



NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair
Mary Coogan, Esq., Co-Chair

“In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, notice of this meeting was given by way of notice filed with the Secretary of State, the Trenton Times and the Newark Star Ledger and posted at the Department of State, 125 West State St., 1st Floor, Trenton, New Jersey.”

**Please note the meeting was recorded for the transcription of minutes.*

Meeting Minutes
December 19, 2025

Attendance:

Christine Beyer, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families
Mary Coogan, Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Sonia Moticha, Department of Education
Wendi White, Department of Corrections
Natasha Johnson, Department of Human Services
Marygrace Billek, public member
Richard Stagliano, Center for Family Services
Nydia Monagas, New Jersey Children's Alliance
Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, District 21
Owen Henry, NJ State Senator
Hon. Rodney Thompson, Superior Court Family Division
Concetta Lapergola, designee for Hon. Rodney Thompson
Eunice Salton, Chair of NJ Child Placement Advisory Council
Jennifer Underwood, Department of Community Affairs
Jeffrey Sutherland, Cape May County prosecutor's Office
Christian Arnold, Assistant Attorney General
Kaitlin Mulcahy, Montclair State University
Rachel Silliman Cohen, NJ CARES Institute
Debra Barksdale, Designee for Senator Shirley Turner

Guest:

Jason Butkowski, Department of Children and Families
Sanford Starr, Department of Children and Families

Greta Anderson, Department of Children and Families
Lisa Chapland, Resource Parent
Katie Onitiri, Department of Corrections
Christine Doman-Wells, Rutgers School of Social Work
Corissa Kazar, Embrella
Lorene Wilkerson, NJ Child Placement Advisory Council
Brian Hampel, public guest

Staff:

Bethany D'Amelio, Department of Children and Families

Welcome and Introductions

Voting:

- September meeting minutes approved without edit. One abstention noted.
- Prevention Plan was tabled to incorporate the suggested edits and updates. The task force will vote on the plan at a later date.
- NJTFCAN 15th Annual Report was approved without edit. Two abstentions were noted.

Subcommittee Updates

A. Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes

1. Two work groups have been convened that consist of representatives from the top reporting groups (law enforcement, education and healthcare).
 - The workgroups produced nine recommendations that were presented to the task force and approved in the Fall task force meeting.
 - The report, including the nine recommendations and the implementation plan, will be available in the upcoming months and will be shared with the task force upon its completion.
 - Outreach is planned for early Spring 2026, including a presentation for the New Jersey chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics and other similar associations to raise awareness of the committee's work on mandated reporter reform.
 - The Gold Standard Mandated Reporter training is in the final stages of development with a full public launch planned for late Spring 2026.
 - Implementation phase of the recommendations is in the early stages with discussions surrounding the recommendations that require legislative action. This will require convening a training and liability implementation

workgroup. Members were asked to express interest in joining a workgroup.

- This subcommittee is moving from individual seats to agency seats to ensure proper representation and will begin recruitment efforts in early 2026.

B. Family Support and Child Wellbeing Subcommittee

1. The 2026-2029 Prevention Plan has been the primary focus of the subcommittee. With today's feedback the subcommittee will consider the addition of wording to address funding plans and once complete will resubmit the plan to the task force for approval prior to forwarding the plan to the Governor's office.

- Once approved the subcommittee will seek approaches to implement and monitor progress of recommendations.
- This group is looking to connect with the appropriate departments and associations to ensure implementation progress is being made and to plan for the collection of necessary data to track the progress.

C. Subcommittee on the Safety of Children

- Policy and Legislative Workgroup:
 - a) "Pass the Trash" statutory amendments: The workgroup is monitoring pending legislative amendments and will continue direct outreach to legislative offices to ensure language addresses identified gaps. A response is pending from Senator Bucco's office; the workgroup will also offer formal support for another pending bill.
 - b) 2018 Department of Education (DOE) Task Force on prevention of sexual abuse in schools: Although approved in 2019, the DOE-advised status indicates this task force has not yet convened. This subcommittee will engage DOE Administration to clarify status, barriers, and opportunities for interagency facilitation and support.
- Training and Education Workgroup:
 - a) K-12 Education Staff Boundaries Campaign- development of learning materials to be distributed to school staff.
 - Rationale: Rising volume of sexual abuse allegations in school settings, often linked to preventable boundary issues, underscores the need for concise, practical guidance centered on student safety.
 - Next Steps:

- Initiate focus groups of 8–10 educators across grade levels, including special education to inform the materials, identify gray areas, and select optimal formats for distribution and use.
 - Create a “do’s and don’ts” infographic informed by institutional abuse investigation data and focus group input; engage a professional graphic designer for the final product, with a potential Children’s Trust Fund request to support design services.
 - Explore supplementary products, including a short PSA-style video for staff orientations and trainings and an additional module to complement the new mandated reporter training.
- Member Discussion points:
 - Consideration to extend elements of this work to preschool settings, acknowledging different roles and training needs; inclusion of an early childhood representative in the focus group was suggested by members.
 - Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) could be a possible support to the subcommittee regarding cost for design and printing.

D. Marketing, Development and Fundraising Subcommittee

- Presented a proposal to offer mini grants from the CTF to engage the community in prevention of child abuse and neglect.
 - Rationale:
 - Support prevention initiatives that may not typically receive traditional state funding.
 - Build awareness of the CTF and the mission to prevent child maltreatment through family-strengthening activities.
 - Outlined:
 - Proposed annual grant cycle and annual reporting requirements.
 - Governance approach
 - Funding strategy
 - Eligible uses and exclusions
 - Application design and criteria

- Evaluation will consider unmet community need; alignment to protective factors; and sustainability after CTF support ends.

E. SORS Subcommittee

- There will be a partial leadership change in January 2026. The current Chair will step down and be replaced by a new chair that was appointed by the subcommittee and has been onboarding over the past few months.
- The SORS report is behind schedule due to a delay in execution of the contract with Montclair State University earlier this year causing a late start to the reporting process. It is anticipated that final report will be presented to the task force for approval in January 2026 prior to forwarding to the Governor's office. This approval will likely occur virtually prior to the March task force meeting.
- SORS presented the plan for the final steps being taken to complete the SORS report and proposed focus area for the 2026 workplan which include:
 - Trends in contact with biological families
 - Trends in caseworker engagement
 - Trends in educational outcomes for children in out-of-home care
 - Trends in re-entry into foster care
 - Trends in case practice

Department Updates

- Despite a tight state budget, DCF requested continued legislative funding related for child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment, domestic and sexual violence treatment, and growth in the Children's System of Care budget surrounding youth mental health, behavioral health and increase to the rates for CSOC programs.
 - This support aims to assist retention, recruitment, and operational challenges while broader rate and system changes are pursued.
- PSB legislation has been sponsored and is moving through the legislative process.
- Kinship caregivers now have less stringent requirements to be an approved caregiver to family or kin.
- Plans of Safe Care had updated regulations posted which will create a newly structured reporting procedure for hospitals and medical professionals working with parents with substance use disorder.
- As of January 2026, Family Connects NJ will be adding five counties. The incoming Governor spoke at the Nurture NJ conference and expressed her interest in continuing to focus on maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, continuing to work toward making New Jersey the safest place to give birth.

- Office of Resilience launched a very successful technoference campaign encouraging parents to be more engaged with their children and less distracted by technology.
This office is also launching a “Healing and Resilient New Jersey” website offering statewide trauma-informed technical assistance and training resources; partners are encouraged to share and utilize the platform.
- DCF will be launching a Learning Management System (LMS) Public-facing LMS with Rutgers, which will host the “gold standard” mandated reporter training and additional asynchronous trainings, including content developed with the Office of Family Voice on partnering with people with lived experience.
- New Jersey completed the CFSR in September and is awaiting the final report, which was delayed due to the federal government shutdown. The report is now expected in December. The PIP process is being restructured, therefore it is unclear how the process will be completed once the report is received.
- Transition context: The new governor will be sworn in on January 20, 2026. Leadership noted this may be the final NJTFCAN meeting attended by current department leadership and expressed confidence in continuity of priorities that benefit children and families.

Public Comment Summary

- A member of the public from Bergen County, a parent and volunteer advisor with lived experience, expressed appreciation for departmental engagement with fathers and highlighted concerns about communication and responsiveness in specific case-related contexts. The commenter requested that NJTFCAN and the department review these concerns through appropriate channels. Task Force leadership acknowledged the input and indicated it would be directed to the appropriate internal forum for follow-up.

This memo aims to maintain transparency and provide the public with an overview of the task force's recent deliberations. The committee values community input and engagement as we collectively strive to enhance the welfare of children and families across New Jersey. This meeting report was prepared, in part, with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). For further information or queries, the public can reach out via the contact channels provided by the Department of Children and Families.