



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

# 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 2018 - JUNE 2019*



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## INTRODUCTION

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The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) is a statutorily established, multidisciplinary citizen review panel in support of 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 services and child maltreatment prevention initiatives 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.

## NJTFCAN PROCEEDINGS

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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), 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 2018 - 2019

In 2018-2019, the NJTFCAN supported the prevention of child abuse and neglect in New Jersey through the following:

### Meeting Topics

The NJTFCAN held 5 meetings between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019 to connect stakeholders to the important work of New Jersey's child welfare system. The NJTFCAN was provided with a presentation by co-chair Dr. Martin Finkel about his work at the CARES Institute and the history of medicine's response to child maltreatment. Dr. Finkel's presentation also provided definitions of child sexual abuse, information on the prevalence of sexual victimization, and data on the outcomes for children who have been abused.

The Task Force held discussions regarding many important topics throughout the year including the findings of the federal Child and Family Services Review of DCF, improving and supporting DCF's strategic plan, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) training for DCF staff and potential private funding to bring ACEs awareness to New Jersey. An Adolescent in Transition Workgroup was formed to gather information regarding a series of motions made by Task Force member Matthew Schwartz related to youth aging out of foster care. The Task Force also had in-depth discussions regarding its role and how it could become more useful to the DCF Commissioner as an advisory board as New Jersey moves toward a 21st century child welfare system. The Task Force bylaws were amended to change the formal Task Force meetings from bimonthly to quarterly and to remove the requirement that a committee or subcommittee chair be a member of the Task Force.

### Legislative Advocacy

At the NJTFCAN meetings, discussion around legislation important to the prevention of child abuse and neglect occurred. The following bills were discussed:

- **S2707 / A4403 (Ruiz, Madden / Lampitt, Vainieri Huttie, Armato)** – Establishes task force within DOE on prevention of sexual abuse of children;
- **S408 (Pennacchio, Ruiz)** – Directs school districts to establish policies and require training for employees on issues regarding child sexual abuse;
- **S1130 (Bucco, Ruiz)** – Requires school districts to incorporate age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades preschool through 12 as part of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education; and
- **S2489 (Perez-Cruz, Turner)** - Requires board of education to post information about child abuse hotline in each school.

## Training

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.

In 2018-2019, 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:

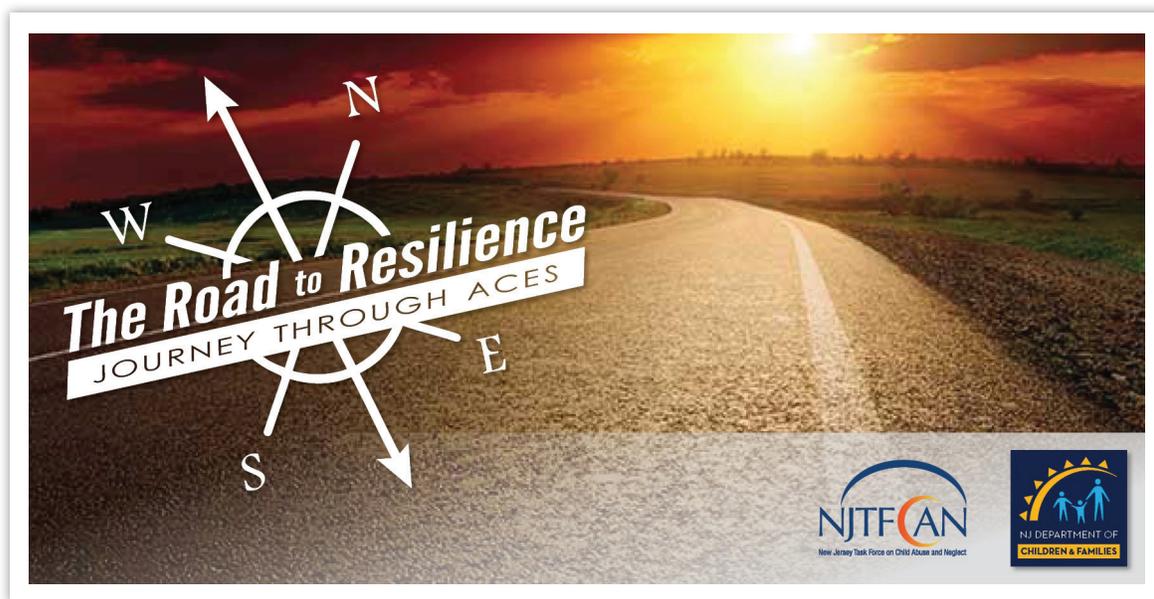
- **Finding Words** – New Jersey: Forensic Interviewing & Preparing Children for Court – This project trains frontline professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse to conduct effective and legally defensible interviews of alleged child sexual abuse victims of various ages 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.
- **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 2019 MDT training event was as follows:
  - **Child Abuse: Before, During, and After** – More than 125 professionals attended this day-long skill building event in which presenters discussed their own experiences with sexual assault, the intricacies of the Sexual Assault Survivors Protection Act, and sexually transmitted diseases. Featured speakers included Jenna and Kellie Quinn, Amelia Wachter-Smith, and Amelia Hamarman.

## Conferences

In addition to the training opportunities listed above, the NJTFCAN conducted two workshops in 2018 and 2019 to promote best practice in the prevention of child abuse and neglect:

- **Hidden Danger: Keeping Kids Safe on the Internet**  
NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, hosted a statewide multidisciplinary skill-building conference on Friday, September 14, 2018 for approximately 200 child protection professionals. This day-long skill building event featured keynote speaker, Dr. David Finkelhor, from the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. Topics included sexual solicitation, sexting, Internet safety and social media, cyber bullying and sextortion.
- **The Road to Resilience: Journey Through ACEs**  
NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, and with the logistical assistance of Stockton University, hosted a statewide conference for approximately 600 professionals in the field of child welfare on Friday, September 13, 2019 at the centrally located Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village (Princeton, NJ). Entitled, "The Road to Resilience: Journey Through ACEs," 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 on the topic of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), resiliency and healing-centered care. Speakers included Laura Porter, co-founder of ACE Interface, who discussed brain science and the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences; Amelia Franck Meyer, CEO of Alia Innovations, who spoke about trauma-informed, healing-centered practices; and Pat Stanislaski, Director of Partnering for Prevention, who presented on resilience. This conference represented the continuum of work regarding ACEs.



## CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & TREATMENT ACT

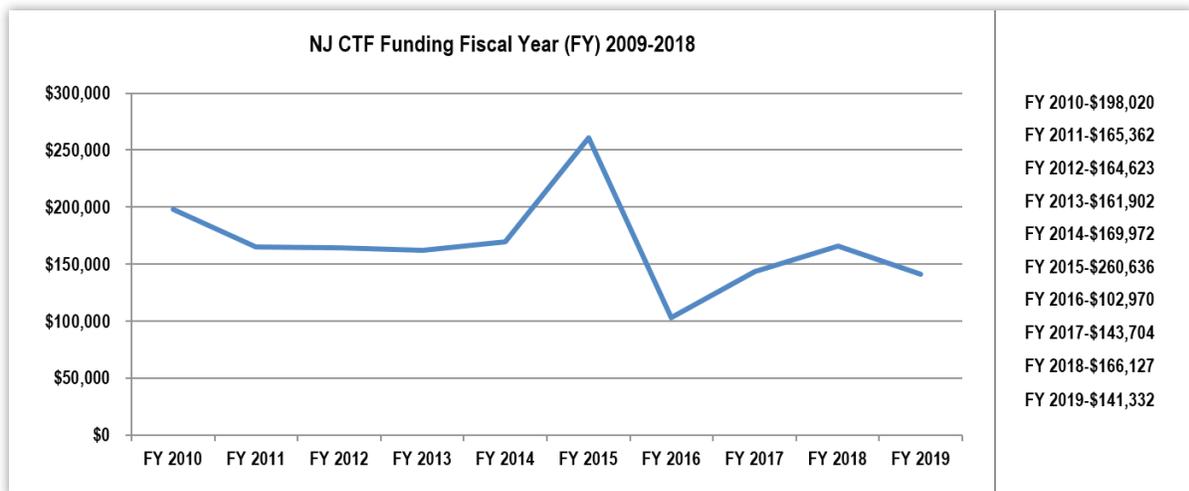
The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides CJA grants that are used to develop programs to reform state systems and improve states' responses to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect fatalities. The NJTFCAN is one of New Jersey's required Citizen Review Panels and provides feedback to DCF to enhance the Department's application for federal CAPTA grant dollars.

In New Jersey, 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 for 2018 to 2021, 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. The NJTFCAN receives, evaluates, and approves applications of public and private agencies and organizations for grants from moneys annually appropriated from the NJ CTF. 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. The NJ CTF is a non-lapsing fund, and any balance within the fund that is not appropriated by the end of a fiscal year shall carry forward into the next fiscal year. These re-appropriated funds, along with the charitable 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:



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 2018 - 2019, NJ CTF was involved with the following projects:

- **New Jersey Children's Trust Fund Marketing Campaign** - The Communication Committee of the NJTFCAN developed a multi-faceted, multi-modal campaign, leveraging several opportunities to engage NJ residents, corporate partners, the retail sales community and DCF staff in elevating the CTF. The campaign includes social media advertising, Point-of-Sale fundraising, corporate giving, and a DCF staff store, wherein 5% of the proceeds will go to the CTF. The Committee believes that this campaign is an iterative, planful way to expand awareness and participation in the NJ 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 an 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 and is currently in its final year of funding. 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.
- **Predict, Align, Prevent** - In July 2018, the NJTFCAN approved use of CTF funds to support primary prevention in NJ through a partnership with Predict, Align, Prevent, a Texas-based non-profit organization dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect by leveraging data on social determinants of abuse and neglect. By using geospatial predictive risk modeling, DCF will be able to identify high-risk places where child maltreatment and related fatalities are likely to occur in the future. Once these high-risk areas are identified, prevention resources will be mobilized precisely to where they will be the most effective. As a result, there should be a reduction in child abuse and neglect-related deaths, and contributory risk factors.

## 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, healing-centered 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 four in-person meetings between June 2018 and July 2019.

#### 2018 – 2021 NJ Statewide Prevention Plan

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. Throughout the remainder of 2018 and continuing into 2019, the Prevention Committee developed workgroups around each of the four strategic priorities to being the work of implementing the Prevention Plan. The following is a summary of the work conducted by these workgroups.

### Outreach and Engagement

The Outreach and Engagement Workgroup is charged with increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors in an effort to reduce adverse childhood experiences for all expectant parents, infants, children, youth and families. The workgroup has two goals:

- To increase coordination across infant, child, youth, and family-service systems and supports;
- To develop non-traditional partnerships to assist with primary prevention efforts.

Among other topics, the workgroup plans to discuss the review of key data points with the NJTFCAN, to request updates from DCF to understand their efforts regarding the Family First Prevention Services Act, and to request a presentation from the Department of Education on the NJ EASEL project, a cross-agency data hub. Furthermore, the workgroup will continue to support DCF efforts regarding messaging and embedding protective factors across the work of the Department.

### Evidence-Based/Evidence Informed Programs and Best Practices

The goal of the Evidence-based/Evidence-informed/Best practices Workgroup is to *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.* Objectives include advocating for evidence-based programs at each level of prevention; encouraging programs that are not evidence-based to, at minimum, collect quality data and follow research-based guidelines and standards to evaluate effectiveness; and promoting workforce access to training, coaching, and ongoing support to better align services with the Prevention Standards. To date, the workgroup has begun drafting a spreadsheet of evidence-based/evidence-informed/best practices in New Jersey.

### Infrastructure and Resources

The Infrastructure and Resources Workgroup has been working towards the goal of developing creative and sustainable strategies to increase funding for prevention programs that strengthen families and communities.

In order to address the specific goals and actions steps for this workgroup, members sought to review and evaluate CTF and DCF funding/spending and prevention program outcomes to determine where increases could occur, based on successful program outcomes. This includes:

- Gathering CTF program outcomes and prevention funding data for the past 5 years;
- Reviewing CTF funds spent on infrastructure & resources in the past 5 years;
- Reviewing DCF spending on prevention programming and infrastructure in the past 5 years;
- Researching federal funding streams to NJ for prevention programming in the past 5 years;
- Reviewing DCF cross-department collaborations for successful outcomes.

### Communication

The goal of the Communication Workgroup is to increase awareness of prevention messages and connect families with prevention supports and services. The Communications Workgroup has two objectives:

- To work with system partners to develop key primary prevention messages;
- To develop and implement diverse strategies for communication of prevention messages to families and partners.

The workgroup has been working with The National Child Abuse and Neglect Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center (CANTASD), a service of the Children's Bureau, on a NJ implementation of the WE CAN Campaign. The WE CAN campaign is a federal initiative that pushes out prevention messages using the popular social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. WE CAN stands for Work to End Child Abuse and Neglect. The campaign has more than 160 messages with corresponding images already formatted for social media. The workgroup is working with CANTASD to restructure the campaign to meet NJ's needs by doing the following:

- Change the campaign name to "WE CAN: Working to Empower, Connect, And Nurture";
- Insert NJ state and NJ DCF logos;
- Connect each message/image to a NJ-specific resource to support families.

At the completion of development of the images, messages, and resource links, the workgroup will be working on a marketing strategy with a goal of implementing the WE CAN campaign in NJ for April 2020 Child Abuse and Neglect month.

### Prevention Committee Membership

**Natasha Johnson, Chair**

**Niurca Louis, Vice Chair**

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Jeanne McMahon  
Director of Health & Family Support Programs  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

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

### Workgroups

#### Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup

In January 2018, the Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup surveyed public school districts in New Jersey regarding available programming to students and parents on the topics of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and Internet safety. Upon reviewing the compiled data, which contained survey responses from schools across all 21 counties, several data points were identified as potential areas for growth. At the time the survey was conducted, less than half of all respondents reported having curricula or programming within their school for students and/or parents around the topic of child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and Internet safety. Furthermore, approximately 40% of respondents who had programming, reported that their program did not have a parent component. Accordingly, the workgroup plans to focus on providing relevant information and resources to assist with parent education in this topic areas. Other data points the group aims to evaluate further include variances in programming among different grade bands (e.g., early elementary, late elementary, middle/intermediate, and high school) as well as differences within the different geographic/regional areas of the state (e.g., north, central, and south).

#### Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup

In The Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup was created to discuss and improve the procedures for handling criminal cases in the family courts regarding juveniles with sexually based offenses. The workgroup has discussed lack of clinical services in the State, with the resulting disparity in how juveniles are served. It was recommended that a clinician training program, similar to the one previously provided by the Juvenile Justice Committee be initiated. It was further recommended that clinicians partner with survivor organizations to develop a protocol for assessing juveniles for diversionary programs. The workgroup plans to develop a training program for clinicians to work with youth with sexually inappropriate behaviors. In addition, some members of the workgroup plan to meet with county prosecutors to discuss diversionary programs. The workgroup noted the recommendations for juveniles with sexually inappropriate behaviors by the Megan's Law Committee of the NJ Bar Association. The recommendations were submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts and to the New Jersey Task Force Protection Committee.

## Protection Committee Membership

**Richard Stagliano, Chair**  
**Liza Kirschenbaum, Vice-Chair**

Richard Stagliano  
President and CEO  
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Jacquelynn Duron, Ph.D., MSW, LCSW  
Social Work Researcher & Clinician  
Rutgers School of Social Work

Martin Krupnick, Psy.D.  
President and CEO  
IEP Youth Services, Inc.

Lisa Landsman  
Trainer  
New Jersey Welfare Training Partnership

## Communication Committee

The mission of the Communication Committee is to increase awareness and promote social change related to child abuse and neglect and its prevention and intervention. It is also tasked with raising awareness of NJTFCAN's activities and issues.

During 2018-19, the committee fulfilled this mission with the following initiatives:

- Promoted the NJ Children's Trust Fund (CTF) by emailing approximately 19,000 licensed accountants in the state to encourage CTF donations;
- Conducted an analysis of current CTF donations from the website and determined that social media outreach may generate more revenue;
- Worked in collaboration with the DCF Office of Communications and Public Affairs to create a 2019-20 CTF Marketing Campaign with the following components:
  - **Social Media Advertising** – Raising awareness and directing donors to the credit card online donation portal. A social media campaign manager will optimize reach to the various social media sites during a focused timeframe.
  - **Point-of-Sale Fundraising** – Coordinating CTF fundraising efforts through a voluntary contribution appended onto a retail purchase. The marketing campaign proposes utilizing retailers that may have assisted DCF programs in the past or retailers that are new to working with DCF, but may be interested in supporting the DCF mission.
  - **Corporate Giving** – With a letter drafted by the co-chairs of the NJTFCAN, reaching out for corporate assistance in the elevation of CTF and the strengthening of families across the state.
  - **DCF Logo Shop** – Overseeing the development of a DCF "Logo Shop," marketed exclusively to DCF employees to build morale, team spirit, and raise funds for the CTF.

## Communication Committee Membership

**Seetha Holmes, Chair**  
**Cheryl Mojta, Vice Chair**

Seetha Holmes, Esq.  
 Office of Public Defender

Cheryl Mojta  
 Director of Operations  
 NJ Child Assault Prevention

Matthew Schwartz  
 Youth Representative

Cristi Bruce  
 Learning Consultant

Lynn Patmalnee  
 Director of Communication & Development  
 umbrella (formerly Foster and Adoptive  
 Family Services)

Roslyn Dashiell, MBA  
 Executive Director  
 PEI Kids

Lesley Dixon  
 Montclair University

## 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:

During 2018-19, the committee fulfilled this mission with the following initiatives:

- 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 Legislature.

SORS attended to this charge by implementing and analyzing its staff survey as well as receiving comprehensive updates from DCF executive staff. SORS convened five times in 2018-2019, focusing on the following areas agreed upon in the previous work plan.

### 2018 – 2019 Priorities of the SORS

- Family First Prevention Services Act;
- Services and resource-availability to staff;
- DCF Children's System of Care;
- DCF Child and Family Services Plan;
- DCF Office of Training and Professional Development;
- Implementation of solution-based casework.

## Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) Membership

**Marygrace Billek, Chair**  
**Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair**

Marygrace Billek, MSSW  
 Human Services Director  
 Mercer County Department of  
 Human Services

Tosca Blandford-Bynoe, Esq.  
 Chief Deputy Attorney General  
 Division of Law and Public Safety

Lisa Chapland, Esq.  
 Kinship Resource Parent

Mary Coogan, Esq.  
 Advocates for Children of New Jersey

Carmen Diaz-Petti  
 Assistant Commissioner, DCP&P  
 Department of Children and Families

## **SORS Membership Continued**

Amy Fischer, MA  
Family Division Manager  
Monmouth Vicinage  
Administrative Office of the Courts

Mary Hallahan, M.Ed. L.  
Foster Parent

Corinne LeBaron, MSS  
Chief Executive Officer  
embrella (formerly Foster and Adoptive  
Family Services)

Lori V. Morris, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
LifeTies, Inc.

Linda Porcaro, M.A.  
Director Office of Youth Services  
Somerset County

Jeyanthi Rajaraman, Esq.  
Chief Counsel  
Legal Services of NJ

Matthew Schwartz  
Nonprofit Management

Angie Waters  
CASA Atlantic/Cape May

Robyn Veasey, Esq.  
Deputy Public Defender  
Office of the Public Defender

Honorable Joseph Vitale  
Senator, District 19  
Designee: Stephanie Albanese

### **Staff**

Dawn M. Marlow, MSW  
Federal Reporting Coordinator  
Department of Children and Families