



FAMILY SUPPORT & CHILD WELLBEING SUBCOMMITTEE

Corissa Kazar, Co-Chair

Sanford Starr, Co-Chair

In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, notice of this meeting was given by way of notice filed with the Secretary of State, the Trenton Times and the Newark Star Ledger and posted at the Department of State, 125 West State St., 1st Floor, Trenton, New Jersey.”

**Please note the meeting was recorded for the transcription of minutes.*

February 6, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Sanford Starr, Department of Children and Families
Corissa Kazar, embrella
Dr. Susan Esquilin, Clinical Psychologist
Jennifer valentine, CASA of New Jersey
LuAnn Dias, Catholic Charities
Dashaan Jennings, Str8 up Employment
Zachary Miller, NJ CARES Institute
Patty Mojta, Rutgers Institute for Families
Diane Delano, Advocates for the Children of New Jersey
Latanya Forest, Department of Children and families
Shanita Alvarez-Crawley, AtlanticCare
Iris Jones, Department of Health
Alessandra Lamar, Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey
Sonia Moticha, Department of Education
Jessica Cowan, Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health
Kaitlin Mulcahy, Montclair University

Guests:

Naomi Englehard, Advocates for the Children of New Jersey
Monique Ruomo, Family Connection New Jersey
Dr. Bukola Ogunkua, Public Member

Staff:

Bethany D'Amelio, Department of Children and Families

1. Introduction and Context

The meeting was called to order with the reading of the public notice.

2. Discussion Overview

- **Prevention Plan Evaluation**

Review of the 2022-2025 prevention plan was conducted, emphasizing the need to address priorities such

as community engagement, family wellness, and workforce development. It was noted that certain areas require updates to better align with the committee's strategic intent.

- **Housing and Workforce Concerns**

Deliberations identified housing needs and waning workforce as significant challenges impacting service delivery. The emphasis was on evolving strategies that prevent the necessity for families to seek last-resort interventions from the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP).

- **Federal Policy Implications**

Recent federal changes and initiatives were discussed, focusing on their potential effects on state child welfare services, particularly concerning support for marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ youth.

3. Key Insights and Decisions

- **Strategic Alignment**

All committee activities tie back to the Department's strategic plan, aiming for seamless integration with existing policies and frameworks.

- **Empowering Communities**

The necessity for more significant collaboration between state agencies and community-based organizations was underlined, ensuring accessibility to services devoid of stigmatization.

- **Priority Recommendations**

Six potential work groups were identified, each tasked with steering specific priority areas towards action plans addressing prevention, community involvement, and sector-specific challenges.

4. Actions and Follow-ups

- **Work Group Assignments**

Committee members were asked to consider work group assignments, focusing on operational delivery and feedback mechanisms. Regular reporting structures were proposed to ensure consistent progress reviews.

- **Data Utilization and Reporting**

A robust data-sharing protocol was suggested. It was agreed that public data from the Department of Children and Families would support evidence-based decision-making and encourage community participation.

- **Next Meeting Preparation**

The agenda for the forthcoming meeting will entail a survey of participant feedback on task execution and plan adjustments necessary for achieving outlined goals.

5. Conclusion

The committee remains committed to fostering an environment in which preventative strategies are paramount in safeguarding child and family welfare. By leveraging community voices and empirical data, the committee aims to drive meaningful change across New Jersey.

This memo aims to maintain transparency and provide the public with an overview of the task force's recent deliberations. The committee values community input and engagement as we collectively strive to enhance the welfare of children and families across New Jersey. This meeting report was prepared, in part, with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

For further information or queries, the public can reach out via the contact channels provided by the Department of Children and Families.