

**Chafee Advisory Group Meeting
March 10, 2022
Minutes**

In Attendance: Naomi Louissaint-Grant, Niambi London, Safa Simmons, Chelsea Sutphin, Ifeanyi Pole, Rachel Barth, Alice Garcia, Mary Coogan, Kelly Nestor, Randi Mandelbaum, Dr. Steven Kairys, Tosca Blanford-Bynoe, Tyhesha White, Dr. Yolanda Allen, David Rosen, Konniesha Moulton, Yolanda Alvarez, Jonathan Marsh, Dan Rhoton, Hailey D’Elia, Suzanne Kreie, Aden Savett, Nichol Killian, Punam Jain, Darlene Cross

Absent: Janel Winter, Jessica Steiger

1) Welcome & Introductions

- a) Welcome by Niambi London
- b) Ice Breaker by Niambi London
- c) Mindfulness exercise by Alice Garcia

2) Meeting Minutes (Niambi)

- a) The Chafee Advisory Group’s (CAG) May and December 2021 Minutes and Agendas will be posted on DCF’s website.

3) Agency Spotlight (Dr. Yolanda Allen, NJ Department of Labor)

- a) NJDOL Youth Investments:
 - i) Bridges to Employing Youth (Bridges):
 - (1) NJDOL invested \$3.9 million dollars in FY22 for this program that originated as a pilot in FY19. The purpose of Bridges is to further the goal of continuing to expand the capacity of NJDOL’s workforce system by providing specialized workforce development services to youth in each of the following targeted populations:
 - (2) Youth with disabilities
 - (3) Justice-involved youth
 - (4) Youth who are in or have aged out of foster care
 - (5) Pregnant or parenting youth
- b) New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC):
 - i) On an annual basis, NJDOL invests approximately \$5.3 million, to serve over 500 young adults enrolled in this statewide program each year.
 - ii) The programs’ goal is to implement a coordinated service system designed to help disconnected out-of-school youth, ages 16-25 without a high school diploma, reengage in educational, training and employment opportunities for a sustainable long-term career development.
 - iii) NJYC provides full-time, cohort-based education and service learning, individual counseling, and transition services designed to help Corps members resolve barriers,

obtain a High School Diploma or other measurable skill gain, and transition to a qualified post-corps placement along an identified career pathway.

- c) Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)
 - i) NJDOL announced \$3.9 million in FY 22 funding for this program to provide in-school and out-of-school youth, ages 16-24, with valuable summer internships in order to help them successfully transition to the world of work.
 - ii) Eligible participants In-school AND out-of-school are youth defined as:
 - (1) In-school youth = is attending or will be returning to any school after SYEP participation
 - (2) Out-of-school youth = is NOT attending or returning to any school after SYEP participation
- d) Youth Transitions to Work (YTTW)
 - i) The YTTW is a pre- Apprenticeship program that provides greater opportunities and incentives for high school juniors, seniors and out-of-school youth (ages 16-24). The goal is to facilitate effective transitions by high school seniors and out-of-school youth to high-skill, high-wage employment in labor demand occupations

4) Chafee/ETV Strategies Overview and Updates (Niambi)

- a) Strategy 2 - Continue to Elevate Youth Voice
 - i) Office of Family Voice (OFV)- Statewide Youth Council has been in existence since 2020. OFV provided an update at the December 2021 CAG meeting.
 - ii) Develop Strategic Sharing learning products for youth and adults to prepare young people to participate in committees, workgroups, etc. – the Office of Training and Professional Development and OFV are taking the lead on developing a training that will strategize differently regarding how individuals with lived experience are informing our work. The training will educate DCF staff on how to work with individuals with lived experience to ensure:
 - (1) Their message is crafted so that it educates the audience
 - (2) They tell their stories in a way in which their voices can be heard
 - (3) Their message accomplishes its goal
 - (4) Their well-being is protected
 - iii) Youth are informed of, prepared for and attend family court hearings – more work needs to be done on this strategy. The Administrative Office of the Courts is implementing Benchmark Hearings for adolescents to meet informally with their Judge. This will provide a good opportunity to provide information to youth and ensure they are aware of the purpose and prepared for the meetings.
 - iv) Increase opportunities for youth with lived experience to serve as peer supports for youth currently in care – the Peer to Peer Mentoring Program is being implemented as a pilot program for adolescents 14-21 who are in out of home placement. The Peer to Peer mentors will be staff with lived expertise.

- v) Increase opportunities for youth with lived experience to be included in learning products (informing curriculum, serving as trainers) – this is ongoing and has been incorporated into the Youth Thrive training and PRIDE training.
 - vi) Youth Advisory Network (YAN) – due to budget cuts, the program no longer exists.
- b) Strategy 3 - Changes to Chafee Program Philosophy
- i) Race Equity Informed Policy, Practice and Programming - disproportionate number and disparate treatment of African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino youth in foster care – over the next year more of a focus will be made towards gathering data and reviewing how services and supports for adolescents might need to be changed
 - ii) Healing Centered Engagement - move beyond coping to healing – looking to incorporate this more into adolescent practice and programming
 - iii) Ensuring that the Chafee Program will serve youth statewide- ongoing work
 - iv) Refining eligibility for benefits and services – ongoing work
 - v) Updating assessments and tools to determine individualized needs - Reviewing Casey Life Skills Assessments to see if another assessment, such as the Youth Thrive Survey will be utilized with adolescents. DCF has been offering the Youth Thrive training for several years and it is a good opportunity to provide more resources and tools to help build protective and promotive factors.
- c) Strategy 4 - Promoting Kinship Care, Permanency, and Connections
- i) Develop formalized process and create resources to train and increase knowledge of judiciary staff regarding adolescents and young adults in foster care – there is a draft bench card that was developed a couple of years ago. ACNJ and DCF worked together to create it. ACNJ offered to follow up with necessary parties to check on the status of the bench card.
 - ii) Supporting youth in kinship care through system and direct service intervention strategies that support both the youth and caregiver (OKR) – ongoing work
 - iii) Updating life skills via appropriate skill development within context of family, peer, and community relationships (Innovation) – DCF has been working with Mathematica to create an intervention that incorporates the Youth Thrive framework. A proposed intervention was developed for consideration.
 - iv) Refine efforts to ensure youth in foster care experience developmentally appropriate activities that will assist in building and strengthening relationships in their home, promote stability, and support efforts towards legal permanency (Normalcy) – this continues through everyday work within CP&P. Adolescents have access to activities, sports, clubs and other recreational activities.
- d) Strategy 5 - Services for Young Adults 18+ (Rachel Barth)
- i) Reviewing and updating the housing program model for youth 18+ - DCF is partnering with public housing authorities in Camden, Essex and Hudson counties for phase one of its Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Voucher Program. This initiative provides housing for up to 25 youth in each county for a total 75 FYI vouchers.

- ii) Reviewing and updating the aftercare services for youth 18+ to support a youth's transition to adulthood - After Care services are being provided through DCF's LifeSet Program. LifeSet provides young adults the support and guidance they need to make a successful transition to adulthood. It is one of the largest programs in the United States helping youth formally in foster care and transition-age youth become successful, independent adults. LifeSet has captured the following data from its former youth participants:
 - (a) 85% of the youth are discharging with a safe place to stay;
 - (b) Almost 80% are discharging with employment;
 - (c) 98% of youth have avoided legal involvement or arrest during their time in LifeSet

- e) Strategies 6 & 7 - Marketing Chafee Services to Eligible Youth and Technology (Rachel and Chelsea)
 - i) Develop and implement a strategy to market Chafee services to newly eligible youth that achieved reunification 14+ - more focus on this activity will occur over the next several months
 - ii) Refine and implement marketing strategies of Chafee services to Chafee eligible youth whose child welfare cases are closed-- more focus on this activity will occur over the next several months
 - iii) Explore the possibility of providing services to adolescents who are not in placement but involved with child welfare to prevent placement – this is an activity that has not yet begun.
 - iv) Strengthen strategy to ensure Medicaid continuity of coverage for youth eligible for Medicaid Extension for Young Adults (MEYA) – The Office of Integrated Health and Wellness within CSOC is working with the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS) to ensure this is in place for the January 2023 deadline. Young Adults who are eligible for MEYA and who move to another state will continue to have healthcare coverage.
 - v) Update content and functionality of the NJ Youth Resource Spot website – the DCF Youth Council in partnership with offices and divisions within DCF have been working on updating the website. The new website will go live in a few weeks.
 - vi) Develop a mobile application specific to youth in foster care – the Youth Council is working on developing a mobile app via a grant from the AOC.
 - vii) Post NYTD data on public DCF and NJYRS websites – the NYTD data is being analyzed and easy to read/understand visuals will be created to post. A dedicated staff person within Research, Evaluation and Reporting will be assisting with this activity.
 - viii) Develop online access for youth to complete the NYTD follow up survey – 19- and 21-year-olds are completing the NYTD follow up survey online via Survey Monkey.

- f) Strategy 8 - Using Data to Measure Success and Improve Service Delivery
 - i) DCF's Office of Research, Evaluation and Reporting will analyze adolescent data and continue the work on the OAS/Chafee Logic Model

- g) Strategies 9 & 10 - Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Permanency (Niambi)
 - i) Mental Health, Substance Use and Domestic Violence – develop a stakeholder informed plan to review supports and services currently available and used, while also identifying areas that need to be strengthened and tailored to meet the needs of youth in foster care. – the mental health and substance use work sits within the DCF Children’s System of Care. Follow up is needed to see if anything needs to be addressed.
 - ii) OAS has partnered with DCF’s Division of Women on domestic violence awareness work.
 - iii) Expectant and Parenting Youth (Ifeyani)
 - (1) Ifeyani drafted EPY survey to be completed at the end of March.

- h) Strategy 11 - Education and Training Voucher (ETV)
 - i) The ETV Strategy team has two subgroups – 1) Educational Resources and Outreach and 2) ETV Eligibility and Data Review
 - ii) The Educational Resources and Outreach subgroup will:
 - (1) build awareness of the NJFCS program within the Higher Education, High School and Certificate program community (Safa)
 - (2) Create a network that assists students with understanding secondary education options
 - (a) Ensure the community is aware that ETV Funding is available for eligible young adults
 - (b) Create a resource guide to provide NJFCS program participants to help identify career and certificate programs
 - (c) Identify community scholarship opportunities for NJFCS participants enhancing funding sources
 - iii) ETV Eligibility and Data Review Subgroup (Chelsea)
 - (1) Review data time duration NJ Scholarship
 - (2) Review scholarship 2.0-ETV-Federal
 - (3) Room Board and Transportation
 - (4) Assist with cost of education
 - (5) Share Connections with ETV data
 - (6) Establish New outcomes
 - (7) Gain access for greater view of data trends that will extended to age 26

5) Chafee Logic Model draft review (Niambi)

- i) Showed the CAG the logic model as a reference
- ii) Discussed the feedback obtained from CAG members
- iii) The logic model is a work in progress – when finalized it will be shared with the CAG

6) Data Update (Jonathan Marsh)

- i) Jonathan analyzed and discussed LifeSet and NYTD data.
- ii) DCF’s Peer-Peer program data will also be analyzed.
- iii) Analysis of NYTD and LifeSet programs should be completed by next Chafee meeting.

7) Closing

- i) Next CAG meeting is on June 9, 2022.
- ii) Konniesha Moulton from Family Connections volunteered to present

8) Meeting Adjourned

All ideas reflected are not endorsed by the agency.