



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

8TH ANNUAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 2017 - JUNE 2018



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INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) is a statutorily established, multidisciplinary citizen review panel to New Jersey's child welfare system. The NJTFCAN also serves as New Jersey's Children's Justice Act (CJA) designated entity that entitles it to receive and administer CJA funds.

The purpose of the NJTFCAN, in accordance with the statute, is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services provided or supported by State government. This includes a review of the practices and policies used by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P), and the Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in order to:

- optimize coordination of child abuse related services and investigations;
- promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- develop a statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in coordination with the FCP;
- mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect;
- foster cooperative working relationships between state and local agencies responsible for providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect and their families; and
- serve as one of DCF's federally mandated Citizen Review Panels.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

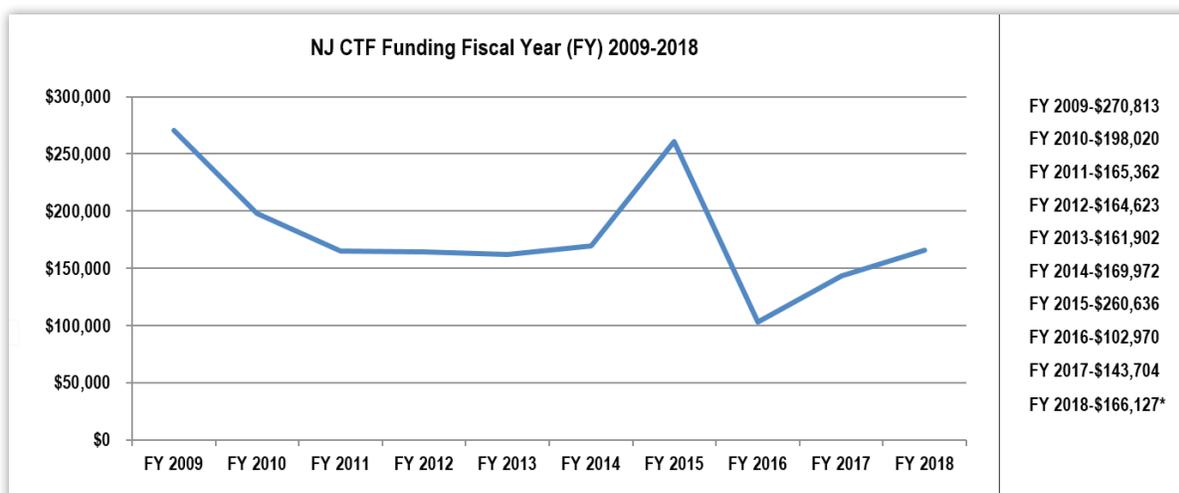
The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides CJA grants that are used to develop programs to reform state systems and improve New Jersey's response to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect fatalities.

CJA funds are also used to establish and support programs to improve New Jersey's child protection system in a manner that limits additional trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect. In accordance with the NJTFCAN's Three-Year Assessment, model programs and innovative approaches were implemented to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect, as well as enhance the effectiveness of the judicial process.

New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund

The New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund (NJ CTF) is a private/public partnership created by law in 1985 to fund child abuse and neglect prevention programs in New Jersey communities. NJ CTF receives funds primarily from donations made by residents via a check box on New Jersey income tax forms. Private donors also make contributions. Any portion of the money actually appropriated which are remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall lapse to the Children’s Trust Fund. These reappropriated funds, along with the actual collections for the fiscal year, comprise the funding that supports the contracts being funded with the NJ CTF collections.

The NJ CTF supports local child abuse and neglect prevention programs that implement evidence-based and evidence-informed programs. Below are NJ CTF’s collections from 2009 - 2018:



*FY2018 CTF fund total includes tax donations made in FY2017/FY2018 and distributed in FY2018/FY2019

NJTFCAN established that the programs and initiatives funded by the 2017 - 2018 NJ CTF funding cycle:

- Supported the strategic goals and objectives of the Statewide Prevention Plan, “Supporting Strong Families and Communities: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2014 - 2017” as well as the newly developed Prevention Action Plan.
- Reflected the Standards of Prevention: Strengthening Families through Family Support.

In 2017 - 2018, NJ CTF was involved with the following two projects:

- New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund Marketing Campaign - In April 2016, the Communication Committee of the NJTFCAN began the development of a marketing campaign to promote the NJ CTF. A proposal for a three-year CTF marketing campaign was developed and approved by the NJTFCAN in September 2016. The Communication Committee continues to implement aspects of the CTF marketing campaign. Most recently, the NJTFCAN approved a plan for the Communication Committee to send an informational email and tent card to tax preparers throughout the state in an effort to increase awareness and donations to the CTF.

- Fatherhood Engagement Initiative - DCF envisions a culture that values and embraces father involvement in families and communities. The goal of the Fatherhood Engagement Initiative is to reduce the barriers that impede the ability of fathers to participate in the wellbeing of their children, support their understanding of their role as a parent, promote healthy co-parenting relationships and educate the community about the importance of the father's role. DCF held a RFP that offered CTF funding for a Fatherhood Initiative in the Central Region of the State (Middlesex, Mercer, and Monmouth counties). This RFP awarded a provider agency with three years of CTF funding to service fathers of all ages in the Central Region. The awarded agency was required to hire a Fatherhood Specialist who is responsible for providing technical assistance, workshops, and training to community-based organizations as needed.

NJTFCAN PROCEEDINGS

Bimonthly meetings provide NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. Three committees support NJTFCAN's work: Protection, Prevention and Communication. One subcommittee, Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee (SORS), and meets bimonthly and reports the results of its activities to NJTFCAN. There are approximately 80 individuals that contribute to this important work. To view a copy of meeting minutes, visit <http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/>.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The NJTFCAN held 4 meetings between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018. The NJTFCAN was provided with presentations and held discussions regarding many important topics throughout the year including the findings of the DCF Advisory Committee on Child Fatalities, Senate Bill S414, regarding stricter background checks on educational professionals, and adolescent issues after aging out of the foster care system. The NJTFCAN also strengthened their membership with six new appointments to the Task Force. In March 2018, the NJTFCAN held a full day retreat that allowed for an orientation for new members.

Each year, NJTFCAN sponsors multidisciplinary training programs to improve the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. All NJTFCAN-sponsored professional training programs are child-focused and designed to promote skills that prevent additional trauma to children and their families.

CJA funds were used to support the following professional development projects to enhance the knowledge of persons involved in the investigation, prosecution, assessment, and treatment of child abuse and neglect:

To date, over 2,000 professionals involved in investigating child sexual abuse have been trained in ***Finding Words-NJ***

Finding Words – New Jersey: Forensic Interviewing & Preparing Children

for Court – This project trains frontline professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse to conduct effective and legally defensible interviews of alleged child sexual abuse victims of various ages and to prepare children for court. The child-focused forensic interviewing project continues to reform the investigation and prosecution process and improve civil and criminal court proceedings.

II Conferences

- **Hidden Danger: Keeping Kids Safe on the Internet**
 NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, will host a statewide multidisciplinary skill building conference on Friday, September 14, 2018 for approximately 350 child protection professionals. This day-long skill building event will feature keynote speaker Dr. David Finkelhor from the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. Topics will include sexual solicitation, sexting, Internet safety and social media, cyber bullying and sextortion



- **Implementing Evidence Supported Services for Children and Families**
 NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, and with the logistical assistance of Rutgers University, Office of Continuing Professional Education, hosted a statewide conference for approximately 350 professionals in the field of child welfare on Friday, September 8, 2017 at the centrally located Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village in Princeton, NJ entitled, "Implementing Evidence Supported Services for Children and Families." This interdisciplinary conference provided professionals and advocates working with children and families an opportunity to learn from experts in child welfare/protection issues and disciplines serving children and families. The speakers for this event included national and local experts in evidence supported practice and implementation: Allison Metz, Ph.D., Kimberly DuMont, and Esther Deblinger, Ph.D.

III Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Training – CJA funds are also provided to the MDT Coordinators' Association for training to improve case management of the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases referred to the prosecutor's office. The 2018 MDT training event was as follows:

- **Continuum of Care: Drug and Alcohol Facilitated Sexual Assault, Music Therapy for Healing Trauma Victims, and Vicarious Trauma in the Course of Everyday Work** - More than 100 professionals attended this day-long skill building event that provided information regarding drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault of teens, music therapy for healing trauma victims, and vicarious trauma in the course of everyday work. Featured speakers included Craig Smith, certified forensic child interviewer, Kathy Jansen, Executive Director for the Association of the Chemical Profession of Alberta, Carol Ann Blank, Ph.D., LCAT, LPC, MT-BC, and John Pizzuro, motivational speaker.

NJTFCAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO DCF

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect recommends that DCF continues its work in understanding and addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Research on the subject of ACEs has shown that individuals who experience high levels of adversity early in life are more likely to see a lasting impact from that adversity, including long-term health issues, substance abuse issues, mental health challenges, financial instability, homelessness, and more. The lasting impact from ACEs can erode protective factors in an individual's adult relationships, thus perpetuating the cyclical nature of adversity and maltreatment.

The NJTFCAN also recommends that DCF continues its efforts to implement a trauma-informed lens over the work that they do. Recognizing and addressing the root cause of trauma rather than simply remedying the outward projections of trauma are more effective in creating a stable environment in which to facilitate healing and relief. Ultimately, by shifting DCF's work to a trauma-informed approach, New Jersey can minimize the impact from ACEs on its population and improve outcomes for families throughout the Garden State.

WORK OF THE NJTFCAN COMMITTEES

Prevention Committee

The Prevention Committee, with expertise in and a commitment to family support and the prevention of all forms of child maltreatment, coordinates the efforts of stakeholders. It is the Prevention Committee's responsibility to ensure the development and implementation of a meaningful and effective Statewide Prevention Plan. The Committee held three in-person meetings between June 2017 and July 2018 as well as a full day statewide meeting in October 2017.

Prevention Plan Development

For much of the year, the Prevention Committee was in the process of developing and facilitating a planning process to align stakeholders across the State of New Jersey around a Statewide Prevention Plan for 2018-2021. In March 2018, with assistance from Clarus Consulting, the NJTFCAN completed the 2018-2021 Statewide Prevention Plan. This plan was created as an update of the 2014-2017 Statewide Prevention Plan and includes a more detailed analysis of how the plan will be implemented. Five-hundred and forty (540) stakeholders, including parents, caregivers, community advocates, providers, and public and private partners were engaged in the planning process. The planning process included an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data acquired from DCF as well as surveys and interviews.

Vision			
Families and communities will thrive with the knowledge, skills, resources, and support they need to keep infants, children and youth safe, healthy and nurtured.			
Strategic Priorities			
Outreach and Engagement	Evidence-Based/Evidence Informed Programs and Best Practice	Outreach and Engagement	Communication
Goals			
Conduct outreach and engagement to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors in an effort to reduce adverse childhood experiences for all expectant parents, infants, children, youth and families.	Promote a culture of continuous quality improvement, supported by a continuum of evaluation approaches that measure effectiveness, and take action to prevent specific types of abuse and neglect.	Develop creative and sustainable strategies to increase funding for prevention programs that strengthen families and communities.	Increase awareness of prevention messages and connect families with prevention supports and services
Objectives			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1: Increase coordination across infant, child, youth, and family-serving systems and supports A2: Develop non-traditional partnerships to assist with primary prevention efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B1: Advocate for Evidence-Based Programs (EBPs) at each level of prevention (primary, secondary, tertiary) B2: If EBP cannot be used, encourage programs at a minimum to collect quality data and follow research based guidelines and standards to evaluate effectiveness B3: Promote workforce access to training, coaching and on-going support to better align services with Prevention Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C1: Advocate for expansion of Children's Trust Fund (CTF) resources C2: Explore funding opportunities at state and federal level C3: Encourage maximization of resources across agencies C4: Support improved administrative management of agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D1: Work with system partners to develop key primary prevention messages D2: Develop and implement diverse strategies for communication of prevention messages to families and partners

The complete action plan can be found at https://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/NJ%20DCF_Statewide%20Prevention%20Plan_Action%20Plan.pdf.

Protection Committee

The Protection Committee is comprised of members of NJTFCAN and allied members in the child maltreatment field. The members analyze state laws, policy, and case practice, within and outside New Jersey. The goal of the committee is to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders as well as advance new methods to address child maltreatment.

During the course of the past year, the Committee focused on several important issues facing youth within the state. The committee was provided a presentation regarding NJ Senate Bill S414, legislation addressing stricter background checks on educational professionals to ensure that individuals guilty of sexual assault against children would not be able to find employment in other educational settings.

The main areas of focus included the issue of Internet safety and juveniles with inappropriate sexual behaviors. The following represents the work of the Protection Committee and its workgroups:

Workgroups

- **Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup**

The Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup created a survey to determine what schools across the state are teaching students about Internet and cellular telephone safety. Upon completion of the survey, the Department of Education sent the survey to the superintendents for each school district across the state. The survey received an excellent response rate and the workgroup is now discussing how the data can be used to inform efforts to increase education.

- **Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup**

The Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup was created to discuss and improve the procedures for handling criminal cases regarding juveniles with sexually based offenses. The workgroup has discussed the role of the Juvenile Justice Committee and how to get clinicians to work with this population of children; partnering with survivors to develop a protocol; the assessment process regarding how juveniles are approved for diversionary programs. The workgroup plans to send members to each county across the state to discuss this issue with county prosecutors.

Communication Committee

The mission of the Communication Committee is to increase awareness among the public and professionals, and promote social change related to child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention. It is also to promote awareness of the NJTFCAN's activities and issues.

During the 2017 - 2018, the Committee continued to develop the following initiatives:

- Promoted visibility of NJTFCAN initiatives through NJTFCAN logo branding on its reports and conferences;
- Partnered with DCF to update the NJTFCAN website to include an option to donate to the CTF using credit cards.
- Revisited the previously created marketing plan in order to prioritize and update certain aspects.
- Created a tent card and cover letter to send to tax preparers across the state to encourage donations to the CTF. These items will be sent via email to at least 19,000 licensed accountants in NJ. Those tax preparers that are interested in participating can request hard copies of the information to be sent for display in their office.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

The charge of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) is outlined in the NJTFCAN statute and includes the following:

- Reviewing staffing levels of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P)
- Developing recommendations regarding staffing levels;
- Developing recommendations around the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within the Division;
- Reviewing the Division's performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes; and
- Reporting annually the Subcommittee's findings to the Governor and the Legislature.

SORS attended to this charge by implementing and analyzing its staff survey as well as receiving comprehensive presentations and/or updates from DCF executive staff. These presentations centered around the scope, work and strategic priorities on the following topic:

- Child Fatality Outcomes: DCF Five Year Analysis of Child Fatalities
- CQI Staff Development: Manage by Data Fellows Program
- Family and System Outcomes: Child and Family Services Review

2018 – 2019 Priorities of the SORS

- DCF priorities and implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.
- Changes available to resources for families and accessibility to staff
- Update of the transfer of substance abuse services to CSOC
- Update from CP&P Office of Resource Families on the recruitment and retention plan and progress to date
- Update from the Office of Training and Professional Development on the electronic learning management system as well as new training initiatives
- Implementation of solution focused case planning
- Staff training on Disproportionality

NJTFCAN TASK FORCE COMMITTEES/SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Note: All members listed, status of membership, job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2018.

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Niurca Louis, Vice Chair

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Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

Ilene Palena
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Liza Kirschenbaum, Vice-Chair

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