



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Natasha Johnson, Chair
Niurca Louis, Vice Chair

May 13, 2019

10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

Capital Center Building
50 East State Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room
Trenton, NJ 08625

Minutes

In Attendance:

Andrea Breitwieser
Suzanne Conrad
Aldina Hovde
Natasha Johnson
Niurca Louis
Cheryl Mojta
Patty Mojta
Kathleen Roe
Wendi White

NJ Department of Human Services
Consultant
NJ Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
NJ Department of Human Services
Department of Children and Families
NJ Child Assault Prevention
Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey
Parents, Inc.
NJ Department of Corrections

Guest:

Aubrey Powers
Blake Connor
Kaycie Getty

Department of Children and Families
Department of Children and Families
Department of Children and Families

Staff

Daniel Yale

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."

**Please note the meeting is being recorded for the transcription of minutes. Please be sure to state your name prior to making comments, motions and seconding votes.*



Welcome and Introductions

A brief welcome was provided by Natasha Johnson and each member briefly introduced themselves.

Review January 10, 2019 Minutes

Minutes were not reviewed at this meeting as there were not enough members in attendance for a quorum.

DCF Office of Family Voice Presentation

Aubrey Powers, Executive Director, DCF Office of Family Voice

Blake Connor, Executive Assistant, DCF Office of Family Voice

Kacie Getty, Program Specialist, DCF Office of Family Voice

Niurca provided a brief introduction for the presentation on the Office of Family Voice (OFV). Niurca informed the Committee that this presentation was requested because we really want to make sure that the Prevention Committee has an ongoing family voice and make sure that it is included in a very informed, intentional way.

Aubrey informed the committee that the OFV is about more than just being heard, it is about having a seat at the table. The mission of the OFV is to use innovative approaches to organize and elevate the voice of constituents to ensure that policy, operations, and practices throughout the Department of Children and Families (DCF) are infused with the voices of those that have lived experience. The OFV is responsible for designing, implementing, and assessing community engagement activities. Aubrey spoke about the listening tours that were conducted by Commissioner Beyer in December 2018. Throughout the listening tour, Commissioner Beyer heard a number of stories which were, in large part, responsible for the creation of the OFV. Commissioner Beyer heard from older youth who were explaining that they did not like their placements, didn't like how they were being treated, and were unhappy with where they were. Commissioner Beyer heard from Kinship relatives that said they felt disconnected from the process and felt that they did not have the access that they needed to their loved ones. Commissioner Beyer also heard from parents with children, dealing with mental health, behavioral health, intellectual disabilities, and trying to navigate that system. So throughout all of those stories, what Commissioner Beyer heard was that our constituents, our families, and our communities wanted to have their voices heard and considered as DCF moves to improve its work. From those stories Commissioner Beyer created the OFV to give DCF a mechanism that would allow us to collaborate with our constituents, not as program consultants, not as clients, but as expert consultants because of their lived experience. It also provides a resource and outlet for individuals to engage with DCF organizationally. It's not DCP, it's not CSOC, it will be a part of every office, every division and allow individuals to connect with DCF organizationally and operationally. The most important aspect of this is including individuals with lived experience because when we bring those individuals on, we get



the benefit of their knowledge and experience with DCF. We can use that expertise at the casework level, the peer to peer level, and certainly systemically as we think about our programs and policies and how they need to change.

One of the strategies that OFV uses in their work is called strategic sharing. This was brought to use by Casey Family Programs and was developed by Foster Care Alumni of America. It is a way for individuals to tell their story or parts of their story in a meaningful, effective and safe way so that everyone – the speaker and audience - are safe and protected, and that the message itself is effective. Aubrey stated that to give an example of what strategic sharing looks like, he asked Kaycie Getty to share her story with the committee. Aubrey informed the committee that DCF is very fortunate to have Kaycie. Not only is Kaycie a foster care alum, and not only did she work in NJ helping us to improve our systems, but she has also worked at the national level as well. She has been on a number of committees, has run youth advisory boards, and has even been a part of the Families First legislation through the Foster Club of America. Kaycie just recently returned to NJ to help DCF with this initiative.

Kaycie played a short video for the committee which provided her story to the Committee. Kaycie provided further information about some of the traumatic experiences that occurred during her time in foster care. Kaycie explained that she was in 12 different placements during her time in placement. She lived in 5 foster homes, 2 shelters, a residential treatment program, a transitional living program, 2 respite homes, and an independent living program. Ultimately, Kaycie felt that in the long run, the residential setting was the best fit for her because she enjoyed living with people that could relate to her and her experiences.

While in the transitional living program at the Center for Family Services, Kaycie was asked if she would be interested in attending a conference in Washington, D.C. to tell her story. Kaycie agreed to do so and spoke with several senators about her journey through foster care. When she returned, Kaycie was asked to be a part of a youth advisory board. From there she learned about speaking, leadership, advocating and organizing. She then became involved with the Camden County Youth Advisory Board. Kaycie eventually went to college and went on to obtain a master's degree in social work. Kaycie explained that she was drawn to this work because she values youth voice, constituent voice, and people with lived experience.

Aubrey stated that he recently attended a national convention for Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI). QPI is a model where birth parents, resource parents, kinship parents, and departmental leadership come together to improve outcomes for children and youth in out of home care. Aubrey stated that he appreciated QPI because there were departmental leaders in the room. If there was a need to change, adjust, or add policy or supports, they had the capability to do so. We must move to action and we can only do that by engaging with the community and bringing them to the table.

Another strategy of OFV is using a public health framework called "Principles of Community Engagement" which contains five principles which will guide the work of the Office of Family Voice.



These principles include outreach, consultation, involvement, collaboration, and shared leadership. The ultimate goal is to end up with shared leadership where there is strong bi-directional leadership with constituents sitting on the boards not just working through an agenda together, we are sitting down and developing the agenda together and building strong relationships. Aubrey stated that we need to be able to prepare individuals so that when they sit down at the table, they are prepared and ready to participate. Aubrey stated that the most strained relationship is with fathers and asked Blake Connor to say a few words.

Blake stated that this strained relationship with fathers is not just in NJ but nationally. Children with involved fathers have better social, emotional and educational outcomes. They spend less time in foster care, have a higher likelihood of reunification, and lower likelihood of adoption. To be a truly transformational system, we need to involve fathers. To that end, DCF created the Fatherhood Engagement Committee, under the OFV. We are currently working on an organizational assessment to see how we are engaging fathers, how we are communicating with fathers, what it looks like throughout the department. The first priority was to add people to the table that were fathers and that were working with fathers.

Aubrey stated that they are now finalizing the strategic plan. They are looking to have conversations with the community to get feedback so that the plan is well informed. Every piece of OFV work is being true to those five principles. OFV also needs more individuals with lived experience – mothers, fathers, kinship, children with CSOC. They would like to add a youth council – youth that have been involved with DCF to come together to meet informally and also meet directly with Commissioner Beyer so that we are planning the agenda together. OFV will also be working with the Office of Adolescent Services to develop a formal training for the strategic sharing component to prepare for this experience.

Patty asked if OFV was looking for recommendations for any of the fatherhood engagement or other groups that were mentioned. Aubrey said the OFV would gladly accept any recommendations as it is very critical. Natasha stated that agencies, even though they are working in the same space, don't communicate about the work that they are doing. Aubrey stated that they are working on looking at who is at those tables and other systems that are involved to find out if there are siloed pockets of work. Kathy Roe stated that in order to make any parent comfortable on a council, there needs to be a plan for the council – when a council meets, what the make up is, the goal of the council, time commitment, etc. Aubrey agreed and stated that they are preparing to put together a structure that includes those issues as well as looking at other things that can be added or explored. Individuals that we are inviting to assist with this work definitely have to be prepared. Daniel mentioned that an issue that may arise once parents are invited to join this committee is having them contribute in a meaningful way rather than just inviting them just to invite them. An orientation should be considered as there may be a learning curve for new



individuals brought onto the committee. Aubrey stated that bringing parents into a room with professionals without some type of preparation can be unkind. There will be a need to explain the purpose of the committee, the roles, etc. Niurca informed the committee that there have been questions about how to include individuals in a meaningful way. We need to think critically about prevention for the whole state and how we can be innovative and creative. Natasha said that before we even get to the training, we need to look at what we are looking to learn from whomever we invite. What we are really looking for is individuals to volunteer to participate and provide input so that the committee is educated on lived experience. Aubrey stated that we also need to know what barriers are in place. Aubrey stated that we must be honest about whether there is any unintentional bias or assumptions that are being made and how they may impact communications. Aldina spoke about making sure that you are not over educating individuals so that you preserve the authentic voice of the parent. The goal is to give enough information so that they are comfortable in that space, but not overdoing it.

Discussion on nomination for chair of the Prevention Committee

Natasha informed the committee that she has submitted her resignation as the acting chair. There was a conversation at the last Task Force meeting regarding a bylaw that states that the chairperson of a subcommittee is required to be a Task Force member. There are many people on the subcommittees that are not Task Force members that are interested/qualified to be chair. There is now a proposal to amend the bylaws to allow non-Task Force members to be a chair of the subcommittees. The full committee is not present, but the committee will need to decide on who will be the new chair of the committee. Niurca has started her new role at DCF but will stay as co-chair of the committee. Natasha recommended that the Assistant Commissioner of FCP should always be co-chair with a public member as chair so that there is balance.

Natasha also discussed that the Task Force has decided to move to quarterly meetings. The Task Force had a discussion about what they are looking to accomplish and how that informs the work of the committees. Natasha stated that there are a lot of things that are happening in the subcommittees that Task Force doesn't necessarily learn about in a strategic and meaningful way. The communication between the Task Force and subcommittees needs to change.

Natasha asked for thoughts about meeting frequency. Many members felt that quarterly meetings were appropriate. There was a question about the meeting frequency of the Prevention Committee workgroups. It was decided that each workgroup should decide on their own how often they should meet.

Discussion topics for upcoming Prevention Committee meeting – Community needs

Niurca explained that DCF is looking at ways to make sure that there is momentum and voice from the communities. DCF is looking to understand what is happening in various different counties and cities, for various different topics or populations, as we look to think about how prevention moves and shifts in our environment. To that end, we have thought about creating and utilizing a standard agenda item



planned meeting-to-meeting, one year in advance, regarding what populations we are looking to address. This will allow for not only committee members, but other individuals that are interested in this work, to provide feedback about their communities. We want to focus our meetings around topic area and then get information back from our provider networks and our communities around different topics areas and use that information to inform the work and the decisions that we are making at the state level.

Niurca asked if the committee had thoughts about focusing the meetings on a particular population or subject. The committee felt that the Task Force should inform the committee about what they see as priorities. Natasha stated that the Task Force will be looking for the subcommittees to provide information about things that should be a focus. The idea is that the committee make recommendations for 4-6 topic areas about what the meetings should focus on. Those recommendations can be sent to Dan and will be added to the possible topics of discussion. Natasha felt that we should look broadly and look at geography, specifically southern counties including Cumberland County. Natasha stated that we have needs in our state that we may not be addressing well. Niurca felt that a good way to begin this focus might be to make the first meeting about Cumberland County and the committee agreed. Niurca stated that we will discuss population health, ACEs, protective factors, etc. Niurca suggested that any and all sectors are invited to attend the meeting to talk about what is happening in Cumberland County. We will think through 2 or 3 key topics of conversation so that the members can send it forward and have people join by phone or in person. The intent is to communicate much sooner so that people are more prepared for the discussion and can bring information for the discussion. Suzanne asked if we could hold our meetings in other places. Niurca explained that the decision on meeting location would need to be made by the full committee.

Niurca gave a brief update on the Predict, Align, Prevent initiative. The discussions around which communities to select and how to move forward have begun. This will help to be able to understand what is happening at a very granular level. This will allow DCF to use data to predict where child abuse could/should/is going to occur and determine how to respond.

Aldina informed the committee the NJAAP is working in Cape May and Cumberland County. They are working with pediatricians to use ACEs screening tools and working with schools to provide education around ACEs so that they understand the link between trauma and learning.

Meeting Adjourned – Next meeting July 11, 2019.