

**Chafee Advisory Group Meeting**  
**June 9, 2022**  
**Minutes**

**In Attendance:** Naomi Louissaint-Grant, Niambi London, Ebony White, Alice Garcia, David Rosen, Dan Rhoton, Suzanne Kreie, Jonathan Marsh, Rachel Barth, Jessica Sanchez, Arian Craig, Konniesha Moulton, Hailey D’Elia, Safa Simmons, Ifeanyi Pole, Chelsea Sutphin, Tosca Blandford-Bynoe, Janel Winter, Nicole Glonek, Yolanda Allen, Randi Mandelbaum

**Absent:** Mary Coogan, Kelly Nestor, Jessica Steiger, Steven Kairys, Tyhesha White

**1) Welcome & Introductions**

- a) Welcome by Niambi London
  - i) Introductions of CAG members and OAS.
- b) Mindfulness Exercise by Alice Garcia

**2) Meeting Minutes (Niambi)**

- a) Tabled for September 15<sup>th</sup> CAG meeting.

**3) Agency Spotlight – Family Connections**

- a) Family Connections’ (FC) mission includes supporting families and children in taking control of their own lives.
- b) FC’s core values are inclusivity, strength-based, relationship-driven, outcome-oriented, and collaborative.
- c) FC currently operates in 11 New Jersey counties.
- d) FC offers a wide range of programs, including youth-focused programs such as:
  - i) Domestic Violence services
  - ii) Early Childhood services
  - iii) Family Support services
  - iv) Housing services
  - v) Mental health and substance use services
  - vi) Training and coalition services
- e) Youth-Focus Grant Programs:
  - i) Pride+ provides a safe space for middle and high school-age youth that identify within the LGBTQIA+ community.
  - ii) This grant is currently focused in South Orange, Maplewood, and Millburn but FC will provide services to youth and their families all throughout Essex County at no cost.
  - ii) Outreach to At-Risk Youth (OTARY)
    - (1) OTARY provides group counseling for youth to express their thoughts, feelings, energy, creativity, overall self-esteem in a positive supportive environment.
    - (2) OTARY services are paid for by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families and provided at no cost to youth all youth between ages 10- 21 in Essex County.

- (3) Youth discuss challenges they face with peers in safe setting.
- (4) Youth learn new skills and information that have been proven to show positive results.
- (5) Youth participate in recreational activities that are fun and empowering, including: video gaming, field trips, creative arts, hang time and more
- (6) Youth do not have to be in the CP&P system to be part of this program.
- iii) School-based Youth Services (SBYS)
  - (1) School-Based Youth Services Programs provide assessment, therapy, academic and employment support case management, and social-emotional skills-building to build on a youth's strength to help them achieve their educational and life goals.
  - (2) These services are paid for by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families and provided at no cost to youth. School-Based Youth Services Programs are offered on-site at the following schools: Bloomfield High School, Columbia High School, Maplewood Middle School, Orange High School, and Orange Preparatory Academy.
- iv) Youth Supportive Housing (YSH)
  - (1) Youth Supportive Services provides client-centered supportive services, long-term safe and stable housing opportunities for 20 high needs youth who are aging out of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P).
  - (2) Currently there are 20 clients, each receiving rental assistance vouchers and training on how to manage their finances such as budgeting and how to pay bills and rent.
  - (3) YSH seeks to prevent and address homelessness by promoting housing stability for youth with experience in the child welfare system.
  - (4) YSH serves 20 clients who reside in Union and its bordering cities in Essex County. The program provides 20 rental assistance vouchers for the purpose of providing long-term, safe, and stable housing.
- v) Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Grant (CCBHC)
  - (1) FC is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Grant (CCBHC)
  - (2) As a CCBHC, FC offers other forms of support such as an in-house nurse, maintaining a lawyer on staff, providing housing, etc.
  - (3) CCBHC is another client-centered wraparound model that provides support to the entire client for his/her/their overall wellness.

#### **4) LifeTies Presentation (Ebony White)**

- a) LifeTies' Triad House
  - ii) Triad House is the first LGBTQI+ group home in Mercer County serving youth ages 16 to 21.
- b) LifeTies' Youth and Family Pride Center
  - ii) Serves youth ages 10 to 21;
  - iii) Is completely grant funded;
  - iv) Provides counseling services, life skills training, psychoeducation, healthcare services, mentor component, etc.;
  - v) Provides a mentor component for the LGBTQI+ youth

- (1) Mentors are trained volunteers who are matched with youth through their interests;
- (2) Counseling only provided in-house for a maximum of four hours

**5) Hudson Pride Center Presentation (David Rosen)**

- a) The Hudson Pride Center delivers services to the LGBTQI+ and HIV communities in Hudson County  
Hudson Pride Center's Social Groups and Platforms/Events
  - i) Youth Connect Programs
    - (1) One-on-One mentoring for youth who need help navigating the social systems and their parents.
      - (1) Any youth can join from anywhere in the state of New Jersey
      - (2) Staff is sent out to schools to establish gay/straight alliances, health and wellness screenings including HIV, STDs, HIV Care, and social groups
      - (3) Sends youth on field trip events, trainings, and classes for whatever they may need
    - ii) Youth Prom:
      - (1) Free to everyone, but all attendees must pre-register and wear a mask during the event;
      - (2) Event being held at the Hudson County Community College Culinary School
    - iii) Beyond Binary
      - (1) Includes transgender and non-binary youth and helps connect them with mentors;
    - iv) LesFest
      - (1) A lesbian festival open to all women who are 18 years or older, who self-identify as female, and who are interested in other women;
  - v. Women Unified
    - (1) A HIV-prevention focused and positive HIV-Care program;
    - (2) Transgender affirming services provide free counseling to obtain identity changes;
    - (3) Provides the fees needed and help navigating the healthcare and other systems.

**6) Pride Month and Safe Space Program Presentation (Chelsea Sutphin)**

- a) DCF is an inclusive and affirming department and has been recognized as one of the best in the country.
- b) DCF staff are mandated to attend LGBTQI+ Cultural Competency trainings. Chelsea attends these training each year because their content is often updated.
- c) Youth Bill of Rights
  - i) Outlines protections for youth in care based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression;
  - ii) DCF documents policies and procedures to ensure a safe environment is established through promoting the use of correct pronouns and affirming gender identity.
  - iii) LGBTQI+ Policy Highlights
    - (1) LGBTQI+ policies were published the summer of 2016 and evolve out of work performed by the Office of Adolescent Services

- (2) Policies apply to ALL staff, clientele, and contractors of DCF.
- d) Resource Page
  - i) Lists resources throughout the state, including links to The Trevor Project (centered around mental health for those in the LGBTQI+ community), suicide prevention, and Safe Space staff;
  - ii) DCF local office staff are encouraged to provide resources for everyone in their offices.
- e) Safe Space Program
  - i) Created in 2009 and launched in 2010 in an ongoing effort to provide safe spaces for all. It sets best practices, provides a variety of trainings, including a three-part series on transgender and non-binary people. All the trainings are available to all who wants to take them, but Safe Space liaisons are required to take them.
  - ii) Safe Space liaisons must be trained and be able to demonstrate knowledge around LGBTQI+ policies and laws.
  - iii) It is important to remember to accurately identify someone by using affirming names, pronouns, and gender whether the individual is in one's presence or not.
  - iv) Safe Space liaisons meet quarterly for a two-hour Zoom meeting with 130 staff to discuss resources and create a safe space to share thoughts on the changing laws and policies as well as any other issues that arise.
  - v) For Professionals, Advocates, and Community Mentors
    - (1) Always model using appropriate affirming and inclusive language when intervening;
    - (2) Gently correct outdated or off remarks, comments, and language;
    - (3) Never assume anything based on anyone's appearance:
      - (1) Ask a person directly or seek assistance;
      - (2) If you make a mistake, don't dwell on it – be respectful, apologize, correct yourself, and move on.
- f) LGBTQI+ Inclusive Language in the Workplace
  - i) Better words to use:
    - (1) Colleagues, team, people instead of ladies and gentlemen
    - (2) Parental leave and parental time instead of maternity or paternity leave
    - (3) Partner or spouse rather than husband or wife
    - (4) People's first names or non-gender specific titles such as Mx or M instead of Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Miss
    - (5) Ask, "What pronouns do you use?"
    - (6) Mail clerk or mail person, chairperson, police officer rather than mailman, chairman, or policeman
    - (7) Sexual orientation instead of sexual preference
- g) Human Rights Campaign Foundation
  - i) Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the National and International leading advocate group for the LGBTQI+ community;
  - ii) DCF has participated in their All Children, All Families program since 2015;
  - iii) Works on a tier system:

- (1) DCF is considered to be “building a foundation for inclusion,” the lowest of the three tiers because DCF has a staff of over 6000 staff, it would have to be in touch with other offices and divisions to be able to move up in the tiers;
- iv) Offers live and previously recorded webinars;
- v) Is ever evolving work and is constantly updating

## **7) Data Presentation (Jonathan Marsh, Office of Applied Research and Evaluation)**

- a) Safe Space Liaison Survey
  - i) Spring 2021, 287 DCF workers participated in a survey on the LGBTQI+ youth they encounter in their daily practice.
    - (1) About 10-11% staff reported having encountered common issues and circumstances such as finding professional counselors/groups while living with non-affirming families;
    - (2) Most often disclosed are mental health, socio-economic and legal issues;
    - (3) It is rarer, but some have also disclosed sex work survival and pregnancy.
  - ii) Only half of Safe Space liaisons have sought support for their LGBTQI+ youths’ needs for housing, food, state legislation policy protections, and school procedures:
    - (1) More CP&P employees feel they need more education in all of these areas.
    - (2) Safe Space liaisons are most commonly sought for referrals regarding housing assistance, counseling, caregiver support, and support training.
- b) Peer Mentoring Program for Youth in Out-Of-Home Placement
  - i) The creation of the Youth Council
    - (1) Made up of 18+ year old young people who had previously been in care.
  - ii) The New Jersey Sibling Bill of Rights
    - (1) The New Jersey Sibling Bill of Rights was recently approved in the Senate thanks to the hard work and advocacy of the Youth Council.
    - (2) Full-time, paid mentor positions are being filled at partnering agencies:
      - (1) Hiring is being done through DCF’s Peer-to-Peer Navigator Program that is seeking candidates with lived experience to fill the roles.
      - (2) Mentors will be available to clients ages 14-21 years who have been in out-of-home care for 18 months or less.

Jonathan shared a video on the New Jersey Sibling Bill of Rights S1034/A1357

  - (1) When possible, siblings will be placed with siblings;
  - (2) Allows siblings to stay connected as a family by ensuring mandatory sibling visitations;
  - (3) Is common sense legislation;
  - (4) Gives youth a choice AND a voice;
    - (1) DCF’s Peer-to-Peer Navigator Program is modeled after the Brave Life program that allows youth in out-of-home placements know they are not alone.
  - (5) Any youth between the ages of 14 and 21 in out-of-home placement are eligible.

**8) Closing**

- b) Reminder the next meeting date is September 15<sup>th</sup>.

*All ideas reflected are not endorsed by the agency.*