



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

Minutes
September 24, 2021
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Christian Arnold	Office of the Attorney General
Jacqueline Augustine	Administrative Office of the Courts
Christine Beyer	NJ Department of Children and Families
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County Human Services
Mary Coogan	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Hon. Margaret M. Foti	Bergen County Vicinage
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
Assw. Nancy Muñoz	21 st Legislative District
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
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 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 March 26, 2021 and June 25, 2021 meetings

The minutes from the March 26, 2021 and June 25, 2021 meeting were approved without edit.



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Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Commissioner Beyer provided an update on the following:

Funding Opportunities:

- Office of Resilience – Innovation Grants - \$3 million over two years. The goal is to sponsor organizations or agencies, 3 regional providers who are willing to partner with DCF to work with communities. The grants are about having community partners, neighborhood centers, individuals, coaches – people who have deep roots in their communities - with a goal of creating/developing self-healing communities and building resilience within communities. Historically, small, grass-roots organizations don't have an opportunity to obtain grants or contracts with state departments because they are not set-up as a 501c3, registered in NJ Start, or have a formal structure. This is an opportunity to work at the community level to have regional hubs work with communities and develop ideas. There will be a bidders conference to provide descriptions of what is trying to be accomplished. This is not an opportunity for large providers to obtain the funds and provide service in communities. This is for large organizations to obtain the money and pass it through to neighborhood centers, coaches, individuals, schools, etc.
- Funding for prevention services - Commissioner Beyer stated that, upon finalization of the NJ Statewide Prevention Plan, DCF will look into investing additional funding in prevention services recommended by the Committee.

Commissioner Beyer stated that DCPD continues to look towards identifying additional supports and services for kinship families to be able to help support children that are placed in kinship families. The needs of kinship families are typically different from foster families so DCF continues to build supports for those families. DCF has been working to amending the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Joint Base McGuire–Dix–Lakehurst (JB MDL) specific to the approximately 9,000 Afghani guests on base. DCF has been working with other state departments, the NJ Office of Homeland Security, the U.S. Office of Homeland Security, and the U.S. State Department to ensure that DCF has the authority to investigate child abuse and neglect within that population.

DCF received approval for the rate enhancement for CSOC in-home and out-of-home services. The new rates for each contract had to be keyed in manually; however, after only approximately one month, a vast majority of the enhanced rates have been provided out to provider organizations.

Commissioner Beyer highlighted the Youth Council within the Office of Family Voice – 20 young people between the ages of 16 and 23 that have been meeting regularly to assist with the Peer Mentoring Program and revisions to the Youth Resource Website. One subcommittee of the Youth Council applied for and received \$100,000 to develop an app. They are working with an organization in California to expand an app that they developed to support one another. They have also written a Sibling Bill of Rights that is now being reviewed and finalized. Another subcommittee of the Youth Council has reviewed DCF's foster parent training and have submitted edits, comments, and suggestions to improve the training. They are also working with organizations to recommend what other types of training should be provided to resource parents on an ongoing basis.

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that she met with the Fathers with Lived Experience Group recently. They have been meeting for approximately a year and developed nine recommendations to DCF to improve DCPD's work with fathers. Several of the recommendations that were made by this group were issues that DCF had already recognized and were in the process of improving.



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Seetha stated that in all DCPD custody cases that are active in litigation, DCPD is searching for kin for the child(ren) to be placed with. However, there are also children who have independent living as a plan or are legally free for adoption who have relatives that may not have been interested in adoption or who may have been ruled out by DCPD policy in the past. Seetha asked if DCPD can revisit these cases to determine if there are relatives that are able to adopt. Commissioner Beyer stated that she has been meeting with local office staff in all 46 local offices since January, attending local office staff meetings to discuss DCF's strategic plan priorities, why kinship is important, and listening to their concerns and questions. A lot of DCPD staff have been working in this system for many years and as DCF is trying to shift the culture and thinking, it is important for DCF leadership to hear staff thoughts about placing with kin. DCF conducted a statewide survey of all DCF staff to gain a better understanding of feelings toward relative placements, types of concerns they have about placing with relatives, and what biases may exist around relatives so that education can be provided to staff. In addition, by visiting with each local office, Commissioner Beyer was able to discuss the benefits of placing with relatives, the improved outcomes for children when they are placed with children, and debunking myths that staff may have.

Commissioner Beyer also discussed a project within the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) regarding youth that have been in placement for over 36 months involving a thorough review of each case. This provides an opportunity to look at what has been done in the past and what can be done differently going forward. Mary also mentioned that all counties conduct post termination reviews where children that are legally free are reviewed by the court system. This may provide an opportunity to remind people that there is a re-focus on relatives and that some of the licensing requirements have changed.

Commissioner Beyer provided an update on universal home visiting. After the legislation was signed, the advisory committee was convened in early September. The advisory team is comprised of approximately 25 individuals from that particular area of expertise. DCF Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP) has been identifying various subcommittees that will be involved with implementation of universal home visiting. A review of the legislative requirements and the evidence-based programs revealed that the only program that meets both requirements is Family Connects. The challenge is that the planning will take time before the service can begin. DCF is in discussions to work with the Burke Foundation on focus groups and a public awareness campaign. The planning and implementation of universal home visiting is a huge undertaking and not something that DCF can do alone. DCF is looking at trying to bring many partners and stakeholders to the table.

Marketing and Fundraising Committee Discussion

At the previous meeting, the Task Force discussed creating a Marketing and Fundraising Committee to take the place of the Communication Committee. Jason Butkowski explained that the Communication Committee was having difficulties because, although the members were very passionate about the cause and had great ideas, without the proper background, they did not have the ability to execute. As the focus of the Communication Committee has been on raising the profile of the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) the Task Force might consider creation of a Marketing and Fundraising Committee for the CTF. This new Committee would seek to recruit members that have backgrounds in corporate fundraising and marketing-based communications. The Task Force discussed that the funding that had previously been allocated to the Communication Committee for a CTF marketing campaign had not been used due to the shift in focus caused by the pandemic. Jason stated that the



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funds would have to be put out to bid again because the previous agreement has lapsed. However, Jason also advised the Task Force that the amount of money that was previously allocated was very low and may need to be increased. Commissioner Beyer suggested consideration of hiring a public relations firm to create a polished, statewide public awareness campaign about the CTF.

A concern was raised regarding whether this new committee would be able to assist with any other public relations initiatives that may come up in the future. Jason felt that there may be opportunities for the new committee to help in other areas as well, but the focus should mainly be the CTF. However, the Prevention Committee has a Communication Workgroup that also provides communications regarding prevention work. Seetha suggested that prior to dissolving the Communication Committee, that a meeting be held to discuss with the members to let them know that the scope of the committee will be changing and discuss whether they would like to continue as members. The discussion of dissolving the Communication Committee will be tabled for a future meeting.

Mary Coogan made a motion that the Task Force utilize the previously allocated funds and any additional funds that DCF is able provide to hire a public relations firm to promote and advertise the CTF for the purposes of increasing donations. Richard Stagliano seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve the motion. Mary also made a motion to create a Marketing and Fundraising Committee. Seetha Holmes seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve the motion.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Mary reminded Task Force members that in addition to the updates that are regularly provided by the subcommittees, each subcommittee was asked to discuss their mission and goals as well as complete a charter template that was provided to each chair.

Protection Committee

Sonia informed the Task Force that the Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup has been working on two resources, a comprehensive document on online safety for parents and caregivers and a companion 2-page document that looks at the most salient points that would be easier to distribute. The workgroup has collaborated with the Protection Committee and the Prevention Committee for feedback and it has now been provided to the Department of Education for a preliminary review and accessibility review. Sonia also asked to include NJTF CAN and the NTF CAN logo on the completed documents.

Nydia informed the Task Force that the Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup has been focused on four areas. The first is regarding the collection of data around this population. DCPP began collecting data on this population and IAIU will begin collecting data this Fall. Regarding education, a presentation was provided for DCPP workers regarding children with sexual behavior problems including assessment, importance of engaging families, and the importance of engaging in treatment. The workgroup looked at legislation and has spoken with representatives from states that have passed legislation requiring their child protective services agencies to take on a more active role in these types of cases. The final area is looking at the DCPP policy around their response to child on child sexual abuse cases. The workgroup is looking to the Task Force to have conversations with DCF regarding revisions to policy to change certain language as well as ensure that children involved in this type of case are being referred to Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Regional Diagnostic Treatment Centers (RDTCs) as appropriate.

Richard informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee had good discussion about the charter that was supplied for each subcommittee. Richard read the mission and objectives that the Committee discussed during



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their meeting and explained that they were only at the early stages of development. Richard stated that the Committee created a workgroup to further develop the charter.

Prevention Committee

Patty stated that the Prevention Committee has been actively working on the development of the 2022-2025 NJ Statewide Prevention Plan. Regarding the workgroups of the Committee, Patty stated that most of the workgroups would be discontinued at the end of the year. The Committee will move into working in workgroups in an ad-hoc capacity as necessary. The Committee discussed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding with members offering support to ensure that prevention is part of the conversation when funding is received. Patty informed the Task Force that the Infrastructure and Resources Workgroup of the Committee developed a crosswalk between the current Prevention Plan and noted areas where there is overlap between those strategic areas and the ARPA funding allowances. Patty shared the document with Task Force members.

Regarding the charter, Patty explained that the Committee previously created a workgroup to discuss the Committee's mission and focus. Patty read the goals that the workgroup developed during their meeting. Patty explained that these goals were created by the workgroup and have not yet been reviewed by the larger Committee. The expectation is that this information will be reviewed during the next Committee meeting.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

Marygrace presented the SORS annual report to the Task Force for review. As many of the Task Force members did not have an opportunity to review the report prior to the meeting, it was decided that members would have the opportunity to review on their own and make suggestions for edits. Once that occurred, the members would vote to approve by email.

Marygrace explained that, due to the expansion of DCF and subsequent legislation, members of SORS felt that the focus has shifted from facilitating change to maintenance and monitoring. SORS will continue to review training, case law, and whether DCPD is continuing to produce good outcomes for children in New Jersey. The Committee discussed conducting another staff survey, key stakeholder interviews, and focus groups to determine the impact of COVID-19 on DCF staff. This will allow SORS to ensure that supports and resources are available for staff.

Announcements

Sonia announced that NJ DOE is partnering with NJ DCF on what is called the "Dreams Program". Up to 50 select districts across the state will have the opportunity to have trauma-informed and healing centered training incorporated in their school practices. All targeted schools have been invited and all 50 schools submitted a letter of intent to go forward with the program.

Next Meeting – March 25, 2021.