. Linda Porcaro will reach out to Liz Manley to schedule a time when she can come and discuss at a SORS meeting.

Discussion around the SORS Strategic Plan followed. Goal 1 is active with the updated staff survey activities. Once survey has been completed, distributed and survey results are analyzed, review will occur to determine whether additional activities under this goal need to be established. In terms of statistical relevance, Sara reported a return rate of 50% of the workforce targeted would yield a statistical significance. Lisa vonPier reported that the survey message out to targeted staff should come from her. Linda will work to ensure there is also a positive message in the introduction to reflect how responses from the last survey effected change. Will review after the Research Protocol evaluation process is complete.

Staff caseload from the Monitors report is in compliance and Sara Munson discussed that Rutgers has partnered with DCF on a workforce report which is in the final stages and Sara will share it once it is published. It will highlight the successes of DCF staffing. Goal 2 review concluded that the focus has been mainly on training outcomes. SORS has received updates and presentations on the many activities occurring within the Office of Training and Professional Development to include the work being done around evaluations and feedback of training participants. Due to transition of training leadership, SORS will request introduction and update after the New Year, possibly at the March meeting.

Goal 3 in terms of educational stability, SORS will continue to work on activities for educational stability outcomes. Mary Coogan suggested as an activity that she will follow up with the Statewide Court Improvement Committee for an update on what is happening with all the CIC workgroups which were to have formed between the schools, court and stakeholders. Rita would like to add as an activity a presentation on the status of child/parent visitation. Discussion around the services activity was that this was a focus on service mapping statewide. Participants discussed that there appears to be a lot of movement and activities surrounding expansion of services. It was decided not to review the mapping but to review data on child/parent visitation. Discussion was held about review of the Monitors reports and Dawn Leff encouraged the group to review the monthly Commissioner's Dashboard which gives more updated snapshots of data reports. It was decided the group will review the monitors reports/Commissioner Dashboard and decide from there how to proceed. Mary Coogan discussed looking at the barriers to the concept of supervised visits vs. unsupervised visits as this can contribute to child/parent visitation issues. Linda Porcaro discussed that one of the Fellows Focus group had worked on parent/child visitation. Dawn reported that she will reach out to Abbie Dimeo, Coordinator of the Fellows Program to come to the next SORS meeting to give an overview presentation. Discussion around role of caregiver, particularly Kinship caregivers as it pertains to visitation and clarity of reasons why visitation is or is not supervised needs to occur on a more frequent basis as MaryJane reports that is an issue that is brought up to FAFS.

It was decided that the activity to monitor the transition of DDD services to DCF is complete.

Discussion on disproportionality occurred and Lori Morris summarized report from CSSP. Lisa vonPier reported that CP&P is working with the Model Court and the Casey Family Programs as well as RER to look specifically at disproportionality in Essex County. This will be a model process to look and analyze to determine recommendations and next steps. Mary Coogan gave some background history on this process leading up to this pilot. Data requests have been submitted to CP&P and Fred Simmons is assisting in research as well. Mary Coogan also discussed how this is being looked at through the Disproportionality Subcommittee through the CIC. Mary Coogan suggested that SORS committee members share the CSSP report with colleagues to assist in looking at disproportionality as well as looking at the JDAI process that has had success. Due to time restraints this discussion will be carried for

the next meeting. It was decided that SORS will follow the Statewide CICIC who will be doing work on disproportionality for the next statewide conference.

Conclusion: Rita will work on drafting the updates discussed for the Strategic Plan.

**Next Meeting:**

**Date and location TBD due to conflicts on proposed date**

**Announcements & Closure**