



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

Minutes

March 26, 2021
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Lisa Allen	21 st Legislative District
Jacqueline Augustine	Administrative Office of the Courts
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County Human Services
Mary Coogan	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Martin A. Finkel	CARES Institute
Hon. Margaret Foti, J.S.C.	Bergen County Superior Court
Marilyn Gorney-Daley	NJ Department of Health
Seetha Holmes	NJ Office of the Public Defender
Natasha Johnson	NJ Department of Human Services
Nydia Monagas	New Jersey Children's Alliance
Sonia Moticha	NJ Department of Education
Kaitlin Mulcahy	Montclair State University
Jason Sarnoski	Warren County Commissioner
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
Katie Stoehr	NJ Department of Children and Families
Mahogany Summers	Youth Representative
Jennifer Underwood	Department of Community Affairs
Wendi White	NJ Department of Corrections
Lorene Wilkerson	NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Guests:

Jason Butkowski	NJ Department of Children and Families
Patty Mojta	Prevent Child Abuse NJ

Staff

Daniel Yale	NJ Department of Children and Families
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“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 new member, Mahogany Summers, and asked that she briefly introduce herself. Dr. Finkel also asked that each member briefly introduce themselves.

NJTFCAN Business



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Review and approve minutes from the December 18, 2020 meeting

The minutes from the December 18, 2020 meeting were approved without edit. Jason Sarnoski abstained from the vote.

Updates from Katie Stoehr, DCF Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Katie explained that, as a condition of the Settlement Agreement in the Matter of Charlie and Nadine H. v. Murphy, DCF is required to produce a needs assessment that is county specific every two years. In the past, the needs assessment was conducted in an iterative fashion over a period of years. This administration changed that methodology and engaged more directly with communities to produce the needs assessment. Katie informed the Task Force that, for a period of approximately one year prior to COVID-19, DCF staff worked with Human services Advisory Councils in every county across the state to create a different methodology – a way that shares quantitative data with those groups and asks them to conduct interviewing and focus groups with constituents and leaders on a local level in order to produce a qualitative report. Katie shared the in-depth, quantitative data that Rutgers compiled from the Census Bureau and other publicly available data that shows socioeconomic and demographic information by county. This data was then used to create a report about every county regarding, qualitatively, what constituents report as their needs. Katie explained how to access this information through the DCF website and shared an example of one county report and what the reports, both quantitative and qualitative, include. Katie stated that the next step is to work with Rutgers to develop a statewide synthesis of the findings.

Katie also provided an update regarding DCF's work regarding race equity. Within DCF's Strategic Plan, there are 5 core approaches, one of which is race equity. The DCF Race Equity Steering Committee recommended a list of priority action areas to DCF Executive Management which included:

- Contracting and collaboration with community providers with a history of supporting communities of color
- Developing decision point analysis using data to determine moments in time where disparity is increasing or decreasing so that leadership will be able to determine where to focus efforts from a policy perspective
- Engage in deep training internally
- Ongoing use of race equity lens within the needs assessment.

DCF has launched a department-wide training effort for every DCF employee. The first wave of the training is self-guided and is using a curriculum that was developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The remainder of the sessions will include live sessions with Dr. Jessica Pryce, a national expert of race equity in child welfare. In the fall of 2021, Joyce James, another national expert of race equity in child welfare, will work with each division of DCF to create specific race equity plans for every area of our work.

In addition to DCF's Race Equity Steering Committee, DCF has recently completed interviews for the Executive Director of the newly developed Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Katie informed the Task Force that another core approach is Collaborative Safety, using safety science when looking at critical incidents that occur when working with children and families. Safety Science is a way of examining what occurred and learning from these incidents as an organization. In 2020, DCF rolled out a very



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deliberate method of using safety science to debrief critical incidents in DCP. This spring, Collaborative Safety will be rolled out within the Children’s System of Care as well.

Katie spoke about the Office of Family Voice Youth Council. In July 2020, they provided a presentation to the DCF Executive Management Team with recommendations on how to improve the system. From this presentation, several subcommittees were formed including:

- Aging out and modernizing communication
- Resource and kin parent training – assisting DCF staff with how to modify training for foster parents to better care for young people
- Sibling and Advocacy Subcommittee – assisted in crafting an RFP regarding peer mentoring.

Katie also informed the Task Force that the statewide ACEs plan was released in February and can be found on DCF’s website. Katie also spoke about a resource associate with DCF’s Office of Resilience, the New Jersey Resiliency Coalition. This is meant to be a collection of information and there is a distribution list that individuals can join. This is a community resource where anyone that is doing ACEs work can share it with like-minded community of practitioners.

Regarding DCF Division related information, Katie informed members that Governor Murphy’s FY22 budget includes a proposed state increase to support rate setting and rebalancing with the Children’s System of Care to modernize rates. Within Home Visiting, in collaboration with the Burke Foundation, the Trenton Health Team, and Family Connects International, DCF is working to develop a Family Connects Universal Home Visitation pilot in Mercer County. Regarding DCP, in 2020, compared to 2019, DCF increased the initial placement of children with kin by 25%. DCF is also enhancing DCP’s case practice model with the use of solution-based casework, an evidence informed model. This model is informed by cognitive behavioral therapy, addiction and recovery work, and solution focused therapy. DCF recently underwent their annual Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) “check-in”. The CFSR includes 10 domains that they measure. In 2019, DCF passed 2 of the 10 benchmarks, leaving 8 additional benchmarks. In 2020, DCF passed 7 out of those 8, leaving only 1 measure to surpass.

Dr. Finkel asked about the status of DCP at that time in terms of field work. Katie informed the Task Force that DCP staff are working in the field and are prioritizing their face-to-face contacts and home visits with children who have been assessed to be at high risk and very high risk of maltreatment. In addition, DCF released a policy in December 2020 entitled “Guidance for Providers of In-Home and Community Services”. This created a mandate for certain types of services to remain in-person specifically, homemaker services, FPS, RDTs, etc. For other types of providers, the policy states that DCF would like them to begin shifting towards in-person services depending on levels of risk. Katie stated that the call volume to DCF remained at below COVID levels. However, the data concerning critical incidents is tracked very closely and there have not been major swings in those cases.

Dr. Finkel also spoke about therapeutic services that transitioned to teletherapy and, where measured, there were some very good, consistent outcomes. Dr. Finkel asked if there were plans to continue teletherapy as an acceptable form of therapy. Katie explained that while this type of therapy has worked well for certain types of individuals, there are other types of therapy that cannot be done in this way, e.g. domestic violence counseling, children at high risk for self-harm, etc. Katie stated that there is a lot of discussion around preserving what is working but there are other considerations that have to be examined including state laws. Katie felt that the task



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before DCF is to not rebuild the things that weren't working but to be creative and innovative to make things better than they were before the pandemic.

Children's Justice Act 3 Year Assessment and Recommendations

Daniel provided an overview of the uses of the Children's Justice Act (CJA) grant as well as the process that the Task Force has used in the previous 3-year assessments. Historically, the Task Force held a full day retreat to discuss the progress that had been made towards the previous recommendation that the Task Force made to DCF. For the 2018 assessment, a retreat was held but a survey was also developed and sent to members of the Task Force Subcommittees. Daniel informed members that, through conversations with members of the Task Force, it may be better going forward to discuss these recommendations on an ongoing basis rather than at the end of the 3-year cycle. By doing so, it will allow Task Force members to keep apprised of the progress being made as well as providing the opportunity to modify/change recommendations if necessary.

The Task Force was previously provided a copy of the 2018 3-Year Assessment and recommendations prior to the meeting and were asked to review the document. Jacqueline Augustine provided an update regarding the recommendations around issues involving the Administrative Office of the Courts and Nydia Monagas provided an update regarding Child Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary Teams to the Task Force regarding what has been accomplished towards the recommendations of the 2018 3-Year Assessment. Members discussed the progress that had been made during the previous 3 years and decided that several of the previous recommendations were still applicable.

At the conclusion of the discussion regarding the previous recommendations and progress that was achieved, the Task Force discussed the recommendations for the upcoming 3-year period. Mary Coogan felt that, prior to finalizing any recommendations, the Task Force members should look at the outcomes of the trainings that have been conducted, determine whether these trainings need to continue, and to look at the assessments that have been conducted to determine the needs of the State. Mary felt that the report should not just be slightly updated and resubmitted, but rather take the time to look deeper into the needs of the State. Seetha Holmes agreed and felt that, with all of the positive changes that are taking place within NJ's child protection system, the Task Force should take their time and develop more detailed recommendations. Mary agreed to assist with this process and suggested that Jacqueline, Nydia, Natasha and Katie work with Daniel to discuss further recommendations of the Task Force. Dr. Finkel also asked members to review the previous assessment thoroughly and email Daniel with any comments or suggestions within two weeks. Once the new assessment and recommendations are complete, they will be sent to the Task Force for review.

Discuss themes and topics for the 2021 NJTF CAN/DCF Biennial Conference

The Task Force was asked to discuss ideas for a theme and topics for the upcoming 2021 DCF/NJTF CAN Biennial Conference. Several suggestions were made including:

- The effects of COVID-19 on child abuse and neglect and the administration of services
 - Innovative ways that agencies have responded
 - What has been working?
- Pending mental health crisis due to COVID
 - Children and Families
 - Workforce
 - Grief and loss
 - Self-care



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- Collaborative presentation between DCF/Rutgers as opening session to frame rest of series

The Task Force also discussed the format of the conference and agreed that the conference should be held similarly to the previous year's conference in that there will be three sessions held every other week.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Communication Committee

Jason informed the Task Force that the last meeting of the Communication Committee was held on March 16, 2021. Although there was not a quorum at this meeting, the Committee members that did attend were able to work through some of the steps that they are taking to launch the CTF campaign through the DCF social media account to coincide with Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Prevention Committee

Patty informed the Task Force that the Prevention Committee met in early March to discuss needs assessment review to prepare for the next step of the Statewide Prevention Plan. The Prevention Committee was provided with presentations from DCF regarding the effects of COVID on DCF families as well as the economic impact of COVID. The next step is that a survey to Committee members to determine priority focus areas for the next plan. The Evidence-Based workgroup of the Committee sent out a survey to all prevention programs funded through DCF. Although the response rate was very low, the responses indicated that the prevention community appears to be struggling with collecting data and evaluating their services due to lack of capacity and funding/staff dedicated to evaluation. Patty informed the Task Force that the Infrastructure and Resources workgroup of the Committee has been attempting to obtain information on past Children's Trust Fund (CTF) initiatives and to make recommendations for the CTF. The workgroup has struggled with obtaining data and plans to put forth recommendations for the CTF in the coming months.

Protection Committee

Richard informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee was provided with the same presentations that were provided to the Prevention Committee. Sonia Moticha spoke about the work of the Digital Realm of Child Abuse workgroup. Sonia stated that in December the workgroup submitted a report based on the survey data that was collected. The report included recommendations to the Department of Education (DOE) regarding child sexual abuse prevention, specifically the internet safety programming piece. Sonia informed the Task Force that the DOE was moving forward with 3 of those recommendations:

- Social media messaging in June for National Internet Safety Month
- Identify or create a parent resource document regarding online safety to be distributed to all schools
- Identify available online safety programming curricula

Nydia spoke about the work of the Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behavior workgroup. Nydia explained the workgroup has been focusing on trying to make sure that there is access to information and resources around youth problematic sexual behaviors, focusing on school aged children. They have been working with DCP, IAIU, and CSOC to have them include a checkbox on referrals to track this type of case to determine case outcomes as services are not typically mandated. Nydia explained that the workgroup has



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started conversations with other states that have developed policy and legislative action to ensure that these children do not “fall through the cracks” and are accessing the appropriate services in hopes that NJ can learn from their success.

The workgroup also met with DCF to host a webinar for DCF staff regarding working with youth with problematic sexual behaviors - how to identify and assess these behaviors and how to understand what treatment provides so that families understand the importance.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee

Marygrace informed the Task Force that the last meeting of the SORS was held on February 9, 2021. During this meeting, the Committee was provided with a presentation on Solution-Based Casework. Marygrace felt that it was an excellent presentation and that Solution-Based Casework is very refreshing as it is built on top of the child-family teaming, but it gives control and empowerment to families to create their own solutions. The Committee is currently reworking its annual workplan to accommodate changes in staffing at DCF.

Announcements

Sonia informed the Task Force that schools are receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funding to assist with safely reopening, addressing learning loss, and other impacts related to COVID. In addition to that, the DOE has designated \$30 million statewide for provision of mental health service and support. Within that funding, each district will be eligible for \$45,000. Within that, 10% is required to be used for professional development related mental health supports. The remaining funds are to be used to assist schools in building a tiered sustainable intervention model of comprehensive mental health supports and services.

Dr. Finkel announced that the CARES Institute Annual Symposium on March 29, 2021. It will feature two topics: Enhancing TF-CBT Application for Youth Exposed to Complex Trauma and Sustaining Evidence Based Mental Health Practices in the Community.

Nydia announced the following statewide trainings:

- May 6, 2021 – Working with LGBTQ+ youth
- June 3, 2021- Impact of Domestic Violence and Interpersonal Violence on Children

Next Meeting – June 25, 2021.