



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 public posting on the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect website: [DCF | New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect \(NJTF CAN\)](#).”

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

Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2026

Attendance

1. Christine Beyer - Commissioner, Department of Children and Families
2. Debra Barksdale -Designee for Senator Shirley Turner
3. Eunice Salton - NJ Child Placement Advisory Council
4. Hon. Rodney Thompson -Superior Court, Family Division
5. Gretchen Pickering – designee for Jeffrey Sutherland, Cape May County Prosecutor’s Office
6. Jennifer Underwood - Department of Community Affairs
7. Mary Coogan - Advocates for Children of New Jersey
8. Natasha Johnson - Department of Human Services
9. Nydia Monagas - New Jersey Children’s Alliance
10. Owen Henry -NJ State Senator
11. Richard Stagliano - Center for Family Services
12. Sonia Moticha - Department of Education
13. Katie Ontieri- Designee for Wendi White, Department of Corrections
14. Dani Rubin- public appointee
15. Hon. Sohail Mohammed- Superior Court- Criminal Division
16. Charu Goel- Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Development for NJ
17. Elizabeth Graham- 180 Turning Lives Around
18. William Harvey, Jr., Esq., New Jersey Attorney General
19. Traci Telemaque- Office of the Public Defender

Guests

1. Concetta Lapergola- Designee for Hon. Rodney Thompson
2. Corissa Kazar - Embrella
3. Christine Doman-Wells -Rutgers School of Social Work

4. Greta Anderson - Department of Children and Families
5. Jason Butkowski - Department of Children and Families
6. Lisa Chapland- SORS committee
7. Sanford Starr - Department of Children and Families
8. Susan Labalin- NJCPAC
9. Kayanne Foster- Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes subcommittee co-chair
10. Colleen McKenna Tucker- NJCPAC and Hudson County CPR Board
11. Corinne Spillman- NJCPAC
12. Helder Freire- Chief of Police Union County

Staff

Bethany D'Amelio- Department of Children and Families

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

The public meeting of the Task Force was convened via virtual platform. The Co-Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, including members and invited guests.

2. Public Notice and Recording Statement

The Co-Chair read the standard public notice indicating the meeting was publicly posted in accordance with applicable New Jersey public meeting notice requirements. Attendees were advised that the meeting was recorded for the purpose of preparing official minutes for posting.

3. Quorum

Task Force staff confirmed that a quorum was expected and subsequently achieved, allowing the Task Force to conduct official business.

4. Introductions

Task Force members and guests introduced themselves by role and/or represented entity.

5. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

The Co-Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes of the prior meeting that had been circulated in advance.

- **Motion:** Made to approve the prior meeting minutes.
- **Second:** Provided.
- **Discussion/Corrections:** None raised.

- **Vote:** Approved unanimously (with non-members/guests not participating in the vote).

6. Committee / Subcommittee Reports

A. Family Support and Child Well-Being (FSCW) Prevention Plan Update

The subcommittee reported that the 2026–2029 statewide prevention plan was officially approved, with appreciation expressed for prior Task Force feedback. The subcommittee advised that planned work will emphasize continuous quality improvement, including an annual report to the full Task Force each January to summarize progress, alignment opportunities, and emerging needs/challenges.

The subcommittee also reported that it will continue inviting external partners to present on prevention-related efforts and data-driven strategies aligned with the statewide prevention plan.

B. Poverty, Neglect, and Community Outcomes / Mandated Reporting Reform (Implementation Update)

The subcommittee reported on dissemination and implementation activities, including:

- Distribution of the final report and efforts to expand statewide and national awareness through media outreach.
- Planned distribution of a communications toolkit to Task Force members and related workgroup/subcommittee participants, including templates and suggested social media content to support broad sharing.
- Implementation progress, including a meeting of the mandated reporter implementation team in February and the launch of workgroups focused on:
 - Legislative topics
 - Communications
 - Pilots and landscape analysis

The group noted that training is a foundational element of the mandated reporting reform work.

C. Safety of Children Subcommittee (Policy/Legislative and Training/Education Workgroups)

The subcommittee reported it is operating through two workgroups: **Policy/Legislative** and **Training/Education**.

1) Policy/Legislative Workgroup – “Pass the Trash” Amendments (S2613)

The workgroup summarized discussion of proposed amendments intended to strengthen protections for children in school settings by addressing background check and information-sharing gaps connected to prior employment in school districts. The workgroup reported that testimony and stakeholder feedback emphasized implementation concerns and feasibility considerations.

Letter of Support and Request for Inclusion in Stakeholder Input

The Task Force considered a draft letter expressing support for the bill and requesting that, if a stakeholder group is convened to address implementation challenges, Safety of Children Subcommittee representation be included.

- **Motion:** Made to approve sending the letter.
- **Second:** Provided.
- **Opposition:** none noted
- **Abstentions:** two abstentions recorded.
- **Discussion:** Included operational considerations regarding the potential increase in background checks and registry checks, and the importance of planning for implementation capacity and potential automation options.
- **Vote/Outcome:** The Co-Chair called for votes in favor, opposed, and abstentions; no opposition; two abstentions were indicated, and the group proceeded with approval to send the letter.
- **Administrative Note:** The group identified the remaining action as determining appropriate letterhead and coordination with the Task Force communications function.

Update: Department of Education Task Force:

- 2018 legislation requiring the establishment of a task force to study and recommend strategies to reduce child abuse in schools has not yet been convened. This workgroup connected with Senator Ruiz as the primary sponsor of the bill in 2000.

- Senator Ruiz informed DOE that this task force must convene in compliance with the legislation. The current DOE leadership will be informed and this work group will continue to follow up with DOE.

2) Training/Education Workgroup – Healthy Boundaries and Prevention of Boundary-Violating Behaviors in Schools

The workgroup reported:

- A recent focus group was completed with school staff spanning pre-K through grade 12 to gather feedback on learning preferences.
- Based on feedback, the workgroup shifted from a primarily digital campaign approach toward development of a high-impact, face-to-face training format that supports real-time questions and scenario-based learning.
- The workgroup noted that while reporting training exists, there remains a gap in training focused specifically on recognizing and preventing boundary-violating behaviors.
- The workgroup intends to define training deliverables and integrate research and focus group findings into a proposed learning product.
- The workgroup plans to engage Department of Education participation for coordination and input.

Additional subcommittee process recommendations

The subcommittee raised general operational ideas for the Task Force's consideration, including:

- A foundational orientation for new members on Task Force history, role, and how recommendations and funding requests are advanced.
- Consideration of subcommittee liaisons who can meet regularly to reduce duplication, align work, and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Broadening review of emerging child safety concerns within the scope of each subcommittee's work.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

- The SORS report is finalized. Traditionally this report is submitted in December, however, due to a delay caused by switching vendors the report was not completed until recently and is currently with the graphic design team.

- The committee hosted an in-person retreat last week to discuss the design of the report and begin plans for this year's focus and report.
- The committee is looking to expand through new membership recruitment.
- The Montclair team will continue to work with SORS to examine and understand the data and draft the next report.
- Due to the size of the legislation SORS is hoping to partner with other committees to help examine the data and bring back the necessary information to the SORS committee in order to expand their focus in the coming year.

Marketing, Development and Fundraising subcommittee

- This subcommittee was unable to host meetings due to lack of quorum in both January and February meetings. Both meetings had conflicts scheduled. This group will try to connect soon.
- A funding-ceiling of 15% will be used for the mini-grant project.
- A new member application was accepted for consideration and a vote will be conducted in an upcoming meeting.

7. Recruitment Efforts

- The Commissioner presented a plan to expand membership in all committees by creating a formal recruitment, interview and onboarding process.
- Presented the idea of a membership workgroup being formed to help with recruitment efforts and review of applications.

8. Featured Presentation: Data-Informed Community Prevention Work (Camden County and Cumberland County)

A partner organization presented findings and themes from a data-informed approach intended to reduce unnecessary child welfare reports by strengthening community-based supports, particularly in neighborhoods with high volumes of unsubstantiated calls. The presentation described:

- Use of granular data to identify priority neighborhoods down to a small geographic area.
- Provider convenings and resident interviews to incorporate lived experience and identify barriers and service gaps.

- Themes emphasizing improved cross-sector coordination, clearer purpose in convenings, better service mapping/navigation, and place-based supports responsive to families' lived realities.
- The importance of stigma-free engagement, accessible communication channels, and actionable data sharing.

Task Force leadership noted opportunities for subcommittees to integrate these findings into ongoing work (including potential alignment with mini-grant or pilot concepts supported by available funding where appropriate).

A DCF division update described ongoing collaboration in identified communities and noted that the work is proceeding into a phase emphasizing alignment, continued provider engagement, and additional outreach with community participants.

9. DCF Updates and State/Federal System Developments

DCF leadership provided program and system updates, including:

- Budget-related updates and program funding implications, including progress toward statewide availability of a universal home visiting program and discussion of changes affecting a school-based hub-and-spoke prevention model shifting toward a grant approach administered by the Department of Education.
- Federal review updates, including the Child and Family Services Review cycle and related performance improvement planning, with discussion of emerging federal expectations and the importance of aligning performance measures with prevention and permanency outcomes.
- System-level issues affecting high-acuity youth needs and cross-system coordination (child welfare, behavioral health, and youth justice intersections).
- A legislative update noting expanded investigative responsibility for institutional abuse oversight in congregate settings for youth ages 18–21.

10. Public Comment

No formal public comment period actions were reflected in the portions of the meeting transcribed for these draft minutes.

11. Adjournment

With no additional business raised, the meeting was adjourned.

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.