

Chafee Advisory Group Meeting June 3, 2025

Minutes

Attendees: Nancy R. Andre, Tanya Berry, Anthony Camelli, Hailey D'Elia, Filomena DiNuzzo, Patricia E. Jordan, Niambi London, Kelly Nestor, Jonathan Marsh, Monique Roumo, Emel Altomari, Luther Owens, Ifeanyi Pole, Safa Simmons, Justin Wang, Barbara Washington, Candice Webb

Absent: Mary Coogan, Arian Craig, Josefina Ewins, Randi Mandelbaum, Stephanie Mills, Kasey Vienckowski

- I. Welcome & Introductions
- II. Meeting minutes approval
 - a. March 2025 CAG Minutes and Agenda will be posted to DCF's website.
- III. Pride Month Events – Niambi London
 - a. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Month is currently celebrated each year in the month of June to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan.
 - b. The State of New Jersey's 2025 Pride Months events are posted online at [Pride Events in New Jersey — 2025 | VisitNJ.org](#)
- IV. Enlightenment Navigator Presentation – Jonathon Marsh
 - a. DCF's Youth Council (YC) recommended to DCF Leadership the need for a mentoring program. DCF's YC created the EnlightenMENT Program which has been launched in 9 counties.
 - b. NJ DCF's EnlightenMENT Program is a peer-to-peer mentoring program for youth in placement.
 - c. The EnlightenMENT program evaluation is based on three primary sources
 - Process data analysis and reporting
 - Survey analysis (baseline through post-discharge)
 - Interviews with staff and participants
 - d. Methods
 - The interview guide was codesigned by DCF and EnlightenMENT providers.
 - The study was approved by NJ DCF's Research Review Committee.
 - Interviews were conducted between February and November of 2024.
 - Remote (Teams) individual interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed.
 - Thematic analysis was used to examine the recordings

- e. Fifty questions were developed in interviews that explored the 5 core topics.
 - Navigators' characteristics prior to employment
 - Navigators' characteristics today
 - Navigators' experiences in mentoring youth
 - Navigator supervision and processing
 - Navigators' Outlook on EnlightenMENT
- f. The interview analyses revealed themes that fell into two overarching topics.
 - Strategies and approaches in EnlightenMENT mentoring.
 - Impact of mentoring on the Navigators, themselves.
- g. Shared the strategies and approaches in EnlightenMENT mentoring.
 - Mentor-mentee matching and preliminary preparation
 - Addressing the topic of being in out-of-home care
 - Juxtapositions between mentoring and traditional services
 - Creating an atmosphere for authentic engagement
 - Role modeling soft skills
 - Setting goals for successful transitions into adulthood
- h. Impact of mentoring on the Navigators, themselves.
 - Motivations for mentoring young people with similar lived experiences
 - Professional growth and development through mentoring
 - Managing emotional triggers
 - Personal fulfillment and inspiration through mentoring
 - Quasi-clinical aspects of mentoring youth who are in placement
 - Navigating programmatic expectations
- i. Lessons learned
 - Partner with people with lived experience throughout program development.
 - Create the infrastructure to effectively partner with people with lived experience .
 - Provide training and support to address the unique needs of mentors with lived experience.
 - Create professional development pathways for mentors.
- j. Beyond program evaluation
 - Two manuscripts were co-authored with former Youth Council member, active EnlightenMENT Navigator, and Lived Experience Expert Consultant Brianna Moore. Both are currently under peer review.

V. SOUL Family Framework – Niambi London

- a. SOUL Family Framework
 - Support, Opportunity, Unity, Legal Relationships
 - Designed by and for young people in foster care
 - Permanency for young people 16 and older
 - Supported by the Annie E. AECF Foundation (AECF)
- b. Permanency Continuum
 - Reunification
 - Adoption
 - Guardianship

- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)
- c. Discussed what is Permanency.
- d. Kansas is the first state to pass legislation to have SOUL as a permanency option. Passed in July 2024 and as of April there were 12 SOUL Families
- e. Washington, DC is working on its SOUL Family Framework legislation.
- f. Discussed the differences between SOUL and other legal options.
- g. DCF completed the SOUL cohort and is trying to decide if the Department will move forward in launching this permanency option.

Q&A:

- CAG member liked the idea of creating lifelong connections for youth. How would SOUL framework address housing options for youth?
 - OAS-Youth would be able to live with an identified connection and the youth can still receive financial assistance.
- CAG member-This can be a permanency goal for 16-year-old youth? How is this different from what we do already and can youth older than 18 years old also participate in SOUL?
 - OAS-Yes, SOUL identifies the best options for youth.
- CAG member-How is this distinguishing different from KLG?
 - OAS-SOUL would go beyond age 18 as KLG currently does not.
- CAG member-Could a youth living with a resource parent become one of their SOUL people and still receive money?
 - OAS -Yes because that is possible now. We still have a lot to figure out.
- CAG member -Where would the money come from?
 - OAS-DCF would need to do a fiscal analysis and figure that out. This is still in the exploratory phase. AECF is offering to provide DCF technical assistance to assist the Department in figuring this out.
- OAS staff-Questions about the background checks...does DCF have to check the selected SOUL people?
 - OAS-We did not talk about that piece. We would have to see how flexible we can be with this framework.
- CAG member-This is a more flexible option for young people. I have seen a lot of placements fails and youth must reenter the system. What young people are more flexibility. When we think about the cost we have to think about DCF's "Return On Investment". How can we incentivize people is something we should be thinking about as well?

VI. Chafee Survey Review – Justin Wang

- a. DCF's Chafee survey will be developed in partnership with the Youth Council and the Office of Applied Research and Evaluation (ARE).
- b. This survey will be administered annually to youth and young adults ages 14-21+ to obtain information on their experiences with DCF and contracted providers as well as learn about their outstanding needs, and challenges and successes.
- c. OARE drafted the Chafee survey in Excel first to categorize it.
- d. Basic administrative questions
 - What is your current CP&P case status?

- What is your placement type?
 - How long have you been in foster care?
 - Number of times in foster care?
 - Sex?
 - How old are you?
- e. Demographic questions taken from SOGIE...
- When you think about yourself, do you see yourself as a boy/man or girl/woman? Or do you use another word to identify your gender?
 - Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?
 - What is your Race? Please check all that apply.
 - Are you Hispanic or Latino?
 - Are you a member of, or eligible for membership in, a federally recognized tribe?
 - What is the primary language spoken in your home?
 - Are you fluent in English?
 - What is your current state or country of residence?
 - What is your current New Jersey county of residence?
 - Are you a US citizen?
 - *What is your immigration status?*
 - *Are you working on changing your status or is someone helping you with this? Assistance is available until you get your green card.*
- * Sensitive questions asking about citizenship and immigration status.
- f. Once completed DCF's Chafee survey will be sent to all youth who are/were in care. Q&A (Demographics)
- OAS staff-Suggested that DCF expand its question on sex beyond 'male' and 'female'.
- g. Legal questions, some of these questions were taken from the NYTD survey
- Are you or have you been an adjudicated delinquent?
 - In the past year, were you arrested for allegedly committing a crime?
 - In the past year, were you confined in a jail, prison, correctional facility, or juvenile or community detention facility, in connection with allegedly committing a crime?
 - In the past year, has a judge, probation, or parole officer ordered you into mental health treatment?
 - In the past year, has a judge, probation, or parole officer ordered you into substance use treatment?
 - Are you currently legally required to pay child support payments?
- h. Education and job training questions
- Are you attending school?
 - What grade are you in?
 - What is the highest educational degree, certification, or licensure that you have received?
 - Over the past year, were you enrolled in any vocational school or job training program?

- Are you currently receiving a scholarship, grant, stipend, student loan, voucher, or other type of educational financial aid to cover any educational expenses?
- What educational services do you need / receive? (break into two questions)
- Do you agree with these statements? (these will change based on previous responses)
- Who assists you with your educational planning? (select all that apply)
- i. What educational services youth need and are they receiving those services?
Q&A (Education):
 - CAG member-Recommended adding a question for youth having an IEP or other supportive educational assistance.
- j. Employment questions
 - Are you currently working?
 - What is your primary motivation for working or wanting to work?
 - What employment services do you need / receive? (break into two questions)
- k. Financial assistance questions
 - Are you currently receiving Social Security payments (Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or dependents' payments)?
 - Are you currently receiving ongoing welfare payments from New Jersey to support your basic needs?
 - Are you currently receiving public food assistance?
 - Are you currently receiving any sort of housing assistance from the government, such as living in public housing or receiving a housing voucher?
 - Excluding paid employment, are you currently receiving any periodic and/or significant financial resources or support from another source not previously indicated?
 - Which of the following sources of income do you currently receive?
- l. Managing money questions with a financial wellbeing scale
 - How much weekly allowance do you get?
 - Do you have a bank account?
 - Are you currently investing any money?
 - How well do you agree with this statement: I feel prepared to manage my own money.
 - How many credit cards do you have?
 - How well does this statement describe you or your situation?
 - I could handle a major unexpected expense
 - I am securing my financial future
 - Because of my money situation, I feel like I will never have the things I want in life*
 - I can enjoy life because of the way I'm managing my money
 - I am just getting by financially*
 - I am concerned that the money I have or will save won't last*

- How often does this statement apply to you?
 - Giving a gift for a wedding, birthday, or other occasion would put a strain on my finances for the month*
 - I have money left over at the end of the month
 - I am behind with my finances*
 - My finances control my life*

Q&A (Managing money):

- CAG member-Managing money is a huge deficit for this population; youth do not understand it.
- CAG member-Basic financial literacy is not talked about; young people are disillusioned how life works.
- CAG member -Do youth know their credit score?

VII. Family and Community Partnerships Updates – Luther Owens and Barbara Washington

a. Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Voucher Program Expansion

- Partnership with DCF, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Public Housing Authorities (PHA).
 - To date, DCF's Office of Housing (OOH) implemented the FYI housing voucher initiative in five New Jersey jurisdictions, five additional partnerships are underway, and OOH is planning to launch new FYI initiatives in July 2025
 1. Hunterdon County
 2. Monmouth County
 3. Asbury Park (Monmouth)
 4. Jersey City (Hudson)
 5. Elizabeth (Union)
 6. Camden City (Camden)
 7. Newark (Essex)
 8. Pleasantville (Atlantic)

Q&A:

- DCF staff-What is the current FYI housing voucher availability...are there any available vouchers?
 - OOH-The FYI locations are just about leased up. Hunterdon County is the only place that there are have low participation numbers.
 - OOH encouraged the attendees to please reach out to OOH about any homeless youth to see if they may be eligible to apply to the FYI housing voucher program. The FYI housing voucher requirement is youth who have at least one day in DCF care.
- CAG member-Can anyone contact OOH regarding a youth housing eligibility or does it have to be a CP&P outreach?
- OOH-Yes, please reach out about any youth. OOH encourages our community partners to reach out about their youths' housing needs.
- OOH- Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers provide rental assistance to youth who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Youth who have a three-year FUP voucher may be eligible for a 2-year extension.

- OOH-OOH will email its FYI Housing Voucher Program info sheet to OAS to share with the CAG members.

QA:

- CAG member- Is there a direct connection between FUP vouchers and section 8 vouchers?
 - OOH-The FUP vouchers are time-limited where the section 8 vouchers are non-time limited.
- CAG member-Does this not create a cycle?
 - OOH-Youth are being connected to services and supports.
- NJ DCF OOH Statewide Discussions – Barbara Washington
 - OOH allows discussions about housing with statewide partners.
 - This is a quarterly meeting; the next meeting is September 30, 2025.

VIII. Closing

- a. Announcements, resources, etc.
 - No new announcements

2025 Chafee Advisory Group Meeting Dates:

March 25, 2025

June 3, 2025

September 16, 2025

December 2, 2025

All ideas reflected are not endorsed by the agency.