



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect



NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT

Proceedings and Findings for the period of July 2014 - June 2015

STATE OF NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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***Former Member*

**** Deceased*

Note: All members listed, status of membership, job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2015.

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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.

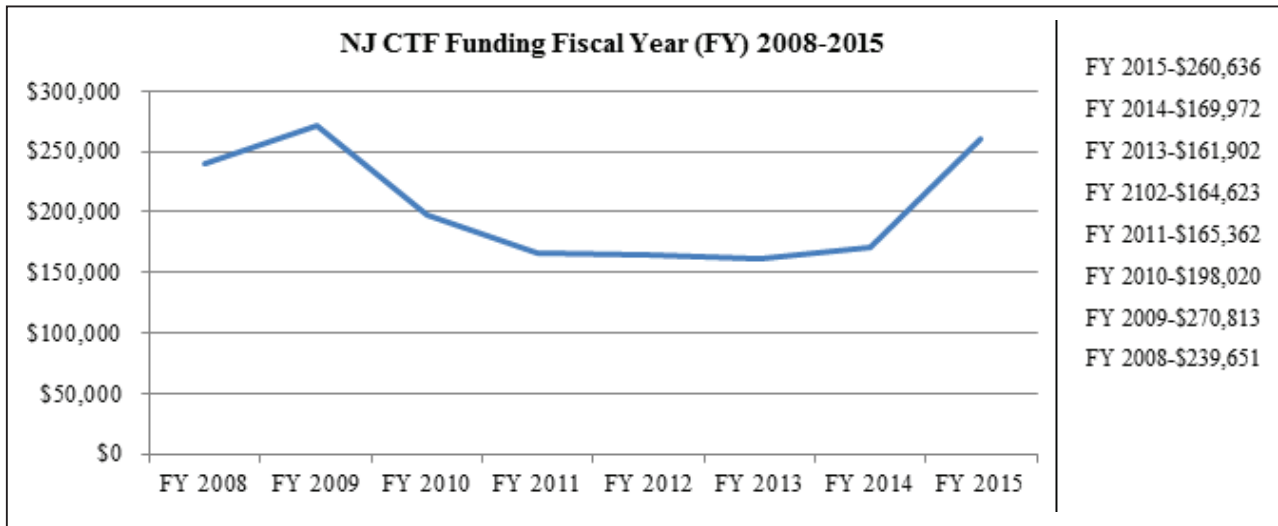
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

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.

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 unspent balances from a previous fiscal year are automatically reappropriated into the next fiscal year. 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. Below are NJ CTF's collections for each fiscal year under DCF:



The NJ CTF supports local child abuse and neglect prevention programs that implement evidence-based and evidence-informed programs. Funding priority established by the NJTFCAN for the 2011 through 2014 grant cycle promoted positive parent-child attachment and supported infant and early childhood mental-health programs. Grants were awarded in 2011 through a competitive process and the following program recipients completed their three-year funded cycle on June 30, 2014:

Incredible Parents! Incredible Kids! – This research-based prevention program was run by Family Connections Inc. It served children and parents in Newark and Essex County. Core performance outcomes included the following:

- Children 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 indicate confidence in managing current child behavior in the home, on their own, to be measured by parent questionnaires.

Level of Service from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014:

- 77 parents enrolled, 62 completed
- 222 students enrolled, 216 completed

Positive Parenting-Padres Positivos – This program targeted 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 was run by the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County and served approximately 75 parents and 150 children annually. Core performance outcomes included increases in family functioning, nurturing, and attachment.

Level of Service from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014:

- 205 parents enrolled, 155 completed
- 152 parents participated in individual parent consultation
- 488 students enrolled, 488 completed

Triple P-Positive Parenting Program – This program was run by South Jersey Healthcare and targeted Cumberland County, specifically the cities of Bridgeton, Millville, and Vineland and served approximately 85-100 parents annually. Core performance outcomes included a decrease in children's conduct problems and an increase in children's positive social behavior.

Level of Service from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014:

- 278 parents enrolled, 222 completed

DCF's Division of Family and Community Partnership (FCP) staff developed the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the next NJ CTF grant awards; these NJ CTF grants will be awarded through a competitive RFP process. The NJTFCAN established that the programs and initiatives funded by the next NJ CTF funding cycle will:

- Support the strategic goals and objectives of the Statewide Prevention Plan, "Supporting Strong Families and Communities: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2014-2017";
- Reflect the Standards of Prevention: Strengthening Families through Family Support.

Additionally, NJ CTF funds were approved by the Task Force in 2015 to pay for a staff member for one year for DCF's "Improving Outcomes for Families of Infants and Young Children in Newark: Integrating Best Practices in Child Welfare and Early Childhood." This collaborative project is a strategic partnership between the divisions of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) and FCP:

- The goal is to strengthen families through engagement and teaming to decrease risk factors and increase Protective Factors for families of infants and young children.
- Families in the target group include young parent(s), 18-30 years old, with at least one child, birth to age five, referred to one of the three CP&P Local Offices in Newark for child abuse and neglect concerns. Families in the target group have no immediate safety concerns or reasons for court involvement, however there are elevated concerns about the risk of child maltreatment.
- Objectives for the initiative include 1) staff development, 2) enhanced assessment, planning, and service access, and 3) systems integration and coordination.

The first phase of the initiative is expected to conclude in the spring of 2016 with a report and recommendations for next steps from DCF and Rutgers University.

NJTFCAN PROCEEDINGS

Bimonthly meetings provide NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. Supporting the work of NJTFCAN are three committees: Protection, Prevention and Communication and one subcommittee: Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee, which also meet bimonthly and report the results of their activities to NJTFCAN. There are approximately 80 individuals that contribute to this important work. To view a copy of meeting minutes, visit www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2014 - 2015

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 child victims and their families.

Children's Justice Act (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 1,700 professionals involved in investigating child sexual abuse have been trained in

Finding Words-NJ

A. *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.

B. *Conferences* – The NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, hosted a statewide multidisciplinary skill-building conference on September 30, 2014 at DCF's Professional Center for over 300 child protection professionals as part of a 2014-2015 Series on Trauma Informed Care. Dr. Bruce Perry was the keynote speaker for this event and spoke on, "Neurodevelopment, Trauma and its Effects on the Brain." Dr. Perry's presentation at the 2014 skill-building conference:



2014 New Jersey NJTFCAN Skill-Building Conference, "Neurodevelopment, Trauma and its Effects on the Brain" featuring Dr. Bruce Perry

- Provided an overview of key principles of neurodevelopment crucial for understanding the role of experience in defining functional and physical organization of the brain;
- Described the emerging clinical and research findings in maltreated children that suggest the negative impact of abuse, neglect and trauma on brain development;
- Outlined the clinical implications of a neurodevelopmental approach to child maltreatment;
- Discussed the role of public policy and preventative practices in context of the impact of maltreatment on children's emotional, behavioral, cognitive, social and physical health.

The NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF and with the logistical assistance of Rutgers University, Office of Continuing Professional Education, is hosting its 14th Biennial Conference for professionals in the field of child welfare on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick, NJ entitled, "Kinship Care and Family Connections." This interdisciplinary, statewide conference will provide the target audience an opportunity to learn from experts in child welfare/protection issues and disciplines serving children and families. The keynote speaker for this event will be Dr. Joseph Crumbley, Trainer, Consultant and Therapist.

NJTFCAN Biennial Conference September 9, 2015

*Kinship Care and Family Connections
New Brunswick, New Jersey*

C. 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 2014 MDT trainings events were as follows:

- ***The MDT Approach to Challenging Issues in Child Maltreatment*** - June 5, 2014 – More than 222 professionals attended a conference held at the Sheraton Eatontown in Eatontown, New Jersey. Attendees included: prosecutors, law enforcement, child protective service workers, medical professionals, mental health professionals, victim advocates, CAC Directors, MDT Coordinators, RDTC professionals, guidance counselors. Presenters included Barbara Bonner, Ph.D., of Oklahoma University and Scott Modell, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Each presenter spoke at a morning plenary session and each conducted two concurrent afternoon sessions.
- ***MDT Approach to Recantation: Best Practices*** - September 18, 2014 - 81 professionals attended the training held at the RWJ Conference Center in Mercerville, New Jersey. Attendees included detectives, mental health professionals, DAG, prosecutors, DCP&P caseworkers, victim-witness, family advocates, student interns, and MDT coordinators. Professionals from RDTCs and CACs were present and attendees came from 15 New Jersey counties. Presenters included Sarah Frietes, Chair, NJMDTCA; Evelyn Mejil, Board President, NJCA, Joe DelRusso, Former Chief Assistant Prosecutor, SVU, Passaic County, Peter Boser, Assistant Prosecutor Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, Sue Rekedal, MDT Coordinator, Monmouth County, Anne Lynn, Project Director Northeast Regional CAC, Chris Freid, Chief Assistant Prosecutor, SVU, Passaic County, and Victoria Galinski, Deputy Attorney General, Northern Region.

Cultural Competence in Interviewing and Treating Child Abuse Victims Conference - May 7, 2015 – This conference was held at the Sheraton Eatontown in Eatontown, New Jersey for approximately 300 child protection professionals. Presenters included: Lisa Aronson Fontes, Ph.D., Joseph DeRusso, JD, Michele Friel Mullen, LCSW, Janet Fine, MS, Penny Paparteys, DVS, and Michele Fesler, MS. Social work CEUs were provided by the Monmouth University School of Social Work Professional Education Program (PEP) and are recognized by the New Jersey State Board of Social Work Examiners. Also, this conference offered New Jersey CLE credits under the approved provider status of the Camden County Prosecutor's Office.

WORK OF THE NJTFCAN COMMITTEES

Bimonthly meetings provide NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. Supporting the work of NJTFCAN are three committees: Protection, Prevention and Communication and one subcommittee: Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee, which also meet bimonthly and report the results of their activities to NJTFCAN. There are approximately 80 individuals that contribute to this important work. To view a copy of meeting minutes, visit www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/.

Prevention Committee

The Prevention Committee 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.

The Prevention Committee held six regularly scheduled meetings and hosted numerous workgroup conference calls from 2014 through 2015. The Committee's work continues to be guided by the New Jersey Statewide Prevention Plan, "Supporting Strong Families and Communities in New Jersey: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2014-2017," and the New Jersey Standards for Prevention: Building Success through Family Support (2014). Activities were focused on three primary areas:

1. *New Jersey Children's Trust Fund*: alignment and recommendation consistent with the Prevention Plan and Standards;
2. *The Prevention Plan*: promoting family, community, provider and state agency engagement; and
3. *Standards for Prevention*: dissemination, training and utilization of the Standards.

I. New Jersey Children's Trust Fund (NJ CTF)

In conjunction with Division of Family and Community Partnership (FCP) staff and DCF Ethics Liaison Officer, the Prevention Committee reviewed the statutory language and the NJTFCAN By-Laws to ensure the NJ CTF grant process is aligned with NJTFCAN guidelines and federal government requirements. The DCF Ethics Liaison Officer provided training on the state's ethics requirements concerning conflicts of interest and

recusal as they pertain to the NJ CTF Request for Proposals (RFP). Based on this information, all future RFPs will be drafted by FCP staff. It is the recommendation of the Prevention Committee, on behalf of the Task Force, that the NJ CTF RFP be consistent with the Standards for Prevention Programs and the five (5) priorities identified in the Statewide Prevention Plan.

FCP requested support from the Prevention Committee for a proposal for NJ CTF funding to be used for a pilot project, "Improving Outcomes for Families of Infants and Young Children in Newark: Integrating Best Practices in Child Welfare and Early Childhood." This collaborative project between FCP and DCF's Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) involves three Essex County Local Offices and Newark Central Intake. The project will work with families with infants, young children and pregnant women who are frequently encountered by CP&P by strengthening system integration and service linkages that best meet family needs before children have been abused and/or neglected. After consideration of the project summary and logic model, and a commitment on the part of FCP to provide regular updates on implementation progress and outcomes, the Prevention Committee recommended approval by NJTFCAN. NJTFCAN voted to approve the project which began in April 2015. Child welfare staff and early childhood partners in Essex County have been trained on the Protective Factors. The NJ CTF funding is for a designated staff person in Newark to supervise and coordinate this initiative. The staff person will attend Prevention Committee meetings and provide quarterly reports.

II. Prevention Plan

The Prevention Plan is based on five key strategic priorities: Early Outreach and Engagement, Partnerships, Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Best Practices, Infrastructure and Resources, and Communication. It also identifies several areas for additional research and focus: young children, children with disabilities, children in families facing alcohol and substance abuse and/or domestic violence issues, and child sexual abuse.

A major goal for 2014-2015 was to engage constituents beyond the Prevention Committee and FCP in understanding, utilizing and implementing the Prevention Plan. Select members of the Prevention Committee are designated "point persons" for each strategic priority and goal. They are charged with engaging identified staff from other state agencies to facilitate the integration of the Prevention Plan and Standards into their respective work. Interview questions were drafted by Committee members and they are interviewing key state agency leaders. The projected outcome is heightened awareness of the effectiveness of prevention and dedicated prevention resources, and collaborations across departments and disciplines.

To date, specific outreach was made to related early childhood partners and providers as well as other state agencies including Department of Health, Department of Education, Medicaid, Department of Children and Families' Children's System of Care, Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development and Division of Disability Services, as well as existing state initiatives such as Race to the Top. This Communication Plan and strategy is an ongoing and continuing work in progress.

III. Standards for Prevention

A contract was awarded by DCF to develop online training that can be used by all DCF funded prevention programs as well as other prevention providers. Two webinar trainings were offered:

1. *Standards for Prevention Programs*: Overview 101
2. *Standards for Prevention Programs*: Practical Application for Administrators, an advanced webinar designed for staff that will be completing the prevention assessment tool.

The capacity for each webinar was 200 participants. Both trainings were given twice and filled to capacity. More than 71 different agencies participated. The interactive webinar was recorded and archived for continued access and is posted on DCF's website. Quarterly reports will be sent to DCF on who accessed the training.

The Prevention Committee continues to discuss strategies and resources to expand training and assessment of the Standards for Prevention beyond staff of agencies funded by FCP, including grantees of all divisions of DCF as well as relevant staff of grantees of other state agencies engaged in prevention and family support/family strengthening activities. The Prevention Committee strongly recommends that the Department of Children and Families require in future DCF and FCP contracts that providers demonstrate implementation of and compliance with the Standards for Prevention.

The Prevention Plan and New Jersey Prevention standards can be viewed on the Department of Children and Families' website at:

www.nj.gov/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/taskforce/njtfca_reports.html.

Prevention Committee Recommendation to the NJ 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 (FCP).

Protection Committee

The Protection Committee is comprised of members of NJTFCAN 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 workgroups:

- The *Human Trafficking Workgroup* produced and forwarded to NJTFCAN, its recommended Human Trafficking County Task Force Guidelines. This document encourages multi-disciplinary collaboration to occur at the county level with regard to trafficking. It covers prevention, response, and ongoing services to survivors, and highlights the importance of inclusion of law enforcement in this work.

- The *Data Collection Workgroup* worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts and DCF to understand the differences in abuse/neglect statistics released by each entity. Overall, the finding is that the differences are not of substance, but rather in the categorization of cases as they move through the processes of both systems. For instance, DCF may report a higher number of child abuse cases than the Judiciary, but that is because some cases do not rise to the level of requiring adjudication of the allegations or criminal proceedings. The workgroup chair has provided one summary presentation of the work done. A brief written summary and presentation are expected in the next reporting period.
- The (domestic violence) *Batterers' Accountability Workgroup* reviewed and tabled a survey it was considering issuing. Several presentations were delivered by those working in the field to the workgroup and even the full Committee with regard to current practice addressing Batterer Accountability in New Jersey; at least one group member attended training provided to CP&P staff on this issue. At the present time, the workgroup and the Committee as a whole are assessing any future direction for this workgroup.

The Committee has added several new members during the year. The names of several non-participating committee members have been forwarded to the NJTFCAN with the recommendation that these individuals – who did not respond to outreach about their continued participation – be removed from the Committee roster.

For the coming year, the Committee has decided to consider the issue of sexually exploitative images of children as it relates to the field of child protective services. Little is in the literature about this issue, yet national data indicates it is growing in prevalence. A presentation from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and U.S. Attorney's Office will serve as the Committee's introduction to this issue.

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 NJTFCAN's activities and issues.

A major goal for the NJTFCAN has been the creation of a logo to increase awareness and visibility of the Task Force's initiatives. This goal was achieved within the period of this report. Committee members worked with a skilled graphic designer at Graphic Image, Inc. in Hackettstown, New Jersey. The final logo, "NJTFCAN", is the acronym of the Task Force and represents its function as a team of child welfare professionals that develop recommendations on improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services. The color blue in the logo was used as it is a national standard color in child protective services. Finally, the final letters of the logo are slightly bolder to represent the positive, forward-moving trajectory of the child-welfare field as a result of the NJTFCAN's efforts. Below is the NJTFCAN's logo, which is also referenced on the cover of this annual report:



With the launch of the NJTFCAN logo, the Communication Committee is redeveloping the webpages to include not only the new logo but also a new design that will be visually stimulating as well as informational. The Committee is also exploring the NJTFCAN's presence on social media.

In this timeframe, the Communication Committee also developed a proposal for a child welfare related calendar that would serve as an internet resource that lists all activities, trainings and highlights that occur in a given timeframe. The myriad of professionals in the field in the State of New Jersey would have one location to identify training opportunities and related activities, with links to the descriptions and registration pages. The NJTFCAN has discussed the proposal and is currently researching the best way to include this type of information in an appropriate internet location.

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 the following actions in 2014 - 2015. The subcommittee received comprehensive presentations and/or updates from DCF executive staff around the scope, work, and strategic priorities from the following:

- DCF Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P)
- DCF Office of Training and Professional Development (OTPD)
- DCF Office of the Commissioner
- Additional presentation from staff at Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ)

In its work this year, SORS continued to prioritize issues for discussion which met its legislative charge and to which the committee believed it could add value. In July 2014, DCF Commissioner gave a presentation on the DCF data transparency efforts through the use of the Commissioner's Dashboard, Screening and Investigation Reports and CIACC Reports which are posted monthly on the DCF Public site: www.nj.gov/dcf/.

In January 2015, the Director of the Office of Training and Professional Development gave an overview presentation on the training pass/failure threshold and policy, staff knowledge gain and upcoming technical advancements.

Educational stability of children in resource care remained a focus over the past year with presentations given by ACNJ on their report: Educational Stability of Foster Children. Updates on recommendations from the report by CP&P Assistant Commissioner and presentations from representatives from the Department of Law and Public Safety as related to the aspects of the Educational Stability Law were also provided.

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Division of Family & Community
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**Resigned*
***Former Member*

Note: All members listed, status of membership, job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2015.

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Office of Law Guardian

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Department of Law and Public Safety

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

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Administrative Director
Metro Regional Diagnostic and
Treatment Center at Newark Beth Israel
Medical Center

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

Sylvia Snyder
Dorothy B. Hersh- Regional Diagnostic
Treatment Centers

Judy L. Spinney, LCSW
Therapist

Cynthia VanBrunt
Executive Director
Court Appointed Special Advocates
of New Jersey

Lorene Wilkerson
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Donna Younkin
Director of Special Initiatives
Department of Children and Families
Office of the Commissioner

**Resigned*

***Former Member*

Note: All members listed, status of membership,
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Supported Work Program
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

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