

# Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair  
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

**August 7, 2020**  
**1:30 p.m. – 3:30 P.M.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

## Minutes

### **In Attendance:**

Christie Bevacqua  
Christine Beyer  
Jacqueline Duron  
Gladibel Medina  
Nydia Monagas  
Brenda Pollack  
Debbie Riveros  
Maria Savattiere  
Javier Toro  
Elahna Strom Weinflash

Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office  
  
Rutgers School of Social Work  
Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection Center  
NJ Children's Alliance  
Joint Base MDL  
Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office  
Deirdre's House  
Hudson County Prosecutor's Office  
Office of the Law Guardian

### **Guests:**

Joseph Pargola  
Brian Ross  
Pete Boser

NJ Department of Children and Families  
NJ Department of Children and Families  
New Jersey Children's Alliance

### **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 3, 2020 meeting. The Board voted to approve the minutes without edit. Jacqueline Duron abstained.

## **III. New Business**

### **Review and vote on completed Annual Progress Reviews**

#### **Burlington County**

There were no questions or concerns with Burlington County at this time. Maria Savatierre made a motion to approve. Javier Toro seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Burlington County.

#### **Cumberland County**

The Board was informed that Cumberland County is the newest CAC. As they were not previously an accredited or associate member, they had not been collecting the required data. As of 2020, they are going to go through the accreditation process and are beginning to collect the appropriate data. The

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Board discussed an error in the Annual Progress Review and Pete Boser from New Jersey Children's Alliance (NJCA) agreed to correct the issue. The Board was also informed that Cumberland County is currently working on developing a mission and vision statement.

Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve with the agreed upon edits. Elahna Weinflash seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Cumberland County. Commissioner Beyer abstained from the vote as she was unable to hear the entire conversation.

## **Mercer County**

Nydia informed the Board that Mercer County is not an accredited or associate member of the National Children's Alliance (NCA) yet. Pete stated that they have had some disruption with personnel assignments which is causing some continuity issues. Pete informed the Board that they are dedicated to ensuring that the CAC succeeds, but they need someone to drive all of the processes. Maria noted that they received a rating of "1" on law enforcement attending case reviews regularly and law enforcement sharing information. They also don't have an MOU, written protocols, or a medical linkage agreement. The Board discussed that they do have a relationship with Dorothy B. Hersh Regional Diagnostic Treatment Center, but they don't have a formalized agreement. The Board discussed contacting the County Prosecutor directly to discuss the issues. Nydia stated that NJCA's next step is to contact the County Prosecutor directly to appoint someone to oversee the CAC.

Debbie made a motion to revisit this review until after NJCA has a conversation with the County Prosecutor regarding the issues. Gladibel Medina seconded the motion. The board voted to revisit this review at a future meeting.

## **Monmouth County**

Nydia informed that Board that, although Dr. Finkel could not attend the meeting in-person, he emailed a concern regarding unknown ages of offenders. Debbie Riveros stated that this was a result of incorrectly entering data. Debbie stated that they are now in the process of correcting the issue. Once the database is updated, the data will be correct. The Board discussed an error in the rating for the item regarding a process for accountability to ensure the MDT process. Pete stated that this issue will be corrected. Nydia explained that Monmouth County is a very solid CAC and MDT with a very strong case review process. Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve. Dr. Medina seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Monmouth County. Debbie Riveros abstained from the vote.

## **Ocean County**

Nydia informed the Board that Ocean County will have their virtual site visit in October to be reaccredited by NCA. Nydia explained that a case review observation was not possible with Ocean County due to the pandemic. Nydia stated that the Board could revisit this review once a case review observation can occur. Maria questioned the rating regarding adequate staff for scope of work. Pete stated that the coordinator is a victim advocate as well as the CAC coordinator, so her time is limited. The Board discussed that they might consider using RFP funding in the future to hire additional staff.

Javier Toro made a motion to revisit this review after NJCA is able to observe the case review process and to discuss the possibility of hiring additional staff. Dr. Medina seconded the motion. The Board voted to revisit this review at a future meeting.

## **Passaic County**

Nydia informed the Board that NJCA was also unable to observe the case review in this county due to the pandemic. Maria questioned the rating regarding adequate building space. Pete explained that they have

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adequate space at this time, but that they are adding staff, including DCPD personnel and will need more space. Maria also questioned whether their review numbers are low. Pete explained that they filter cases differently than other counties, recording data regarding prosecutor investigations rather than all cases in which a child makes an allegation.

Dr. Medina made a motion to revisit the review until NJCA has had the opportunity to observe the case review process. Debbie seconded the motion. The Board voted to revisit this review at a future meeting.

## **Discussion regarding content of Annual Review Reports**

Nydia asked the Board that, after having gone through this review process two times, if the Board feels that the Annual Progress Review documents are helpful, or if they would prefer something that is not as lengthy and more meaningful. The Board discussed that the document should contain an overview that includes strengths and areas for growth as well as any significant discrepancies. Nydia stated that they continue to record the statistics that are included now as it gives an opportunity to compare how the county is progressing. Nydia also stated that they will continue to prepare the reports as they have been and Board members will be able to view them if necessary. Maria felt that the most useful numbers are the number of cases the MDT reviews, the number of forensic interviews, and the number of medical evaluations.

Regarding statistics, Commissioner Beyer stated that the Board doesn't have nearly what they could have or what is needed to get a sense of how the individual MDTs and CACs are functioning, or how they compare and relate to one another across the state. The current raw number of cases doesn't tell the whole story. The Board discussed creating a workgroup to look at what data is available and what information is needed or wanted that will give the Board a picture of what is happening. The Board should be developing a set of metrics that is reviewed on a regular basis. Until this data is collected and analyzed, the Board won't have the whole picture and won't know where the gaps are.

Nydia stated that a workgroup could be formed to discuss what data should be collected and the feasibility of collecting it. To develop metrics, the workgroup will connect with each county to discuss resources and to determine what data they possess. Commissioner Beyer suggested that before the workgroup asks what data is available, they discuss what data is wanted and needed so that they are not limited to what is available. It may be that the necessary data is not being captured so a discussion about how to start capturing that data may be necessary. Maria Savattiere, Commissioner Beyer, Dr. Jacqueline Duron, John Esmerado, and Nydia Monagas volunteered to be members of the workgroup. Commissioner Beyer will also ask a member of the DCF Research, Evaluation, and Reporting Unit to join the workgroup.

## **Discussion regarding options for future funding**

Nydia asked whether multiyear contracts are possible to allow CACs to hire CAC directors. The Board was advised that DCF has, in the past, allowed multiyear contracts, but the funds are not guaranteed. It is dependent on the sufficiency of funds and whether the money is reallocated in the following fiscal year. A question was raised regarding how much money should be used for capital projects in the next round of funding, if funding should become available. Nydia stated that there are CACs that need renovations and technology, but the majority of the money should go to programs, services, and technology for the next RFP.

The Board discussed alternate funding options for CACs to be able to assist in keeping them functioning if state funding is not available. There were some concerns about previous funding sources that are not being offered or significantly reduced due to COVID-19.

Regarding advocating for future RFP funding, the Board discussed contacting the Governor's Office and the Legislature to request that they continue to provide funding. Nydia stated that NJCA will be doing some advocacy on the state level and asking CACs to send out materials as well.

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## **IV. Announcements**

No announcements.

## **V. Adjourn**

Next meeting Friday, October 2, 2020.