



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

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## **Minutes**

**December 18, 2020**

Virtual Meeting

### **In Attendance**

April Aaronson  
Jacqueline Augustine  
Christine Beyer  
Marygrace Billek  
Mary Coogan  
Mark Doherty  
Esther East  
Martin A. Finkel  
Marilyn Gorney-Daley  
Seetha Holmes  
Natasha Johnson  
Christina Lazzaruolo  
Nydia Monagas  
Sonia Moticha  
Kaitlin Mulcahy  
Richard Stagliano  
Jennifer Underwood  
Lorene Wilkerson

Public Member  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
NJ Department of Children and Families  
Mercer County Human Services  
Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Legislative District 21  
Jewish Family Services  
CARES Institute  
NJ Department of Health  
NJ Office of the Public Defender  
NJ Department of Human Services  
Attorney  
New Jersey Children's Alliance  
NJ Department of Education  
Montclair State University  
Center for Family Services  
Department of Community Affairs  
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

### **Guests:**

Jason Butkowski

NJ Department of Children and Families

### **Staff**

Daniel Yale

NJ Department of Children and Families

"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."

### **Introduction and Welcome**

A brief welcome was provided by Dr. Finkel and the public notice information was provided. Dr. Finkel welcomed two new members the NJTF CAN, April Aaronson and Nydia Monagas and asked that each new member briefly introduce themselves.

### **NJTFCAN Business**

#### **Review and approve minutes from the September 25, 2020 meeting**

The minutes from the September 25, 2020 meeting were approved without edit.



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## Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Commissioner Beyer spoke about the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the regional forums in partnership with ACNJ. In November, through both sessions, approximately 300 providers were able to hear from DCF's Assistant Commissioner regarding kinship work in DCPD, updates on CSOC, and a discussion of DCF priorities in the upcoming year. The Executive Director of the Office of Resilience, Dave Ellis spoke about what is already occurring within the office as well as what is being planned for the future. Kathy Haggerty from the Administrative Office of the Courts spoke about what the court system is doing regarding disparity and disproportionality, both in partnership with DCF and what the court is doing individually. Commissioner Beyer explained that DCF has also gained a great deal of information from the providers and stakeholders that participate in the meetings. Mary Coogan has done a great job reporting back out of to the participants about the feedback that was received during the previous forums and how the feedback is being used to drive some of the state's initiatives.

Commissioner Beyer also spoke about COVID-19. DCPD staff that are client-facing as well as out-of-home provider network are in the 1B category to receive vaccines. DCF is trying to get clarification on whether other types of providers will be included that category as well. Commissioner Beyer explained that the vaccine will not be mandatory for staff and providers. DCF is also looking at what the continued costs associated with COVID-19. DCF will still need PPE, cleaning services, and porter services for at least another year. As DCF primarily deals with children and children are not getting vaccinated, DCF needs to be prepared to serve that population and their families and build those considerations into the work going forward. DCF has access to rapid response COVID testing and will make them available to the out-of-home providers. Although the rapid tests have a high false positivity rate, there is an opportunity to use them in certain circumstances. DCF is also taking stock of additional responsibilities that have come about due to COVID. A large portion of staff working in DCF's Office of Research, Evaluation, and Reporting are working specifically on COVID data. DCF produces daily and weekly reports on COVID related issues to keep on top of what is happening with our client base.

COVID poses such a significant threat to the viability of families in NJ well into the future including challenges to income, food insecurity, housing, and health insurance. There will also have to be work done on infrastructure regarding childcare and transportation. Also "inside the home" dynamics – parental coping abilities, social supports, exacerbation in mental health issues, domestic violence and sexual violence. These issues disproportionately affect the low-income population, single parents, families caring for children with special needs, and populations traditionally marginalized by NJ. DCF is aware that families are going to be struggling and we will have to address the economic fallout of COVID for the next 5 or more years. DCF has been examining data of our state to understand what families and children are facing. There are different needs that exist in different areas of the state.

Commissioner Beyer provided update on DCF priorities but asked that members also provide feedback.

- Creation a family helpline. DCF will be partnering with many different departments throughout the state. Many of the calls that come into the child abuse hotline are families who are struggling economically and are not true abuse and neglect. This is something that would be placed in DCF's Division of Family and Community Partnership. This would integrate constituent access to social and clinical services through phone, internet, and texting. This would be an attempt to try to remove barriers



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to access and to decrease the frequency and severity of family crises that could lead to homelessness, hospitalization, arrest, or foster care placement.

- Creation of a DCF language access plan. One major barrier to progress is a lack of treatment in many family's language of origin in NJ. Although this initiative is in the very early stages of discussion, it is necessary for ongoing treatment and ongoing support of families.
- Address the accelerating youth mental health crisis that is associated with the pandemic. This includes increases in crisis calls to CSOC and PerformCare, increases in frequency and acuity of youth who are presenting to hospital emergency departments for psychiatric emergencies, and an increase in youth suicide.
- Address infant mental health in a more significant way. Conversations have begun to start training on the topic with Montclair University.
- Reform School Based Youth Services (SBYS). DCF will be looking to launch a stakeholder engagement effort with the SBYS providers and the DCF Children's System of Care (CSOC) to work collaboratively on the core services with a heavy emphasis on mental health. Some of the current SBYS have a mental health piece while others do not.
- Maintain or enhance core services to families that prevent harm to children or reduce the risk of domestic violence. DCF is looking at an expansion of supportive housing and shelter programs as family homelessness is a major risk factor for child protection involvement and foster care placement. Youth exiting foster care are also at a high risk for homelessness in young adulthood.
- DCF will work with DHS and DOE around childcare and the childcare infrastructure.
- Expansion on home visiting network to support families upstream. DCF is looking at opportunities to bring other home visiting programs into NJ so that we have a full continuum of services and looking at a more universal way of connecting with mothers at birth.
- Advance the strategic plan. Connectedness is even more important now than ever before. Isolation and loneliness are impacting mental and physical health. DCF will continue to strengthen the prevention of family violence, continue to promote kinship and family connections, continue work with staff health and wellness. DCF will continue to work towards the goal of health and behavioral healthcare strategies, including race equity, healing centered practice, family voice, and culture of safety.
- Develop an Office of Housing within the Department. The focus will be on housing for young people as well as families.
- Create an Office of Monitoring. DCF will look to work with their provider network of services, creating standards of quality, increasing efficacy, looking to increase evidence practices with a focus of race equity and client safety. This is an opportunity where DCF will be asking for contracted provider and stakeholder feedback into the process of what monitoring will look like for the Department.
- DCF will be launching a public/private demonstration project which is the focus of safely eliminating the use of family separation as a tool in child protection. DCF is looking at further reducing the number of children that enter foster care – and when children do have to be separated from their parent, they are placed with relatives. Across the country, child welfare, health, and other sectors are really mobilizing to end this practice while also developing and creating more upstream services to be able to support parents and families in their communities. The first year will be more about a community co-design, working with parents telling DCF what they need. This project will use a human centered design firm to help lead the work. There will also be an evaluation partner to evaluate the efficacy of this co-design



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process. The project is about community, families, changing the way that services are provided, and hearing from families what they need.

The Task Force discussed DCPD's role in cases involving child on child sexual contact. While these types of cases are not specifically handled by DCPD as DCPD handles cases of sexual abuse where a caretaker is the perpetrator, it was agreed that the NJTF CAN Protection Committee should examine the issue. The Task Force also approved the Protection Committee request that members contact other states to determine how similar cases are handled.

### **Recommendations and approval of NJTF CAN Annual Report**

A draft of the NJTF CAN Annual Report was sent to all members for review prior to the meeting. The Task Force discussed keeping the recommendations from the previous Annual Report as they are still viable. The Task Force also agreed to add specific language to the recommendations regarding inclusion, diversity, and equity as well as a recommendation regarding integration of prevention work from the start of family development. The Task Force voted to approve the Annual Report with the modifications discussed.

### **2021 NJTF CAN Meeting dates**

The Task Force reviewed and approved the calendar of meeting dates for 2021.

### **Subcommittee/Committee Updates**

#### **Communication Committee**

Jason Butkowski informed the Task Force that the Communication Committee is continuing to promote the Children's Trust Fund (CTF). Due to COVID-19, the Committee has not been able to make as much progress as previously planned. However, the DCF Logo Shop has sold 358 items since launch and has raised approximately \$450 in revenue for the CTF. Jason reported that Cheryl Mojta retired in September, so the Committee is in the process of looking for a new co-chair.

#### **Prevention Committee**

Daniel Yale explained that Patty Mojta was not available to provide updates on the Prevention Committee. However, Patty composed an email requesting permission to administer a survey to service providers to assess current program evaluation practices and capacities as well as to identify barriers to program evaluation. The Prevention Committee is seeking approval for DCF Communications to send an electronic survey on behalf of the Task Force to all FCP grantees and CAPTA grantees. The Committee will collect data throughout February and may request periodic reminders through DCF Communications. In late March, the Prevention Committee will present a summary of the survey findings to the Task Force. The link to the survey will be sent to Task Force members for review.

As the Prevention Committee has gained several new members, they will be convening a workgroup to develop an orientation to the Committee. The Committee is seeking permission to develop a purpose statement and bylaws. A motion was made to approve the requests from the Prevention Committee. The Task Force voted to approve requests.

#### **Protection Committee**



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Richard explained that the previous meeting had been canceled, but that the workgroups have been meeting regularly. Nydia Monagas provided an update regarding the Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup. Nydia informed the Task Force that one of the goals of the workgroup is to obtain data to understand the prevalence of child on child sexual contact. The workgroup has been discussing exploring what other states are doing to address this issue. They are also working to ensure that these children are accessing appropriate evidence-based services. Nydia spoke about discussing with the workgroup an awareness campaign so that parents are aware of how to respond to this issue.

### **Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee**

Marygrace spoke about the SORS workplan for 2021 which includes:

- A presentation from DCF leadership on DCF priorities and implementation of the strategic plan, including the integration of CSOC and updates on Families First
- A presentation from the DCF Office of Strategic Development regarding the changes in services available to resource families and accessibility of staff
- Update on the DCF Office of Health and Well Being
- Update on the resource family pilot project in Monmouth and Ocean Counties
- Update from the Office of Training and Professional Development regarding programming related to undocumented populations and cultural competence

**Next Meeting – March 26, 2021.**