

Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

June 4, 2021
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

In Attendance:

Christine Beyer
Lilianne Daniel
Jacquelynn Duron
John Esmerado
Martin Finkel
Gladibel Medina
Nydia Monagas
Debbie Riveros
Maria Savattiere
Javier Toro
Elahna Strom Weinflash

NJ Department of Children and Families
Office of the Attorney General
Rutgers School of Social Work
Attorney – Carella Byrne
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:

Pete Boser
Joseph Pargola
Brian Ross

New Jersey Children’s Alliance
NJ Department of Children and Families
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 April 9, 2021 meeting. The Board voted to approve the minutes without edit. Maria Savattiere abstained from voting as she was not present at the previous meeting.

III. New Business

Review and vote on completed Annual Progress Reviews

Cape May County

Hearing no questions or concerns regarding the review of Cape May County, Nydia asked for a motion to approve Cape May County to be considered for funding in FY22. Christine Beyer made a motion to approve and John Esmerado seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Cape May County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Cumberland County

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John asked why Cumberland County did not collect medical or mental health data. Pete explained that they have been attempting to collect this data but failed to obtain end of the year data. The coordinator is aware that they need to improve data gathering and has begun to do so. Nydia explained that Cumberland County is a newer CAC and there was no previous expectation to collect this data. They are in the process of improving their practice. Nydia also explained that they are in the process of becoming accredited by the National Children’s Alliance (NCA). Once they submit their application, they will have six months to make sure everything is in order prior to the site visit. Debbie Riveros made a motion to approve Cumberland County. Jacquelynn Duron seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Cumberland County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Essex County

John asked about the high number of children listed on the review and whether the number of children were direct victims or whether the number included siblings. Pete explained that Essex County realizes that their numbers were a problem this year and their data was inconsistent. This number reflects victims, siblings, and every child that they came into contact with in any way. John also felt that the number of forensic interviews was very low. Pete said he questioned this number as well and was informed that COVID was a contributing factor. They also explained that they have very specific, narrow guidelines as to who receives a forensic interview. Maria also pointed out an issue regarding the number of children referred for medical exams versus the number of children receiving medical exams. Pete explained that the number are different because the number of children referred for medical exams was reported by the CAC and the number of children receiving medical exams was reported by the Regional Diagnostic Treatment Center (RDTC).

Dr. Medina made a motion to approve Essex County. John seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Essex County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Mercer County

Dr. Medina informed the Board that Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection provides services for Mercer County. Dr. Medina explained that they keep detailed data on those that are served and, as a result, their numbers are different than those provided by the CAC. Dr. Medina felt that there may be a miscommunication regarding the tracking of data regarding how many children are being served. Nydia explained that they have seen similar instances in many counties where RDTC data is more reflective of the actual data.

Jacquelynn Duron made a motion to approve Mercer County. Debbie Riveros seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Mercer County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Morris County

Maria informed the Board the Morris County’s medical evaluation numbers are very low. Maria stated that they have made exhaustive efforts to improve the rate at which children are referred for medical examinations, but they are not receiving referrals. Maria stated that they conducted training over Zoom regarding the importance of medical examinations. Unfortunately, the training date was in conflict with a different training and so they had no attendees from Morris County. The Board discussed several options for training DCPD staff in Morris County to further educate staff on referring children medical examinations on sexual abuse cases and how to engage with families to discuss the importance of medical exams. The Board also discussed that education regarding CACs and the importance of medical examinations needs to be more widespread in the child welfare community (police officers, prosecutor’s office staff, doctors, parents, etc.) in general, as DCPD is only one “touch point” for children in this type of situation.

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John made a motion to approve Morris County. Elahna seconded the motion. Maria Savattiere abstained. The Board voted to approve Morris County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Passaic County

Hearing no questions or concerns regarding the review of Passaic County, Nydia asked for a motion to approve Passaic County to be considered for funding in FY22. Jacqueline Duron made a motion to approve and John Esmerado seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Passaic County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Salem County

Hearing no questions or concerns regarding the review of Salem County, Nydia asked for a motion to approve Salem County to be considered for funding in FY22. Dr. Finkel made a motion to approve and Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Salem County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Sussex County

Nydia explained that, historically, Sussex County has had an issue with medical referrals and medical examinations. They have been working to bring medical staff on site and have recently contracted with an area physician to fulfill this role. The group discussed that the RDTC is too far away from the CAC to be utilized efficiently. Dr. Finkel suggested opening a satellite office for RDTC to perform medical examinations. The Board discussed that there are not enough referrals for medical evaluations to justify opening a satellite office. Maria informed the Board that she has offered for Sussex County to refer their medical evaluations to Deirdre's House and Deirdre's House would pay for it through a private foundation grant. Maria stated that they have never received a referral from Sussex County. John Esmerado made a motion to approve Sussex County and Debbie Riveros seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Sussex County to be eligible for FY22 funding.

Data Workgroup RFP update

Nydia informed the Board that the RFP was released a few weeks prior. Nydia stated that she received a few emails expressing interest in the position but has not yet received any applications. The Board discussed that it is likely that applications would be received closer to the closing date.

Discussion: Medical Evaluation Referrals

The Board discussed medical evaluation referrals at length while discussing the Morris County Annual Review. Christine Beyer suggested considering creating a smaller group to discuss training and exploring other options and opportunities and then bringing these ideas back to the larger group to discuss further. Debbie Riveros, Dr. Finkel, Dr. Medina, Christine Idland (DCF), and Maria Savattiere volunteered to be members of this new group.

FY22 Funding Update

Nydia informed that Board that, during her last conversation with the Senate Majority Office, she was informed that CAC funding would be included amongst their requests. Nydia stated that she is not aware of the amount of funding that will be received but she should be receiving further information in the coming days.

IV. Announcements

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Nydia informed the Board that they have a training scheduled for June 30, 2021, that will discuss male victimization. The training will include a male survivor that will share his experiences with childhood abuse as well as a panel discussion that will include representatives from different disciplines to explore some of the issues around male victimization, disclosure, and response.

V. Adjourn

Next meeting Friday, August 6, 2021.