



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair
Martin A. Finkel, DO, FACOP, FAAP, Co-Chair

Minutes

March 29, 2019

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
DCF Professional Center
30 Van Dyke Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

In Attendance

Christian Arnold	Office of the Attorney General
Christine Beyer	NJ Department of Children and Families
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County Social Services
Cindy Cortez	NJ Senate Legislative District 15
Esther East	Jewish Family Services
Martin A. Finkel	CARES Institute
Marilyn Gorney-Daley	Department of Health
Natasha Johnson	Department of Human Services
Corinne LeBaron	Foster and Adoptive Family Services
Christina Lazzaruolo	Attorney
Sonia Moticha	Department of Education
Kaitlin Mulcahy	Montclair State University
Matthew Schwartz	Youth Representative
Jason Sarnoski	Warren County Freeholder
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
Darlene Supnick	Senator Addiego
Stephanie Ullman	Administrative Office of the Courts
Jennifer Underwood	Department of Community Affairs
Stephen Urbanski	NJ State Police
Wendi White	NJ Department of Corrections

Phone

Seetha Holmes	Office of the Public Defender
Mary Coogan	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Assw. Nancy Muñoz	Legislative District 21
Darlene Supnick	Legislative District 8

Staff

Jason Butkowski	Department of Children and Families
Daniel Yale	DCF – Office of the Commissioner

“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.”



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Introduction and Welcome

A brief welcome was provided by Dr. Finkel and each member briefly introduced themselves.

Natasha Johnson announced that she submitted her resignation as acting Chair of the Prevention Committee to Commissioner Beyer and Dr. Finkel. Natasha informed the Task Force that she felt that, due to other obligations, she would not be able to commit the time necessary to chair the committee. Natasha stated that her last meeting as Chair would be on March 7, 2019.

Review of November 16, 2018 and January 25, 2019 Minutes

November 16, 2018 minutes were approved without edit.

January 25, 2019 minutes were approved without edit.

Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that in late November, DCF created the Office of Family Voice (OFV). The OFV was developed after having spoken with over 500 parents in all 21 counties. What became apparent very quickly was the need to have parent voice and youth voice more integrated into the work of the Department. Aubrey Powers, who was previously the Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Performance Management and Accountability, has been tasked with taking on the Executive Director role of the OFV. The OFV has been talking with parents, organizations, and agencies around the state that have been working with parents. They are also looking at the national best practices to see where there are models that they may be able to replicate or implement in New Jersey. One example, the Quality Parent Initiative (QPI), is a program where foster parents work more closely with birth parents in the best interest of the child. By developing those relationships, the foster parents can foster the entire family, not just the child, which results in smoother transitions. There is also a parent to parent model wherein parents who have been through the protective service system can be brought up as parent leaders and be a resource for parents currently involved with DCF. Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that the OFV hired Kaycie Getty, a young woman who grew up in foster care in NJ, to work with youth and adolescents that are aging out of foster care. Ultimately, Commissioner Beyer stated that she would like to get enough youth and adolescents that have aged out of foster care to the table to be able to improve our foster care system. Commissioner Beyer felt that if anyone is going to be able to fix the foster care system, it will be the kids that experienced it and have lived it. Commissioner Beyer is also looking into creating a Parent Council and Youth Council to give her the opportunity to sit with parents and youth that participate in all of the programs across the department. This will allow DCF to gain input from those that will be affected prior to launching new programs or policies. Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that DCF also made two new appointments since the previous meeting. Niurca Louis, previously from Robin's Nest, past member of the NJTF CAN, and Vice-Chair of the Prevention Committee, has been appointed as the Assistant Commissioner of Family and Community Partnerships within DCF. In the Children's System of Care (CSOC), Mollie Greene has been promoted to the title of Assistant Commissioner of CSOC. Mollie worked as the Director of Clinical Services and has a lot of clinical experience and knowledge, a strong substance abuse background, and knowledge of those programs and systems. This will be an opportunity for DCF to look into more integrated healthcare models. DCF will be



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looking at how resources are used and thinking about what the needs are within that Division. DCF will be launching an advisory committee for CSOC that will be made up of parents and providers from around the state that will advise the Department on how to improve. This advisory group will have a very focused approach and will only meet for approximately 6 months.

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that within DCPD, there was a 10% reduction from January 2018 to January 2019 in children in out-of-home care. At the start of the reform effort, there were approximately 13,500 children in care. In 15 years, that number has been reduced to approximately 5500. Compared to data on a national level, NJ has lower rates of substantiation, lower rates of maltreatment and repeat maltreatment, and have lowered our rates of deaths as a result of maltreatment. So, while our numbers in foster care are coming down, the services and supports that the Department is able to offer through Family and Community Partnerships, CSOC and DCPD, are improving and we are better able to serve children and their families and keep them safer. Commissioner Beyer stated that she felt that NJ is in a good place to be able to go more upstream and do more prevention work, resulting in further improvements in outcomes.

Marygrace commended Commissioner Beyer for traveling throughout the state highlighting the need for partnerships. Marygrace stated that it is not the job of DCF to solve everyone's problems. Dr. Finkel stated that DCF should not have to shoulder the entire responsibility and felt that it is the collective insight and sharing of burden that obtains the best results.

NJTFCAN Business

Reviewing the scope and direction of the NJTFCAN and proposed changes to the bylaws

Dr. Finkel explained that when the NJTFCAN was initially created, it was a different time. The Task force was established due, in a sense, to crisis. While things are very different today, the format and structure of the Task Force has stayed the same. While members of the Task Force come to these meetings every other month, there is a very limited amount of decision making and substantive work done. It seems that it may not be the best use of members' time and a dialogue may be necessary to think about how we want to move forward, what we might want to change, both in the frequency of meeting or other ideas for changing the structure to make things better.

Commissioner Beyer stated that we have had a similar conversation recently about how we can improve the content of the meetings rather than DCF just reporting out. We also discussed that there was a time when it was necessary to have a Task Force to discuss the issues and problems that were occurring in the state, evaluating data, etc. Commissioner Beyer felt that there is still a role and place for the Task Force, but we don't want to waste people's time. The format of this meeting tends to be that DCF reports out, the committees report out, and then we leave. There should be more that the larger group should be/can be engaged in.

Richard asked if there are duties of the Task Force that are statutorily required. Daniel explained that there is certain language in the statute that require the Task Force to perform certain duties. For example, the Task Force must develop a Statewide Prevention Plan, administer the Children's Trust Fund, etc. However, there is no requirement regarding the frequency of meetings or topics discussed. Joe Pargola stated that there are operational pieces that the Task Force has discretion to change, such as meeting frequency, meeting locations, etc. These changes must be submitted in writing based on the bylaws and have a subsequent meeting to vote on the proposed changes.

Dr. Finkel stated that the way the bylaws are written, it is a requirement that a chair of any of the committees must be a member of the Task Force. Dr. Finkel stated that there are a lot of people who are on the committees



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who may be suited to be chair due to their experience and expertise. Dr. Finkel stated that one recommendation would be to remove that requirement and that the committees can select the best person to chair the committees. Dr. Finkel stated that the second recommendation would be to reduce meeting frequency.

Richard stated that in the past, oversight was necessary, but now that things are running more smoothly, the question is how we can enrich or assist DCF. Commissioner Beyer stated that perhaps the Task Force should be utilized as an advisory board. Commissioner Beyer stated that she has been talking about a 21st century child welfare system and what that means. DCF has a strategic plan that is being finalized around the priorities that have been laid out including looking at all of the work that is being done through the lenses of racial equity, healing centered practice, and being family focused. Commissioner Beyer would like the Task Force to discuss what is happening nationally around transforming child welfare and what can be done in NJ. The Task Force could be the advisory board for moving towards a 21st century child welfare system as the group represents all of the departments, the legislature, and private agencies.

Natasha stated perhaps we should consider using the subcommittees in a different way as well. The Prevention Committee talks about things that need to be elevated to the Task Force but those issues aren't really elevated in the way that they should. There is a need to think differently about the relationship between the subcommittees and the Task Force. Natasha felt that there needs to be bidirectional communication, direction and clear expectations of the subcommittees. Commissioner Beyer stated that if the Task Force becomes the advisory board for the 21st century child welfare system in NJ, there would be specific tasks that the subcommittees would be asked to work on.

Dr. Finkel asked for a motion for a bylaw amendment to change the frequency of the formal Task Force meeting dates from bimonthly to a quarterly schedule. A motion was made and seconded. Joseph Pargola informed the Task Force that there must also be a subsequent meeting, in no sooner than 30 days, at which the proposed changes must be ratified by two-thirds of the Task Force. Dr. Finkel also asked for a motion to remove the requirement that the chairperson of a subcommittee must be a Task Force member. A motion was made and seconded. Richard questioned whether there would be a strong connection with the subcommittees if the chairs were not Task Force members. Matthew Schwartz felt that there are individuals on the committees that are very qualified to be chair but cannot be because they are not Task Force members. Natasha agreed and stated while she understands the necessity of having Task Force members on committees, requiring that the chair is also a task force member is difficult. Dr. Finkel stated that perhaps we can require the chairs of the committees, whether they are task force members or not, to report out at the quarterly meetings. Matthew modified his motion to state that the task force would remove the requirement of the committee chairs to be a member of the task force and having the chairperson report at the quarterly meetings. Joseph stated that there should also be an amendment to the bylaws that states that non-member designated chairs of the subcommittees may participate in meetings of the task force.

Adolescents in Transition Workgroup

Matthew stated that the Adolescents in Transition Workgroup has two requests/recommendations from the Task Force. The first request is for advice from the Task Force/DCF on how to obtain transportation for youth to attend meetings. Matthew stated that the transportation would not be necessary for all meetings, but the workgroup would like youth to attend some of the meetings to have feedback and bring up current issues with the system. There was some concern about youth being able to attend meetings depending on the times of the meetings. Matthew suggested that perhaps the meetings can occur after hours or on Saturdays. Commissioner Beyer stated that for the listening tour, there were agencies and DCF staff that were able to provide



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transportation for youth. Matthew stated that he would like youth in a variety of living situation to attend and would like the age range to be from 17 to 24 years of age.

Matthew stated that the workgroup's second request is for a youth survey to determine if youth are aging out to homelessness, if they feel as if they have appropriate care to succeed in the world, budgeting, etc. Matthew stated that it is very difficult to find data on aging out youth and the data that we do have is negative.

Commissioner Beyer stated that at the next workgroup meeting we will have to talk about how we would identify these youth, get support from programs, and how to deliver the survey to youth. Dr. Finkel stated that we would want the largest survey possible and we would want someone to participate in the workgroup that could interpret that information.

Dr. Finkel informed the Task Force that he has a colleague that sits on the workgroup, Dr. Jennifer LeComte, who is providing input regarding medical issues during transition. Matthew stated that he had an opportunity to speak with Dr. LeComte following a previous workgroup meeting regarding a study that he found stating that foster care youth are twice as likely to have health issues in the future.

Jessica Trombetta informed the Task Force that the Youth Advisory Network was able to get youth to the table for the listening tour and she was wondering if Matthew could create a flyer to send out. The expectations of the DCPD specific adolescent providers is that they are building youth advocacy and leadership within their programs and this is a way to do that. Jessica stated that DCF has a template that would provide youth with information about the workgroup regarding general information. Matthew asked if he could create the flyer and send it to the DCF graphics designer for assistance. Marygrace stated that the workgroup needs to be very respectful of the youth and be very clear of what you are requesting from them.

Mary Coogan explained that Children's Aid and Family Services (CAFS) sends out quarterly surveys to youth that have been involved in their program. Mary informed the Task Force that she has had some conversations with staff at CAFS and they have pulled together some of the results of those surveys and will contact Jessica. Mary stated that they pay a stipend to motivate youth to complete the surveys. Mary stated that we may want to collaborate with the Office of Family Voice as well.

Consideration of Committee Applications

- Christina Lazzaruolo's application for membership on the Staffing and Oversight Review Committee was accepted.
- Scout Hartley's application for membership on the Protection Committee was accepted.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

- **Communication Committee** – Cheryl Mojta, Acting Chair, informed the Task Force that the last meeting was on February 26, 2019. At that time, the committee reviewed the two-year marketing campaign for the Children's Trust Fund (CTF). Moving forward the committee will be looking at conducting community outreach regarding the CTF to increase donations. The committee spoke with Patty Mojta, chair of the Communications Workgroup of the Prevention Committee, who is discussing the WE CAN campaign with the National Children's Bureau. The WE CAN Campaign is a visual messaging campaign designed to increase prevention awareness. The committee is hoping to be able to use some of the images for a social media campaign for CTF. The committee has also discussed using Google advertising grants which are in-kind, up to \$10,000 worth of advertising for nonprofits. Cheryl stated that Jason Butkowski, DCF, provided a presentation on the Safe Haven social media campaign



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and how it may be used to inform the CTF social media drive. Jason stated that he provided multiple scenarios to the Communication Committee to help determine what type of social media campaign they would like to roll out. Cheryl stated that the Communication Committee may be requesting CTF funds to assist with a future social media campaign for the CTF.

- **Prevention Committee** – Natasha informed the Task Force that the last meeting was on January 10, 2019. The meeting was specifically used for the workgroups to convene and discuss the work of their groups.
- **Protection Committee** – Richard informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee had not met that month but that the Committee was still working on the Digital Realm of Child Abuse and Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors. Jennifer Underwood informed the Task Force that Jacquelynn Duron from Rutgers University was working on putting together a full report on the data that the committee received from the survey respondents. There was some discussion about wanting to broach the survey with private schools in the state. The workgroup is considering adding an individual to the workgroup that can assist with that. Sonia Moticha stated that they are waiting for direction from the workgroup chair before they move forward. Richard stated that the workgroup is doing great work and they have a lot of good data that they will share with the Task Force about how we can assist schools with sexual abuse prevention.

The Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behavior workgroup are in the process of developing a proposal for a training program that would help train therapists in NJ on an annual basis. The Protection Committee may come back to the Task Force to request funds.

Richard also shared that Dr. Martin Krupnick sent an email regarding the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court judges releasing a document regarding sex offender registration requirements for youth younger than 18 and addressing registration for juveniles with sexually related offenses. The Council recognized the demonstrated potential harm of placing juveniles on registries and recommended that juveniles not be placed on sex offender registries except for the most violent of offenses.

Commissioner Beyer stated that the Task Force can request information from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). There are judges in NJ that have a direct link and leadership at a national level who may be able to provide more information. Dr. Finkel stated that perhaps we can make a case for the annual judges retreat to address this issue. Stephanie Ullman stated that there is an annual two-day conference that NJ judges are required to attend. Stephanie stated that she can propose that this be one of the issues discussed.

- **Staffing and Oversight Review Committee**
Marygrace stated that the committee had a great conversation about some programmatic interventions that are happening. The conversation was focused on what type of resources can be obtained for the staff. Marygrace stated that she would like to have a conversation with the staff at the Office of Training and Professional Development regarding DCF training if DCF plans to include parents on a larger scale. Commissioner Beyer stated that DCF is looking into incorporating parents into some new worker training and certain modules, as they are the experts on their family and will have a great impact. Commissioner Beyer stated that one of the values in DCF is family and looking at all of our work through the lens of the families that we serve. Any new initiatives will be discussed with the Office of Family Voice to determine if there is a way to incorporate family voice.
Commissioner Beyer also informed the Task Force that, within the Commissioner's Office, they are creating an Office of Staff Health and Wellness. Once an individual has been chosen to lead the Office



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and begins to get involved in the Culture of Safety work, it may be beneficial to have that individual participate on SORS or participate in some of the work that SORS is doing to see how SORS could help impact or effect the rollout.

Announcements

Dr. Finkel announced that on April 16, 2019, the CARES Institute is holding their Annual Symposium. The morning topic is recognizing and understanding child sex trafficking with Dr. Jordan Greenbaum. In the afternoon they will be showing the movie “The Tale” and at the conclusion, there will be panel discussion by the producer and director.

On May 14, 2019, the CARES Institute will be providing a free training on ethical issues in providing mental health services for children. It will fulfill the requirement for CEUs for the state.

Daniel Yale provided the Task Force with an update on the Biennial Conference including the proposed date of the conference, speakers and topics for discussion.

Next Meeting – May 17, 2019 in Trenton.