

Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

December 3, 2021
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

In Attendance:

Christie Bevacqua
Lilianne Daniel
Jacquelynn Duron
Martin Finkel
Gladibel Medina
Nydia Monagas
Debbie Riveros
Maria Savattiere
Javier Toro
Elahna Strom Weinflash

Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office
Office of the Attorney General
Rutgers School of Social Work
CARES Institute
Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection Center
New Jersey Children's Alliance
Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
Deirdre's House
Hudson County Prosecutor's Office
Office of the Law Guardian

Guests:

Joseph Pargola

NJ Department of Children and Families

Staff:

Daniel Yale

NJ Department of Children and Families

I. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order and the Open Public Meetings notice was read.

II. Approval of Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes from the June 4, 2021 meeting. Maria made a motion to approve the minutes. Elahna seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes without edit. Christie Bevacqua abstained from voting as she was not present at the previous meeting.

III. New Business

RFA Update & Feedback

Nydia discussed that this year, instead of a Request for Proposals (RFP), a Request for Applications (RFA) was developed using feedback from the CAC-MDT Advisory Board over the past several years regarding the RFP process. The RFA included a base amount for each county and a funding formula that was based on the number of forensic interviews that were conducted in each county during 2019. The hope was that the new RFA format would streamline the process and provide easier access to funds for each county. Daniel provided an update to the board regarding the number of counties that applied, the amount of funds that were awarded, and how the funding was being used.

The Board discussed that the funding requests made through the RFA should be focused specifically on child advocacy centers and should be tied back to the NCA standards. The Board also discussed programming that should be considered to ensure that centers have a robust and functional operating

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CAC. Nydia stated that, ideally, a CAC is meant to be a “one stop shop” where everything is offered in-house. Although this is not always possible, many counties have been able to supply onsite services through interagency agreements. Nydia suggested the following could be made available onsite:

- Mental Health evaluations/services
- Medical evaluations and services, as needed. The first choice is to have cases referred to Regional Diagnostic Treatment Centers (RDTCs). However, in some cases, there are a variety of issues that may preclude children from attending evaluations outside of the CAC.
- Improving advocacy services.
 - Creating family advocate positions to serve families when there are no criminal charges.
 - Ensuring that there is an advocate on site during forensic interviews.
- Providing in-house trainings for centers that have the capability.

A question was raised regarding the remaining funding from the RFA process. The board spoke about the options for a secondary award process including releasing a second RFA (funding formula) or releasing an RFP (competitive process). Maria stated that if an RFA is released, there again may be funds remaining as all counties may not apply. The Board discussed that perhaps preference should be given to those counties that did not apply for funding through the RFA and to those counties that need extra funding, in which case the RFP process would be appropriate. The Board discussed possible timeframes for release of an RFA or RFP. A question was also raised regarding whether the funds could be used retroactively back to July 1, 2021 for appropriate costs.

The Board decided that, due to conflicts of interest with members of the Board being employed by entities that may be applying for funding, the decision on how the remaining funds would be awarded would be decided outside of the meeting by individuals not involved with receiving funds.

RFA Process for SFY 2023

Nydia explained that RFAs will be released in the spring with applications being due prior to July 1st so that if funds are available, awards will be able to be accessed more quickly. A question was raised regarding the funding amounts. Nydia explained that 2019 data was used for the funding formula for the previous RFA as 2020 data was skewed due to COVID. Whether 2019 data will be used for the next RFA will need to be discussed as data may still be skewed due to COVID.

Nydia also discussed being clear that the funding must directly impact CACs and CAC clients and link back to the standards. A list can be created regarding what is not eligible for funding as well as a list of additional allowable expenses, especially programs and services, to help build CAC programs.

Annual Progress Review Update

Nydia stated that this Board ultimately decides which counties are eligible for funding. The expectation is that CACs are improving their practice, services, and programs to meet the needs of their clients, that they are working towards meeting all of the NCA standards, and, if they are already accredited, that they are working to maintain their accreditation. Nydia informed the Board that there are currently 18 established CAC facilities and the 3 remaining counties without a facility have the funding to be able to open a facility in the upcoming year. Nydia also informed the Board that all 21 CACs are members of the NCA either as associate members or accredited members.

Nydia stated that NJCA continues to do annual strength and needs assessments for each CAC. Many of the case review observations have been scheduled and the expectation is that the assessments will be complete by April 2022. Nydia asked if there were any changes to the annual review process or report that would be more helpful as the Board makes decision about funding eligibility. A suggestion was made that the reports include data regarding child on child sexual abuse. Jacquelynn stated that she would like

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to review the previous Annual Progress Review prior to making any recommendations about future changes. Nydia stated that she would send the form that was used for the previous reviews to members and asked that any suggestions for changes be emailed to her by the middle of January so that any changes can be incorporated for the upcoming reviews.

Statewide Data Project Update

Nydia reminded members that the workgroup decided to hire a consultant to examine all available statewide child abuse data to determine where there are commonalities, what can be streamlined, and what the data is telling us. The consultant will make recommendations on where there can be agreement across data collection methods so that the data makes sense across the state. The data being examined will include data from RDTCs, CACs, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), prosecutor's offices, DCF, and the Attorney General's Office. The process has taken longer than anticipated as there have been some issues with accessing data. The hope is that there will be a report by early 2022.

A question was raised regarding DCF's child on child sexual abuse referral practice and how it will affect referrals to CACs. The Board discussed how this practice will change and the effects it will have on referrals to RDTCs as well as CACs. Nydia informed the Board that the NJTFCAN Protection Committee has a workgroup that is discussing child on child related issues. They are currently reviewing existing DCPD policies regarding child on child sexual abuse. The workgroup has invited Commissioner Beyer and other key DCF staff to attend the next Protection Committee to have a conversation about these issues. Nydia asked members to email her with any questions or issues that they would like to have discussed at the Protection Committee meeting.

Medical Evaluation Referral Workgroup

Nydia explained that as a result of a previous meeting, a workgroup was created to discuss the issue of medical referrals. Debbie Riveros provided an update regarding the most recent meeting of the workgroup. The group spoke about:

- Creating a training module for DCF staff, CMO workers, prosecutor's office staff, and other MDT members regarding medical evaluations
 - The group discussed having NJCA or the Protection Subcommittee of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) get involved with the creation of the training module.
- Creating infrastructure for referrals to RDTCs through CMOs
 - Determine if CMOs have funding to create agreements that allows them to make referrals to RDTCs when DCPD is not involved.
 - In the future, using CACs to oversee and refer to RDTCs
- Examination of data that RDTCs have been collecting regarding the number of referrals received on an annual basis.

IV. Announcements

Nydia announced that NJCA will provide a training on December 16, 2021 called *A Groundwater Analysis of Racial Inequities* which will be presented to Joyce James.

Dr. Finkel announced that on March 9, 2022, the CARES Institute will hold a lecture by Chris Greeley from Baylor Medical speaking about the impact of disparity and inequality on child and family wellbeing.

V. Adjourn

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Next meeting Friday, February 4, 2022.