



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

## **STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE**

Marygrace Billek, Chair  
Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

**January 14, 2020**  
**10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.**

### **CONFERENCE CALL** **Minutes**

#### **In Attendance:**

Marygrace Billek	Mercer County DHS
Lisa Chapland	Kinship Resource Parent
Mary Coogan	ACNJ
Amy Fischer	Administrative Office of the Courts
Mary Hallahan	Foster Parent
Lori Morris	Lifeties
Linda Porcaro	Somerset Co. OYS
Jeyanthi Rajaraman	Legal Services of NJ
Robyn Veasey	Office of Parental Representation

#### **Staff**

Daniel Yale	NJ Department of Children and Families
Dawn Marlow	NJ 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 Marygrace Billek and a roll call was completed to see who was participating on the call.

#### **Review November 12, 2019 Minutes**

It was noted that the November 12, 2019 minutes had the incorrect date listed. Mary Coogan made a motion to approve the minutes with the caveat that the date would be corrected. Lisa Chapland seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes with the noted change.



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### **Discuss DCF Child and Family Services Plan**

The Committee discussed that, although there was mention of issues that were identified by SORS, there was a lack of specific sections in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) regarding staff and/or staff training. Dawn Marlow explained that there weren't any specific sections regarding training, but that the development of the DCF Office of Staff Health and Wellness is included in Goal 3.

The Committee discussed the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) changing their focus from case management to a more clinical approach when working with families. Dawn explained that the Solution-Based Casework is a new initiative that will be rolling out over the next few years. This was identified in the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) which, in the 5-year plan, falls under Goal 2. This is an evidence-based model so it will include training embedded within the framework. Dawn explained that, in any new initiative, there will be thought about staff development and training around that initiative.

Marygrace stated that training is not the basis of the development of the Office of Staff Health and Wellness. It is more to support staff in the work that they do. Dawn stated that when the staff is healthy and their wellbeing is being supported, there will be less burnout, the turnover rate will be decreased, and employees will be able to work more effectively. The Office is also being supported by staff so there may be recommendations for more training or more supportive services.

Lori Morris stated that they recently started an employee assistance program due to some traumatic events. People can call without anyone else knowing to get support in all different arenas. The Committee discussed secondary trauma and was informed that there is training available regarding secondary trauma and resiliency in the training curriculum. DCF also offers the worker-to-worker peer support program. Regarding a safe environment to talk about an incident that has occurred, DCF is also building up what is called Human Factor Analysis through Safety Collaborative. Although this initiative will begin by looking at child fatalities or near fatalities, it will also look across the Department at incidents of violence, incidents with violence with staff, and incidents of violence at congregate care settings. This work is also part of DCF's 5-year plan and is part of Goal 1.

The Committee also discussed training/services for employees in the event that they are put into a situation that they do not know how to handle and whether there was a way for employees to ask for help without being penalized. Marygrace suggested that, regarding the training issue, since the Committee will be having a presentation from the OTPD, perhaps we should wait to ask those questions until then.

Jeyanthi stated that prevention work is helping caseworkers to feel empowered and they have started advocating for their parents because they feel like they have a resource. They are asking their supervisors for more services for their families. How can we make our caseworkers feel like they are better, more effective advocates so that they feel supported and also serve the purpose of the agency? They are getting lawyers for their parents which reduces some of the stress that they are feeling. Positive outcomes help them to continue working.



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Marygrace also suggested perhaps the Committee should add an update from the Office of Staff Health and Wellness to their workplan and create a new list of topics to be discussed by the Committee. How is the CFSP related to the Office of Staff Health and Wellness and how does that translate to what trainings will be changed, improved, offered, etc.

The Committee decided to revisit the discussion of the CFSP until the next meeting after members had a chance to thoroughly read through the plan.

### **NJTFCAN Bylaws**

Daniel explained that there had been two changes to the NJTFCAN bylaws in 2019. The first change was that the NJTFCAN changed their meeting schedule to quarterly rather than bi-monthly. Daniel informed the Committee that two of the other subcommittees voted to change their meeting schedule to quarterly as well. The second change was that it was no longer a requirement for the chairperson of a subcommittee to be a member of the Task Force.

There was a question about term lengths for the chairperson of a subcommittee. Daniel explained that there is not a bylaw that limits the term of a chairperson. Mary Coogan felt that this issue should be brought up at their September meeting for anyone that would like to be chair/vice-chair for 2021.

Mary Hallahan informed the Committee that she has been made aware that there have been some issues with “non-removals” or removals that should have occurred but did not. There is a concern that, although NJ is looking at reducing the number of children removed from their family and placed in foster care, it is possible that it has taken it too far. Robyn felt that, due to the prevention work that is occurring, they are seeing less removals and safety is not in question. Jey agreed and has heard that there have been many positive changes. However, if there is a concern, there are legal mechanisms to challenge a denial of removal in court. Mary Coogan mentioned that there has been mention of incidents in which DCPD waited too long to remove children. However, whenever you implement a new policy or create a culture change, you can get extremes at both ends. Mary Coogan felt that it would be helpful to get specifics on specific concerns. Mary Hallahan informed the Committee that she would like to keep the “pulse” of what is going on regarding proper removals of children.

Meeting Adjourned – Next meeting March 10, 2020.