



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee
2015 9th ANNUAL SORS REPORT



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

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Introduction

On July 11, 2006, P.L. 2006, Chapter 47 was enabled which established the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF). This law amended numerous statutes in order to transfer a number of functions from the New Jersey Department of Human Services to DCF, including the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN). The bill also expanded the responsibilities and membership of the NJTFCAN. Further, the law included provisions whereby the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (C&PP) was established and the Staffing and Outcome Review Panel under N.J.S.A. 30:4C-3.1 was dissolved and its roles and functions were assumed by the NJTFCAN through the creation of a Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS).

The charge of SORS is to review staffing levels of CP&P in order to develop recommendations regarding staffing levels and the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within C&PP. In addition, the Subcommittee was mandated to review CP&P's performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes and prepare a report of its findings to the Governor and the Legislature.

Subcommittee Proceedings and Minutes

SORS met on the following dates:

- July 8, 2014;
- September 9, 2014;
- November 12, 2014 - cancelled;
- January 13, 2015;
- March 10, 2015; and
- May 13, 2015.

These meetings provided SORS the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with their statutorily mandated work.

To view a copy of the meeting minutes, visit <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcан/>.

Summary of Activities and Focus – 2014 to 2015

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: <http://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.

Priorities of SORS

In 2011, SORS conducted a workforce survey focusing on several key areas such as training, communication, workload and supervision. The initial survey results were based on 524 employees. Realizing there were target areas that required additional attention, SORS considered, in 2014, the possibility of conducting 3 focus groups across the state, however, through technical assistance it was determined that the most effective and reliable way to collect follow-up data was to duplicate the original questions. A new survey was developed consisting of 25 multiple choice questions that were replicated from the 2011 survey. It will be distributed to the local CP&P offices throughout the state with a note to supervisory staff requesting support and assistance in ensuring completion compliance. It is anticipated the results of the survey will provide guidance to SORS as it prepares their 2015 agenda.

As previously noted, the Subcommittee heard from the Office of Training and Professional Development (OTPD) which provided an update on the linkage to practice and performance, an analysis on the increase of knowledge through the pre and post- test given to each student and what constitutes a passing grade. The Subcommittee will follow up with the OTPD to review the time for students to receive grades, the process for students who have not passed a course and the final grade to determine if a student has passed.

In addition, this year SORS looked at educational stability, particularly the quality and consequences of educational decisions. Information and data was provided by DCF, CP&P as well as Department of Law and Public Safety to inform SORS discussions. ACNJ provided an overview of the ACNJ report on Educational Stability of Foster Children. Concerns that appeared in both the ACNJ report and DCF data centered on transportation, and staff not consulting with the primary case participants. SORS asked for clarification on tracking of children in group homes and residential homes not covered by the Educational Stability Law as well as mapping of children in placement in relation to their home school of origin. CP&P is working with system partners as well as stakeholders to address these concerns and future presentation from the DCF Fellows on the educational mapping will be provided to SORS.

Issues for Follow-Up in 2015-2016

The subcommittee identified the following priorities for the upcoming year:

1. Completion, dissemination and evaluation of the Staff Survey
2. Request update from the Office of Training and Professional Development on software advancements
3. Gather and evaluate data on disproportionality
 - Review racial makeup of CP&P staff as it pertains to the racial makeup of the population served
 - Request a presentation from Essex County Model Court
4. Support and assist CP&P with staff safety concerns

SORS will explore these issues to determine what oversight will be necessary to ensure that the improvements being achieved now are sustained for years to come to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable children.