



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

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

Minutes

December 20, 2019

Conference Call

In Attendance

Christian Arnold	Office of the Attorney General
Mary Coogan	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Martin A. Finkel	CARES Institute
Sonia Moticha	Department of Education
Assw. Nancy Muñoz	Legislative District 21
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
Kathy Haggerty	Administrative Office of the Courts
Seetha Holmes	Office of the Public Defender
Jason Sarnoski	Warren County Freeholder
Kaitlyn Mulcahy	Montclair State University
Hon. Margaret Foti	Bergen County Superior Court
Esther East	Jewish Family Services

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Patty Mojta	PCA NJ
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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 each member briefly introduced themselves.

NJTFCAN Business

Review 9th Annual Task Force Report

The Task Force discussed that their annual report will be posted on the DCF website and included in the annual Children’s Justice Act Grant application. The Task Force did not have any edits to the report at that time, but were instructed to email any edits to Daniel Yale by the 1st of January.

Review Annual Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) report

Mary explained that the SORS report is a summary of their activities. SORS has been working on obtaining the DCF Strategic Plan and Child and Family Services Review. Mary explained that the SORS was audience to several presentations throughout the last year and will follow up with a variety of activities that DCF is involved with. SORS is looking for presentations from the Office of Strategic Development, The Children’s System of



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Care (CSOC) regarding the transfer of substance abuse services to CSOC, and the Office of Health and Well-Being. They will also be looking for updates from the Office of Training and Professional Development to look at electronic learning management system, new training initiatives, implicit bias and disproportionality, cultural competency and also looking at how they can support caseworker engagement with families including in terms of the quality of engagement and case plans.

The Task Force discussed if there are any benchmarks that have been established to objectively measure success regarding DCF staff achieving the needed service array for their clients. Mary informed the Task Force that she will bring that issue to the SORS to discuss further. The Task Force also discussed that DCF has a very low turnover rate compared to other states and Commissioner Beyer's creation of the Office of Staff Health and Wellness due to her concerns about staff well-being.

Review 2020 NJTF CAN meeting dates

The proposed dates of the quarterly Task Force meeting for 2020 are as follows: March 27th, June 26th, September 25th and December 18th. There were no objections to these dates being approved.

Update on Regional Forums, Mary Coogan

In 2017, DCF and ACNJ hosted a forum to talk about the implementation of the Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). This law was passed to allow states to receive funds to pay for prevention services with a focus on limiting the removal of children from their homes and placed in foster care. DCF brought in Amelia Franck-Meyer to talk about the research regarding how to change the work that is being done and focus on prevention. Jerry Milner, acting Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Families, and Youth, attended the forum and spoke about FFPSA and how it is not a "cure-all" for the problems in the child welfare system, but can be used as a catalyst for the reforms that states are trying to implement.

After the initial forum, ACNJ and DCF began hosting regional forums. There have been 3 different series each held in the north, central and south. There has been a growing number of people attending these forums, which includes stakeholders, service providers, etc. The general agenda includes Commissioner Beyer providing an update on the DCF plan or the implementation of the plan. At two of the previous forums, Katie Stoehr, Deputy Commissioner of Operations at DCF, has provided updates on the initiatives that DCF is working on.

Following these updates, those in attendance are asked to respond to a series of questions in a group discussion format. Attendees are grouped by county, not only to give them an opportunity to get to know those from their own counties, but to allow DCF to get some feedback. At the first forum, groups were given a series of questions that included: what we should start doing, what we should stop doing, and what we should continue to do. The feedback from these discussions was then share at the 2nd forum series. A primary response was that the focus should be on collaboration. Those in attendance felt that other entities need to know what DCF does, especially law enforcement and educators. It was felt that we need to stop working in silos. During the 2nd forum series, Commissioner Beyer also shared DCF's priorities: increasing placements with kin, preventing maltreatment, increased focus on staff health and wellness, and to intentionally align DCF and CSOC, as there is a tendency for them to work in silos. Commissioner Beyer has also shared DCF's Core approaches: racial equity, healing centered practice, using the protective factors framework in casework, intentionally including family voice, and culture of safety.

During the most recent series, Commissioner Beyer provided an update on the progress of implementation. Katie Stoehr also provided an update as to why NJ could not access FFPSA funds as previously thought. Part of the reason is that the guidance from the Federal Government has been slow coming out and they have only



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approved 8 or 9 evidence-based programs for this purpose. To be able to use these funds, they have to be applied to new programs. As NJ is already implementing these programs, we are unable to use these funds at this time. The federal dollars that are being used have to be the payer of last resort and since the CSOC is already on a Medicaid platform and is already using federal funds, DCF would have to create a new system and use new funding to utilize FFPSA money. However, Commissioner Beyer is still pursuing the reform efforts to which she has committed.

During the last series, attendees were asked to comment regarding whether they have found barriers to services in terms of access or services that are lacking. The comments will be reviewed, and an update will be provided at the next forum.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Communication Committee

Jason Butkowski informed the Task Force that the Communication Committee has been working on engaging the plan to promote the CTF. DCF released a request for bids and received two responses to provide management for the social media campaign. The Committee approved one of the bidders and are moving forward with finalizing content for the campaign. The Committee has also reached out to Saker Shoprites regarding the Point-Of-Sale campaign. Unfortunately, they are unavailable for the next couple of years. The representative suggested that the Committee reach out to the Wakefern Group. DCF Logo shop is still running well and has produced a small amount of money to be given to the CTF.

Prevention Committee

Patty Mojta explained that she was recently voted in as co-chair of the Prevention Committee but that they have not yet had a meeting since that change took place. Patty stated that the last meeting was in September, during which the Committee agreed to change to a quarterly meeting schedule. In September, the topic of conversation was school mental health, teen pregnancy, and youth suicide. The Committee discussed the need to engage school communities in their work, specifically becoming trauma-informed or healing-centered. The Committee felt that the most effective work and maximum number of adolescents can be reached at schools. The Committee members discussed the initiatives in their communities, some of their successes, and ideas about working together. The Committee discussed the need to continue services for adolescents through mid to late 20's as opposed to ending services at 18 or 21 years of age.

Patty informed the Task Force that the Prevention Committee has four workgroups that are working on each of the goals of the prevention plan. Each workgroup had an opportunity to report out at the previous meeting. The Communication Workgroup is having some success in implementing a new campaign called the WE CAN campaign. WE CAN is a federally funded initiative that is headed up by CANTASD, a Division of the Children's Bureau. It is a social media marketing campaign created for child abuse prevention month and intended to reach the general public. The workgroup is working with the creators on an adaptation to be able to make it state specific. The workgroup has requested that they change the acronym from Working to End Child Abuse and Neglect to Working to Empower, Connect, and Nurture so that it is more family friendly. The workgroup is also working to change some of the links to include NJ specific resources. The plan is to have this campaign ready for this April.



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Protection Committee

Richard explained that the Committee held a conference call to discuss updates from the workgroups of the Committee, the Digital Realm of Child Abuse and Juvenile with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors. The Committee needs to meet to discuss the plans for the data that was collected from their survey. The Committee plans to come back to the Task Force next year to discuss funding for a clinical training program for clinicians across the state to increase the number of therapists who have the ability to work with juveniles with sexually inappropriate behaviors. The Committee has been addressing the need for additional discussion topics. They are currently exploring identifying the gaps in services across the state and how the Committee can help DCF address the issue.

Staffing and Oversight Review Committee

No further update from SORS.

Next Meeting – March 27, 2020 in Trenton.