



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

## **STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE**

Marygrace Billek, Chair  
Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

**March 10, 2020**

**10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.**

**Embrella**

**101 College Rd East 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**

**Princeton, NJ 08540**

**Minutes**

### **In Attendance:**

Marygrace Billek  
Lisa Chapland  
Mary Hallahan  
Corinne LeBaron  
Lori Morris  
Linda Porcaro  
Jeyanthi Rajaraman  
Robyn Veasey

Mercer County DHS  
Kinship Resource Parent  
Resource Parent  
Embrella  
Lifeties  
Somerset Co. OYS  
Legal Services of NJ  
Office of Parental Representation

### **By Telephone:**

Amy Fischer

Administrative Office of the Courts

### **Guests:**

Suzanne Alvino

NJ Department of Children and Families

### **Staff**

Daniel Yale

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 each member briefly introduced themselves.

### **Review January 14, 2020 Minutes**



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Motion to approve minutes from the January 14, 2020 conference was made by Linda Porcaro. Motion was seconded by Robyn Veasey. Minutes were approved without edit.

### **Office of Training and Professional Development (OTPD) Update**

*Suzanne Alvino, Administrator*

Suzanne informed the Committee that the training academy website, called the Electronic Learning Management System, was created and is managed in partnership with Rutgers University. The Electronic Learning Management System is a fluid, ongoing process. There have been some recent improvements made to the webpage that makes it more functional and user friendly. Staff can now see a full calendar of trainings up to 6 months in advance so that they can plan ahead. One such improvement is that the system will now allow staff to enroll themselves in training, whereas previously, each staff member had to be enrolled by an assistant administrator. Another added function is that if a staff member enrolls in the same training more than one time, their supervisor will be alerted.

The staff at the Professional Center meets monthly with the Assistant Area directors to discuss the needs of staff. They are currently discussing a new initiative called “learning paths” which will identify specific trainings for specific needs. The OTPD is also improving their archiving practice as new curricula are introduced. Going forward, they will be updating the archive annually. The OTPD will also be introducing “pre-learning” which will include short videos or articles to be sent to those staff members that will be attending training. OTPD is also looking to see if University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC) trainings can also be offered to DCF staff. In the future, OTPD will be looking to merge webpages for DCPD and CSOC.

A question was raised regarding whether there is a way to determine how many people have searched for a specific topic to determine what staff is interested in. Suzanne agreed that this would be helpful and informed the Committee that she will explore the possibility. Another question was raised about people attending training and then returning to the office and being informed that what they learned is not part of their office practice. Suzanne informed the Committee that this is occurring less frequently as OTPD now has support and accountability packages attached to certain trainings that addresses this issue. The accountability piece is about holding leadership accountable to set up the environment to receive the employee after they are trained. One of the ways in which this is accomplished is to train leadership first. One of the Transfer of Learning strategies is to advise the supervisor about what the staff member is expected to learn and give strategies on things supervisors can do to enhance the learning. Some of the new initiatives have a training component built in for supervision regarding how to support staff members. There are also case practice liaisons located in the offices to support staff after they have been trained.



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Another question was raised regarding whether all courses are offered for in-person training or whether there are courses that are held online. Suzanne informed the Committee that one of the goals of OTPD is to include some distance learning. The larger initiatives trainings involving culture and values are held in-person. However, one of the advantages of holding online trainings is the ability to learn what some of the gaps are. The committee discussed that perhaps refresher courses could be offered online for those courses that are held in-person. Suzanne informed the committee that there are currently courses that offer online refresher courses.

Suzanne spoke about an online course that they are in the process of developing entitled “Difficult Conversations”. This course will assist caseworkers in having conversations about permanency, change of goal, changing placements, etc. This course is in response to issues with the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) section regarding permanency. Regarding the format of online courses, Suzanne informed the committee that, generally, the online courses consist of videos with questions at the end of each segment that must be answered prior to moving forward. However, it depends on what is needed. In some cases, webinars or voice over PowerPoint may be used which is less interactive. Suzanne stated that the decisions on the format of the training are made by a small group (3-5) of individuals including a staff member from OTPD and staff members from the lead office with the ability to make decisions about the training. A question was raised as to why they haven’t utilized online trainings more often. Suzanne stated that some people prefer in-person trainings and it is felt that some trainings need to be in-person depending on the content. However, they are asking in the consultation meetings when trainings are being planned whether the training can be done online.

The following are new initiatives were introduced: SDM, Fathers are Important, Solution Based Casework, Difficult Conversations, CQI, and Collaborative Safety.

- **Structured Decision Making (SDM) Training**– a 4-day training for field staff and a 1-day additional training for supervisors. The additional day for supervisors is to assist in helping supervisors to support their staff. This training is from the Children’s Research Center and is an actuarial-based tool. It includes a risk assessment, a risk reassessment, a reunification assessment and a safety assessment. The training includes how and when to use the included tools. Although initially offered many years ago, it was recently determined that not all of the tools were being used and some weren’t being used properly. DCPP did a lot of work with staff to determine why it wasn’t being used properly. DCF contracted with the Children’s Research Center to revalidate the tools, look at some changes in practice, and to look at how that might impact training. This newer version included some implicit bias training as well as a refresher course online that can be taken before or after the training.



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- **Fathers Are Important** – This training was developed as one of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) strategies around engagement of fathers. This training is held in-person and has the advantage allowing staff to discuss their views. It includes an implicit bias piece and will also include a support and accountability package. Once the office is trained, they can view a video from the Childrens Bureau and then respond to included questions. Every month there will be a discussion about how they are engaging fathers, any difficulty they have had engaging fathers, etc. This training will be offered to all offices but will be rolled out strategically.
- **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)**– This training provides an opportunity for staff to get a sense of what they can do individually to implement CQI in their own work and how the idea of CQI relates to work with their families. It can also include CQI for local office issues.
- **Collaborative Safety** –Collaborative Safety is a training based on Culture of Safety and derived from the nuclear industry, airline industry, etc. Collaborative Safety allows staff to learn from mistakes to prevent future issues while making them feel comfortable about discussing what occurred. DCF has an intensely trained, internal critical incident team to review these incidents to be able to make people feel safe to tell their story. The purpose is really to determine what the systemic issues are as well as what happened in that particular incident. This process allows the Department to move away from the “Shame and Blame” process.
- **Race equity** – The training subcommittee is looking at trainings being offered to see if they include negative buzzwords to make sure that DCF is being culturally sensitive. Staff has reported certain things that have been included in curricula that is offensive. Staff can report any issues on evaluation forms, by speaking with a trainer, or by speaking with OTDP staff.
- **Cultural competence and humility** – DCPP has had mandatory cultural competence trainings in the past but there are no new initiatives. Presently, DCF is looking more at culture humility rather than cultural competence. Suzanne will discuss the issue further with OTPD staff.

The Committee also discussed issues regarding the undocumented population in New Jersey and issues of poverty (homelessness, housing, welfare and entitlement benefits). Suzanne will discuss these issues with staff at the OTPD to determine if there are course that deal with these issues.



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### **Update from DCP&P Assistant Commissioner Carmen Diaz-Petti**

Carmen discussed the Family First Act (FFA) with the Committee. In order to use federal dollars, the programs that DCF uses must be evidence-based programs. The Federal Government has their own clearinghouse and only those programs which they have approved, which is currently very few, can be used. The Federal Government will continue to add programs as they are approved. In order to use funds for these services, DCF must prepare a prevention plan. The complexity of the issue is that DCF already provides many of the programs that are included in the clearinghouse. In order to use FFA funds, the service that is being provided cannot be paid for through another federal funding source. As many of the services that DCF provides are being paid for through Medicaid, this causes a problem as well. DCF is currently in the planning stages with the developer to implement the Solution Based Casework (SBC) model. Although SBC is not yet included on the clearinghouse, a modification was recently passed which will allow states to use “transition funds” to assist in getting to the point that evidence-based programs can be used. In order to get SPC included on the clearinghouse, DCF will use these transition funds to conduct a rigorous research study. The plan for the transition funds must be in by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Shortly after DCF will be submitting their prevention plan.

Carmen stated that DCF has been improving the kinship numbers. DCF’s analytics group conducted a survey to determine biases, attitudes, etc. DCF also consulted with Dr. Spigner to help inform some of the questions. DCF received a 77% return rate on the surveys. The results were received the previous day and included helpful data. The main takeaway was that staff believe that placing children with relatives is the best thing for children. DCF also gained a lot of information regarding barriers to placing children with kin, some of which include systemic barriers. DCF plans to have meeting with Area Directors and Office Managers to discuss this data to create interventions for each specific office. A question was raised regarding issues with approvals due to licensing issues. Carmen explained that they have relaxed some of the licensing requirements. Carmen also informed the Committee that DCF will also be addressing issues with waivers to be able to remove some of the barriers.

### **Announcements**

Jeyanthi announced that Unification day is June 29<sup>th</sup> at the Law Center where pre-petition and post-petition parents will be honored. This year’s theme will be resource parents and parents.

Marygrace informed the Committee that, at the next meeting, they will be discussing the Annual SORS report. The SORS report is due to the NJTF CAN for review in August.

Meeting Adjourned – Next meeting May 12, 2020.