May 2, 2024

Meeting Minutes

**Attendance**

Sanford Starr, Department of Children and Families

Corissa Kazar, Embrella

Patty Mojta, Rutgers School of Social Work

Aldina Hovde, American Academy of Pediatrics

Jeanne McMahon, Inspira Medical Center

Diane Dellanno, Advocates for the Children of New Jersey

Suzanne Conrad, Public Member

Tiffany Tucker, Public Member

Wendi White, Department of Corrections

**Staff**

Bethany D’Amelio, Department of Children and Families

**Overview of Meetings**

In recent strategic planning sessions held over two consecutive days, the Committee convened to re-evaluate the structure, priorities, and strategies of the Task Force in light of evolving state and community needs. Attendees engaged in constructive dialogue aimed at enhancing the efficacy of Task Force efforts through potential organizational restructuring and programmatic realignments.

**Key Discussions and Resolutions**

1. **Task Force Evaluation:**
   * Emphasis was placed on revisiting the mission and operational framework of the Task Force amidst a changing environment. Participants highlighted the necessity for the Task Force to remain adaptive and relevant as priorities shift.
2. **Children's Trust Fund:**
   * Significant discussions revolved around the rebranding and realignment of the Children's Trust Fund. Participants noted the ambiguity surrounding current fund usage and there was a broad consensus that streamlining funding directly to children's services could enhance transparency and efficacy.
3. **Community Engagement and Resource Development:**
   * Recognizing geographic disparities, particularly in South Jersey, the Committee affirmed the need to address resource deserts. Strategies include bolstering family support at entry points and enhancing local recreational facilities.
4. **Legislative Advocacy:**
   * A proposal to establish a dedicated legislative and advocacy committee was received positively, foreseeing it as an avenue to increase proactive policy engagement and support.
5. **Communication Improvement:**
   * Efforts to bolster communication across platforms were deliberated. The need for greater clarity and outreach via modern and traditional media was emphasized to enhance public awareness and engagement.

**Next Steps**

1. **Action Steps and Timeline:**

* The Committee recognized the importance of setting clear action steps and timelines.
* Strategies for restructuring and new task implementations are anticipated to be discussed further in an upcoming meeting planned for early June.

1. **Inclusive Participation:**
   * Ongoing commitment to broaden stakeholder participation was stressed. The Committee aims to involve a wider array of partners to build a resilient support network and to ensure diverse perspectives in future planning initiatives.

**Conclusion**

The strategic planning sessions provided a foundational step towards modernizing and strengthening the Task Force's commitment to child welfare. The forthcoming tasks involve refining these deliberations into actionable strategies that perpetuate the Committee's mission of supporting families and children across New Jersey.

*This memo aims to maintain transparency and provide the public with an overview of the task force's recent deliberations. The committee values community input and engagement as we collectively strive to enhance the welfare of children and families across New Jersey. This meeting report was prepared, in part, with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).*

*For further information or queries, the public can reach out via the contact channels provided by the Department of Children and Families.*