



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair
Mary Coogan, J.D., Acting Co-Chair

Minutes

March 25, 2022

Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Christian Arnold
Christine Beyer
Marygrace Billek
Mary Coogan
Martin Finkel
Marilyn Gorney-Daley
Seetha Holmes
Natasha Johnson
Corinne LeBaron
Nydia Monagas
Sonia Moticha
Richard Stagliano
Jennifer Underwood
Wendi White
Lorene Wilkerson

Office of the Attorney General
NJ Department of Children and Families
Mercer County Human Services
Advocates for Children of New Jersey
CARES Institute
NJ Department of Health
NJ Office of the Public Defender
NJ Department of Human Services
embrella
New Jersey Children’s Alliance
NJ Department of Education
Center for Family Services
Department of Community Affairs
NJ Department of Corrections
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Guests:

Patty Mojta
Jason Butkowski
Sanford Starr
Benita Miller

Prevent Child Abuse NJ
NJ Department of Children and Families
NJ Department of Children and Families
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 Mary Coogan and the public notice information was provided. Mary asked that each member briefly introduce themselves.

NJTFCAN Business

Review and approve minutes from the December 17, 2021 meeting.

The minutes from the December 17, 2021 meeting were approved without edit.



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Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Commissioner Beyer provided an update on the following:

SEP Exit and Agreement

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that after 18 years under the federal lawsuit, due to thousands of people working together, NJ has one of the highest performing child welfare systems in the country. Recently, DCF was able to negotiate an exit plan and agreement with the federal monitor and plaintiffs. The plan was presented to the federal court judge the previous Tuesday and will be finalized in the coming days. As the attorney representing DCF on this lawsuit since 2014, Christian Arnold spoke about how amazing it has been to watch the transformation of DCF and a credit to those involved, both DCF staff and stakeholders.

Commissioner Beyer explained that the NJTF CAN and SORS will be involved as part of the exit plan and agreement. DCF is currently in the last monitoring period with the federal monitor. The monitoring period runs from January 1, 2022 to June 30, 2022. During this timeframe, DCF has agreed to implement a new CQI system, including a family survey portion. At the conclusion of this monitoring period, the federal monitor will prepare a report that will be submitted to the court. This report will be received by DCF in mid to late October 2022. Assuming all that has been agreed upon has been accomplished, there will be a “Fairness Hearing” at which time, if there are no objections from the plaintiffs, DCF will return to court in December and the court will end the lawsuit. Christian stated that they will still have the ability to reopen the lawsuit and there will be a 6-month transition period, but essentially the court case would end at that time. During the 6-month transition period, although not under court oversight, the federal monitor will review whether DCF is continuing, as a system, to implement all that was agreed upon under the agreement. As of June 30, 2023, the oversight would end.

Commissioner Beyer spoke about who would be looking at DCF’s performance once the monitor is no longer involved. As DCF has progressed so far in the use of data quality, outcomes, and the information that is made available to the general public, it is not necessary to be “monitored”. One of the items that DCF agreed to was to draft legislation to memorialize much of the agreement. The legislation is very detailed and spells out that DCF will continue to do what was agreed upon in the exit agreement. Also included in the legislation is a proposal that the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) of the Task Force would become the body that would continue to look at the Department’s performance. There would need to be some reconfigurations to the SORS including specific positions on the Committee that were detailed in the legislation to ensure that children’s attorneys, parent’s attorneys, the Court, a parent, a young person, etc. all have a seat on the Committee. The seats on the Committee would also include the DCF Commissioner and DCF Assistant Commissioner, although they would not be permitted to be a chair/co-chair of the Committee. The SORS would be required to prepare an annual report to the Legislature and Governor that would include very specific points of information and performance. Commissioner Beyer stated that DCF will begin to have meetings and planning with the SORS about taking on this new role and what the role will entail.

CBCAP Supplemental Request for Proposals (RFPs)

Sandy Starr, Assistant Commissioner, DCF Division of Family and Community Partnerships

Commissioner Beyer reminded the Task Force that she mentioned in the Fall of 2021 that DCF had some federal funding that they intended to use for prevention work. However, DCF was waiting to review the recommendations of the 2022-2025 Statewide Prevention Plan prior to determining how the funds would be utilized.



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Prior to discussion of the RFPs, those in the meeting that might consider applying for funding were given the option to leave the meeting so as not to potentially disqualify themselves. Patty Mojta, Richard Stagliano, and Dr. Finkel left the meeting.

Sandy provided the Task Force with a very general description of the two RFPs that would be funded through the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) American Rescue Plan (ARP) Supplemental Funding. Sandy also provided a description of the eligible uses for the CBCAP ARP funds which include: (1) supporting community-based efforts to develop, operate, expand, enhance, and coordinate initiatives, programs, and activities to prevent child abuse and neglect and to support the coordination of resources and activities to strengthen and support families thereby reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and (2) fostering understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of diverse populations in order to effectively prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.

Moving the 2022-2025 NJ Statewide Prevention Plan Forward

Mary stated that for the past few years, Commissioner Beyer has tried to get the Task Force to be more proactive in trying to get involved in prevention and taking a more proactive role on this Task Force. In December, the Task Force approved the 2022-2025 Statewide Prevention Plan. To assist in moving the plan forward, Mary reached out to several Task Force members and asked what they can do to help promote the plan. Mary stated that members shared a lot of great things that are going on in the members' departments and agencies in the prevention realm. Mary suggested that those who have a connection with a commissioner or executive create a two-minute video spot that highlights the prevention efforts that the department is undertaking and put it on their website, share with staff, and with the public. Once that occurs, the Task Force can coordinate efforts to share across departments and agencies as well.

Marygrace suggested using the PowerPoint of the Prevention Plan presentation and asking the Human Service Advisory Council (HSAC) to share at their meetings. Natasha shared that she would like to do targeted outreach to specific groups and explaining why the Prevention Plan is important and relevant to them. Lorene stated that she will share the plan with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and ask that the plan be sent to the Child Placement Review (CPR) Coordinators so that they can share it with the individual CPR Boards. Sonia felt that there are many connections and parallels between the Department of Education and the Prevention Plan. Sonia stated that she will put together some of the information and share it with the Task Force. Mary asked that if members are able to assist, that they let the Task Force and Sandy know the details so that they can be shared.

2022 NJTF CAN/DCF Skill Building Conference Discussion

Daniel discussed the idea of forming a workgroup to plan this year's Skill Building Conference and asked Task Force members to discuss possible themes and topics. The Task Force decided to hold a hybrid conference to be held virtually and in-person. Task Force members spoke about several topics that would be suitable for this year's conference. Mary and Nydia agreed to join the Conference Planning Workgroup.

Powerful Families, Powerful Communities

Benita Miller, Executive Director

Benita explained that Powerful Families, Powerful Communities came from the idea of "narrowing the front door" or reducing the reach of the child protection side of the child welfare system and introducing more



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upstream prevention methods. In addition, they wanted to examine how they can support and sustain kinship placements rather than non-kinship placements when children come into care.

A significant part of Powerful Families, Powerful Communities focuses on power sharing through the use of human-centered design practices. In the fall of 2021, three communities, the city of Camden, Bridgeton and Millville, and Newark, were identified as sites to recruit and support co-design teams. There are 30 co-designers that work with IDEO, a design firm, to think about ways to create equitable tables and decision-making points within our child welfare system. The 30 co-designers are compensated for their time, have a commitment of 4 hours per week, and have homework that they complete within their communities to determine if what they are doing resonates with other community members. The co-designers are also provided with clinical support to help process what they have talked about during co-design sessions. The clinician provides support for other issues that might arise as it relates to their lived experiences with the child welfare system as well.

The co-designers were charged with coming up with “prototypes”, or ideas that get refined over time and emerge as an innovative way of doing something. These prototypes fall into one of three categories: restorative practices, healing-centered interventions, and trauma-informed community building. The co-designers have communicated a desire to have DCF be an important part of the community fabric, which is important to highlight because the conversation underway nationally is about abolishing systems. Because they were invited to create a table that DCF joins alongside community members, there has been great conversation about what role DCF should play in providing upstream preventive services and focusing on the core mission of making sure children are safe. As a result of these conversations, much information has emerged as a model for how systems can work with and build trust with communities to transform large child welfare systems. Benita stated that the next step is connecting the co-designers to stakeholders such as Task Force members, to work together to not just transform the child welfare system, but how services are delivered in communities. Several Task Force members stated that they would like to connect with Benita to further discuss partnership in this initiative. Commissioner Beyer added that they are having difficult, honest conversation with the co-designers which is challenging the system and the way we think. What has been so unique is the co-design process, challenging issues, policy, or practice to determine what works for communities. DCF is looking at how they can more fully embed this process in all of their decision making.

A question was raised about ideas that have been developed by the co-designers to this point. Benita explained that there were originally 95 ideas, which has been narrowed down to approximately 35. The initial focus was on young children (0-5) and families affected by substance abuse. The following areas of focus have emerged:

- Truth and reconciliation as healing
- Unrestricted access to mental health services in communities
- Development of mandated supporter role within DCF and community stakeholders that will prevent families from entry into the child protection system

Benita stated that, moving forward, they would like to use the existing co-designers to help identify the incoming class of co-designers. By Fall 2022, they hope to be in three additional communities to build on this effort.

Discussion: Marketing and Fundraising Committee



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Jason Butkowski informed the Task Force that a meeting was held with members of the Communication Committee to discuss that the Task Force was moving towards a Marketing and Fundraising Committee for the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) rather than continuing with a Communication Committee. They discussed the need to include individuals that have experience in the nonprofit fundraising world. After a review of how other states raise funds for their CTFs, Jason felt that it is possible for NJ to raise similar amounts of funding. To accomplish this, we may need to review what options are available, the CTF itself may need to be restructured, or we may need to look at examples of what other states are doing. The first step will be to recruit individuals to serve on the Marketing and Fundraising Committee. Jason felt that there are partners that DCF works with who are involved with other aspects of the work that DCF does that may be able to assist with this effort. Richard and Nydia offered that the marketing individuals that work for their agencies may be able to assist.

Rules for Open Public Meeting Participation

Mary reminded members that a draft of Rules for Public Participation was sent by email for review prior to this meeting. The Task Force discussed why these rules are necessary and how they would be posted if they were adopted. Mary spoke about other large public meetings that she attends that don't have written rules but have informal processes in place. Mary asked that members review the document and a formal vote be held at the next meeting.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Prevention Committee

Patty informed the Task Force that the Prevention Committee met earlier that month. During that meeting, the Committee voted on and approved the Committee Charter. Patty will email the Charter to the Task Force for review. The Committee also heard presentations from Benita Miller on Powerful Families, Powerful Communities as well as the DCF Office of Family Voice regarding their Youth Council and Fatherhood programming. Finally, the Communication Workgroup of the Committee has been working with DCF Communications on the WE CAN Campaign for Child Abuse Prevention Month. Regarding the WE CAN Campaign, Jason asked that if Task Force members see the posts on DCF's social media, to share with their social media community as well.

Protection Committee

Sonia spoke about the survey that was conducted by the Digital Realm of Child Abuse around programming regarding online safety prevention. One need that arose from the survey was parent programming. The workgroup, in collaboration with the NJ DOE, developed a parent resource that includes a flyer containing the most salient information. At the bottom of the document, there will be a link to a larger source document for those that want more information and resources. The plan would be for the flyer to be distributed by the DOE broadcast system to all schools in NJ. The broadcast can also include information and ideas on how the flyer can be utilized and shared with parents and caregivers. Drafts of the flyer and source document were provided to Task Force members by email prior to the meeting. The workgroup requested that the Task Force vote to approve the document at this meeting so that it could be moved along for review at the DOE. Mary made a motion that the Task Force approve the documents on the condition that those that were not in attendance approve. Dr. Finkel seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve the aforementioned documents.



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Nydia informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee invited Commissioner Beyer and DCPD Assistant Commissioner Carmen Diaz-Petti to attend their meeting to address concerns around child-on-child sexual abuse and activity. Nydia stated that a Child-On-Child Sexual Abuse Workgroup has been established that includes members of various disciplines to discuss a comprehensive, coordinated, systemic response to addressing child-on-child sexual abuse activity cases to ensure that these children and families get access to the appropriate medical and mental health services. DCF is also working to create a temporary unit within SCR to be able to connect those children with appropriate services. Nydia also explained that last year, the Protection Committee requested that DCF collect data on this type of case when they are called into SCR. As it has been a year since DCF began collecting this data, the workgroup requested this data from DCF to see if there are any trends, the disposition of these cases, etc.

Nydia also provided an update regarding the Medical Evaluation and Referral Workgroup which is chaired by Dr. DeBellis from Audrey Hepburn Children's House and Dr. Silliman Cohen of CARES. The focus of the workgroup is to ensure that there is appropriate training on what physical and sexual abuse examination entail so that those talking to families are describing the examinations appropriately. The workgroup met with the DCF Office of Training and Professional Development and as a result, Dr. DeBellis and Dr. Silliman Cohen will be subject matter experts on DCF's sexual abuse training module. The workgroup is also looking into how they can provide training to other providers who may be referring children for examinations (CMOs, Mobile Response, Etc.)

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

In addition to the conversation with the SORS about their new role, Marygrace explained that Carmen Diaz-Petti provided a presentation on kinship data as well as priorities and new initiatives of DCPD to help keep children safe.

Announcements

In the interest of learning the roles of Task Force members in their jobs, Mary asked that members provide a brief presentation at future meetings. Mary informed the Task Force that Wendi White has agreed to provide a presentation at the next meeting about the family engagement work that occurs within the Department of Corrections.

Next Meeting – June 24, 2022.