

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

# **Fourth Annual Report**

Proceedings and Findings for the period of July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014





# Co-Chairs, New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Honorable Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W. Commissioner Department of Children and Families

Martin A. Finkel, DO, FACOP, FAAP Professor of Pediatrics Medical Director Child Abuse Research Education Services (CARES) Institute

# New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Members

#### **Ex-Officio Members**

Honorable Richard E. Constable, III, Esq. Commissioner Department of Community Affairs

Designee: Pending

Gerald J. Council, PJ Superior Court Judge Mercer County Courthouse Designee: Alfred Federico

Charles W. Dortch, Jr., JSC Superior Court Judge Camden County Hall of Justice Family Division

Designee: Stephanie E. Petrillo

Colonel Joseph R. Fuentes Superintendent State Police Designee: Joseph Glennan

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Honorable John Jay Hoffman Acting Attorney General Department of Law and Public Safety Division of Law

Designee: Lauren Carlton

Joseph Krakora Public Defender Office of the Public Defender Designee: Lorraine M. Augostini

Honorable Gary M. Lanigan Commissioner Department of Corrections Designee: Marisol Lloyd

Carolyn Murray Acting Essex County Prosecutor Essex County Prosecutor's Office Designee: Mark Ali

Honorable Mary E. O'Dowd, MPH Commissioner Department of Health Designee: Gloria M. Rodriguez

Honorable Jennifer Velez Commissioner Department of Human Services Designee: Natasha Johnson

#### Senate Members

Honorable Shirley Turner Senator, District 15 Designee: Shabnam Salih

Senate Member Pending

### **Assembly Members**

Pending

### New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Members

#### **Public Members**

Diana Autin, Esq. Executive Co-Director Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

Rhona Beadle Executive Director Ginnie's House

Marygrace Billek, LCSW, LCADC Director Mercer County Department of Human Services

James Chester\*\*
Director of Support Services
Foster & Adoptive Family Services

Kathy Collins, LCSW Executive Director Monmouth Cares

Maura Somers Dughi, Esq. Child and Family Advocate

Rita M. Gulden, MSW Executive Director Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Jersey

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Cynthia VanBrunt Executive Director Court Appointed Special Advocates of Monmouth County

Youth Representative Pending Cecilia Zalkind, Esq. Executive Director Advocates for Children of NJ

#### Staff

Ifeanyi Pole Acting Executive Coordinator New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

\*Resigned
\*\*Former Member
\*\*\* Deceased

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### **Table of Contents**

introau	C110n	2
	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act	2
	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act	3
		J
Task Fo	orce Proceedings	4
Summo	ary of Activities – 2013-2014	4
Mork o	f the Task Force Committees	6
WOIK		
	Prevention Committee	6
	Recommendation to the Department of Children and Families	7
	Protection Committee	7
	Communication Committee	7
	Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)	
Task Fo	orce Committee/Subcommittee Membership	
	Prevention Committee	9
	Protection Committee	10
	Communication Committee	11
	Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)	12

### Introduction

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

The purpose of the Task Force, 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 utilized by Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P), formerly the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), and Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), formerly the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in order to:

- 1) Optimize coordination of child abuse related services and investigations;
- 2) Promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- 3) Ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- 4) Educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- 5) Develop a statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in coordination with FCP;
- 6) Mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect; and
- 7) Foster cooperative working relationships between state and local agencies responsible for providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect and their families.
- 8) Serve as one of DCF's federally mandated Citizen Review Panels.

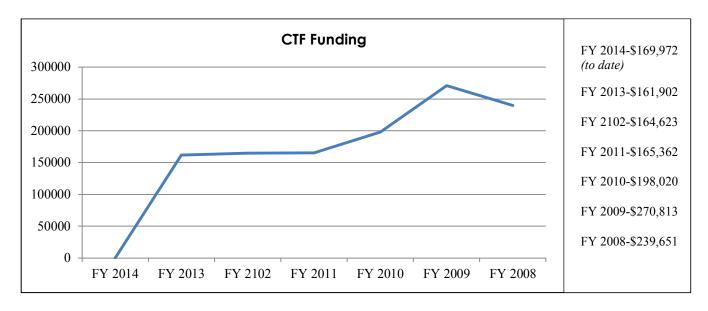
# **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act**

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 Task Force 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.

### Children's Trust Fund

The New Jersey Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is a private/public partnership created by law in 1985 to fund child abuse and neglect prevention programs in New Jersey communities. CTF mainly receives funds primarily from donations made by residents via a check box on New Jersey state income tax forms. Private donors also make contributions. Any unspent balances from a previous fiscal year are automatically re-appropriated into the next fiscal year. These re-appropriated funds, along with the actual collections for the fiscal year, comprise the funding that supports the contracts being funded with the CTF collections. Below are CTF's collections for each fiscal year under DCF:



The CTF supports local child abuse and neglect prevention programs that implement evidence-based and evidence-informed programs. The funding priority for the current funding cycle (through 6/30/14), established by the Task Force, is to promote positive parent-child attachment and support infant and early childhood mental-health programs. Grants were awarded in 2011 through a competitive process and the following program recipients were funded for a three-year cycle:

<u>Incredible Parents! Incredible Kids!</u> – This research-based prevention program targeting children and their parents is run by Family Connections Inc. It serves approximately 50-55 children and parents in Newark and Essex County. Core performance outcomes include the following:

- Children will demonstrate an increase in positive social skills as measured by the Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Subscale social skills composite score.
- Parents of preschoolers, toddlers, and babies will indicate confidence in managing current child behavior in the home, on their own, to be measured by parent questionnaires.

<u>Positive Parenting-Padres Positivos</u> – This program targets at-risk, low-income Spanish and English-speaking immigrant Latino and refugee parents with preschool children from ages two-and-a-half to five. This program is run by the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County and serves approximately 75 parents and 150 children annually. Core performance outcomes include increases in family functioning, nurturing, and attachment.

<u>Triple P-Positive Parenting Program</u> – This program is run by South Jersey Healthcare and targets Cumberland County, specifically the cities of Bridgeton, Millville, and Vineland and serves approximately 85-100 parents annually. Core performance outcomes include a decrease in children's conduct problems and an increase in children's positive social behavior.

# **Task Force Proceedings**

The Task Force meets bimonthly. These meetings provide the Task Force with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. Supporting the work of the Task Force are four committees and one subcommittee, which also meet bimonthly and report the results of their activities to the Task Force. There are approximately 80 individuals that contribute to this important work. To view a copy of meeting minutes, visit <a href="http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/nitfcan/">http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/nitfcan/</a>

# Summary of Activities - 2013 to 2014

Each year, the Task Force sponsors multidisciplinary training programs to improve the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. All Task Force-sponsored professional training programs are child-focused and designed to promote skills that prevent additional trauma to child victims 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:

A. Finding Words – New Jersey: Forensic Interviewing & Preparing Children for Court – The goal of this project is to train 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.

To date, over 1,530 professionals involved in investigating child sexual abuse have been trained in Finding Words-NJ

B. Conferences – On September 20, 2013, the Task Force, in collaboration with DCF, hosted its full-day Biennial Conference for over 500 child protection professionals. The conference, entitled, "Transitions: From Infancy to Adulthood," featured keynote speaker, Charlyn Harper Browne, PhD, Senior

Conference – September 20, 2013

Transitions: From Infancy to Adulthood Atlantic City, New Jersey

Associate and QIC-EC Project Director at the Center for the Study of Social Policy. This event focused on building professional knowledge and collaborative partnerships to improve the effectiveness of New Jersey's child -maltreatment protection and prevention efforts and sought to encourage working relationships among volunteers and professionals in prevention, protective services, health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice to create child- and family-focused systems.



2013 New Jersey Taskforce Biennial Conference, "Transitions: From Infancy to Adulthood"

The Task Force is currently preparing for its skill-building conference on trauma-informed care in September 2014.

C. Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Training – CJA funds are 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. This year's conference, entitled, "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – A Training for Child Abuse Professionals," was held on June 6, 2013, for 227 attendees. This conference featured morning keynote speaker Gigi Mei Lan Scoles, Assistant Prosecutor in Essex County and Intermittent Legal Advisor on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice and afternoon presenter Holly Smith, a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation and an advocate.

An additional training entitled, "Best Practice Guidelines for Multidisciplinary Teams," was held on October 3, 2013, at the Robert Wood Johnson Conference Center in Mercerville, New Jersey for 120 professionals: detectives, caseworkers, assistant prosecutors, mental health and medical professionals, and victim advocates. The full day training consisted of a discussion and updates in MDT best practices regarding child abuse investigation, prosecution, child protection, medical and mental health services and victim advocates. John Esmerado, Assistant Prosecutor, Union County Child Advocacy Center was the primary presenter. Attendees reviewed their discipline's roles and responsibilities with reference to agency mandates and essential practices. The training concluded with a mock MDT case review presented by the Monmouth County MDT. The review presented steps in the investigation and advocacy on behalf of the victim both by child protection and law enforcement; and ultimately by prosecution.

### **Work of the Task Force Committees**

#### **Prevention Committee**

The Prevention Committee of the Task Force coordinates the efforts of stakeholders with expertise in and a commitment to family support and the prevention of all forms of child maltreatment. It is the responsibility of the Prevention Committee to ensure the development and implementation of a meaningful and effective Statewide Prevention Plan.

Accomplishments for the past year include:

- The New Jersey Standards for Prevention: Building Success through Family Support (Standards), originally developed in 2003, has been reviewed, revised, and approved by the Task Force. This is the culmination of an eighteen-month process to review the original Standards:
  - The Standards include the History of the document, the Importance of Prevention, the Intended Purpose of the Standards, and Definitions of Prevention and Risk and Protective Factors.
  - o The Standards for Prevention cover Practice with Families, Practice with Communities, and Administrative Standards. The Standards are accompanied by an Evaluation Rubric that allows families, researchers, funders, providers, administrators, communities, and policy makers to measure a program's compliance with best practice.
- The New Jersey Statewide Prevention Plan, Supporting Strong Families and Communities in New Jersey: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2014-2017 (Plan) has been completed and approved by the Task Force. A wide range of public and private partners—participated in the development of this Plan. Approximately 485 parents representing New Jersey's diverse population provided feedback and recommendations that helped to shape the plan.

On April 28, 2014, a
public community event
was held to present
Standards for Prevention:
Building Success
Through Family Support
and the New Jersey
Statewide Prevention
Plan 2014-2017.

#### The Plan's five strategic goals:

- 1. Communication
- 2. Early Outreach and Engagement
- 3. Partnerships
- 4. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed Programs and Best Practices
- 5. Infrastructure and Resources

The Plan has been a collaborative project of DCF's FCP and the Prevention Committee of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. Public and private agencies will share in the Plan's implementation.

To view the Standards for Prevention: Building Success through Family Support and the New Jersey Statewide Prevention Plan 2014-2017, visit http://ni.gov/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/taskforce/nitfca\_reports.html.

The Prevention Committee facilitated presentations by the DCF's FCP at committee meetings. This
has included information on family success centers, home visiting, central intake, and data
collection.

### Prevention Committee Recommendation to the Department of Children and Families

The Prevention Committee recommends incorporation of measurable outcomes and strategies into all programs and services funded by the DCF's Family and Community Partnerships.

#### **Protection Committee**

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

During the course of the past year, the committee had three active workgroups:

- The Human-Trafficking Workgroup discussed a multi-disciplinary approach as a basis for establishing best practice guidelines for treating juvenile human trafficking victims.
- The Data-Collection Workgroup studied various data sources and how each entity defines sexual and physical abuse.
- The Batterers' Accountability Work Group is researching the policy considerations and practice of prosecuting domestic violence cases by the State's prosecutors' offices.

#### Communication Committee

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

Major activities for 2013-2014:

- Establishing the scope and responsibilities relative to the needs of the Task Force and other committees.
  - Developed a mechanism to explore the needs of other committees regarding collaboration on communication.
  - Collaborate with the Prevention Committee on marketing the 2014 NJ Statewide Prevention Plan.
- Created and began implementation of the Task Force's media plan:
  - o Produced the Annual Task Force Report
  - o Creating a brand and logo for the Task Force
  - o Developing plans for a Task Force calendar and web page
  - o To identify and align with potential partners

### Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

The SORS is charged by legislation with oversight of two critical areas:

- 1. Staffing issues within DCP&P, including staffing levels, caseload size, staff recruitment, training and retention; and
- 2. Outcomes for children and families.

SORS is also required to submit an annual report directly to the New Jersey Legislature on the work it does around staffing and outcomes. To view this report, please visit <a href="http://nj.gov/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/taskforce/njtfca">http://nj.gov/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/taskforce/njtfca</a> reports.html

Over the past year, SORS has identified the following as priorities:

- Parent/child and sibling visitation;
- Educational stability, particularly the quality and consequences of educational decisions; and
- Staff training and retention in regard to measured outcomes of the current training curriculum.

Activities and accomplishments for 2013-2014 include:

- Education Stability Presentation by Michele Safrin;
- A comprehensive review of the Educational Stability Act to identify which aspects of the Act are working, and which are not; A presentation on the quality review process, including the development and implementation of any program improvement plan that is deemed necessary;
- The development of the second SORS staff survey, including a review of the last survey and discussions on how the new survey should be administered;
- A review of the DCF Training Academy coursework to help inform the survey development; And
- Ongoing review of visitation statistics to evaluate the challenges surrounding competent data to access the results.

Some of the priority areas for SORS in the upcoming year include:

- Completing, implementing, and reviewing a staff survey;
- Reviewing the complications of educational stability; and
- Analyzing the reality of visitation for children and their siblings in New Jersey and seeking ways to advocate for increased accountability for this service.

# **Task Force Committees/Subcommittee Membership**

### **Prevention Committee**

Maura Somers Dughi, Esq., Chair Diana Autin, Esq., Vice-Chair

Nina Agrawal, MD, FAAP Hackensack University Medical Center

Diana Autin, Esq.
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Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

Christine Baker, PhD
Clinical Director
Metro Regional
Diagnostic & Treatment Center
Newark Beth Israel Medical Center

Maureen Braun-Scalera
Director
Rutgers University School of Social Work
Institute for Families
Office of Child Welfare Initiatives

Jeannette Collins Director of Program and Curricula Child Assault Prevention

Suzanne Conrad, MA, RN, LPC Consultant

Diane Dellanno Policy Analyst Advocates for Children of New Jersey

Anthony DiFabio, PsyD Chief Executive Officer Robins Nest, Inc.

Maura Somers Dughi, Esq. Child and Family Advocacy

Gina Hernandez, MA Division Director of Prevention Prevent Child Abuse-NJ Alice Hunnicutt
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Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Natasha Johnson, MSW
Deputy Director
New Jersey Department of Human Services
Division of Family Development

Cheryl Mojta
Director of Operations
NJ Child Assault Prevention Program

Natasha Palmer\*
Educational Stability Specialist
Department of Education

Gloria Rodriguez, DSW Assistant Commissioner Department of Health

Kathleen Roe Executive Director Parents Anonymous of NJ

Rush Russell Executive Director Prevent Child Abuse-NJ

Pat Stanislaski Director Partnering for Prevention, LLC

Mary Tovar Chief of Staff NJ Department of Agriculture

Lisa von Pier\*\*
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Family
and Community Partnerships
Department of Children and Families

- \* Resigned
- \*\* Former Member

### **Protection Committee**

Mark Ali, Esa., Chair Liza Kirschenbaum, Esq., Vice-Chair

Mark Ali, Esq. Director SVU

Essex County Prosecutor's Office

Suzanne Alvino

Assistant Director of Case Practice Department of Children and Families Division of Child Protection & Permanency

Greta Anderson

Director of Investigation

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Susan H. Curcio, Esq. Montclair State University Center for Child Advocacy & Policy

John Esmerado, Esq. Assistant Prosecutor Union County Prosecutor's Office

Dr. Martin A. Finkel Medical Director Child Abuse Research Education & Service (CARES) Institute

Rosalie Jones MDT Coordinator

DSC Victim Witness Unit/Child Abuse MDT

Coordinator

Camden County Prosecutor's Office

Liza Kirschenbaum, Esa. Associate Director Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Jersey

Cynthia Lischick, PhD, LPC, DVS Director of Psychological Health NJ National Guard Family Programs

James Louis, Esq. Deputy Public Defender Office of the Public Defender Office of Law Guardian

Leslie Malkin, Esa. Community & Program Education Administrator NJ Coalition for Battered Women

Angela Melchionna Deputy Attorney General Department of Law and Public Safety

Clinton Page, Esq. Director of Legal Affairs Department of Children and Families

Susan Rekedal, LCSW Monmouth County Child Advocacy Center Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office

Judy L. Spinney, LCSW Therapist

Cynthia VanBrunt Executive Director Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Jersey

### Communication Committee

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**Executive Director** Case Manager, Warren County Ginnie's House Supported Work Program

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

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Monmouth Cares Director of Operations NJ Child Assault Prevention Program

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Debra Jennings\* Pat Stanislaski\* Executive Co-Director Director Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc. Partnering for Prevention, LLC

Ernest Landante Director Department of Children and Families

Office of Communications and Public Affairs

### Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

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Honorable Allison Blake, PhD, LSW Commissioner Department of Children and Families

Elizabeth Bowman
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Children and Families
Office of Performance Management
and Accountability

Lauren Carlton Assistant Attorney General Department of Law and Public Safety

James Chester – 2/2014\*\*
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Foster & Adoptive Family Services

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Mary Hallahan, MEdL Resource Parent

Debra Jennings\*
Executive Co-Director
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc.

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Lisa Nemeth
Deputy Attorney General
Division of Law and Public Safety

Nancy Parello Communications Director Advocates for Children of NJ

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