



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, Chair
Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

May 12, 2020
10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.
Conference Call

In Attendance:

Marygrace Billek
Lisa Chapland
Mary Coogan
Carmen Diaz-Petti
Amy Fischer
Mary Hallahan
Corinne LeBaron
Lori Morris
Linda Porcaro
Jeyanthi Rajaraman
Matthew Schwartz
Jennifer Valentine
Robyn Veasey

Mercer County DHS
Kinship Resource Parent
ACNJ
Department of Children and Families
Administrative Office of the Courts
Resource Parent
Embrella
Lifeties
Somerset County Office of Youth Services
Legal Services of NJ
Former Youth Representative
Court Appointed Special Advocates
Office of Parental Representation

Guests:

Dawn Marlow
Darlene Fusco

NJ Department of Children and Families
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.



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, Chair
Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

Review March 10, 2020 Minutes

Motion to approve minutes from the March 10, 2020 conference was made by Linda Porcaro. Motion was seconded by Matthew Schwartz. Minutes were approved without edit.

Update on the 2018 Resource Family Survey

Darlene Fusco, NJ DCF

Dawn Marlow, NJ DCF

A PowerPoint presentation, along with county-by-county breakdowns of the included data, were sent to Committee members prior to the meeting. Dawn Marlow explained that the survey was developed with the Office of Quality with the Continuous Quality Improvement Subcommittee of the Resource Parent Retention Task Force. It was a web-based survey and was distributed to approximately 4,000 resource parents across the state. It used both closed-ended and open-ended questions and the respondents were entirely anonymous. The response rate was 21% with 821 complete surveys received. All counties and local offices across the state were represented.

The Committee was provided with a breakdown of the county-by-county results of who responded.

Dawn presented the following data regarding resource parents:

- 53% have been licensed resource parents for less than 3 years
- 34% have been licensed resource parents for between 3 and 9 years
- 13% have been licensed resource parents for between 10 and 20+ years
- 620 resource parents had a child placed in their home within the last 6 months of the survey

The Committee was also provided county results regarding questions that were posed to resource parents in the survey. The questions that were posed were regarding receipt of Foster Parent Identification Letters, Medicaid Certification at the time of placement, communication, daycare services, accessing mental health and behavioral healthcare, medical care, and other supportive services (clothing check at the time of placement, placement kit at the time of placement, etc.). The survey also asked additional questions to gain further information regarding communication, whether resource parents felt valued by DCF staff, and what resource parents felt they needed but were not receiving. Data that was received was compared between the northern and southern counties.

A question was raised regarding whether the results of this survey were shared with the counties, as some of the general percentages statewide weren't positive. The Committee was informed that the results were shared with the Area and Local Office for each county as well as presented at the statewide managers meeting so that some of the challenges can be addressed.

Darlene explained that this is the third time this survey has been sent to resource parents. Although there has been a decline in response rate, there has been steady improvement over the course of time



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, Chair
Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

regarding satisfaction. DCF has been working on improving the survey and the distribution method which will hopefully improve the results. Currently, the survey is sent only to licensed resource parents which does not include those in kinship status and those in presumptive status. DCF will work with their Office of Research, Evaluation, and Reporting office to come up with better research tools to accurately collect the data that is needed.

A question was raised regarding how DCF is collecting information from resource parents regarding whether they have what is needed during the pandemic. Dawn explained that DCF was having resource workers from local offices, who have a relationship with these resource parents, to reach out in a thoughtful and planful way to ask those critical questions. What are their needs specifically around caring for those children in your home, including food, access to relative services, access to technology, etc. This information was gathered within the first three weeks of the state of emergency, resulting in technology and other necessities being delivered as quickly as possible. Local offices are also looking at using “Flex Funds” in creative ways to make sure that resource parents have what they need to care for the children in their care. DCF has also been asked to canvas biological families to determine if they have a smartphone or tablet to be able to have visits with their children. If they do not, local offices can use “Flex Funds” to purchase equipment for parents.

Darlene also explained that DCF has increased their respite rate for resource parents who are essential workers or those who have to work outside of their home and need someone to care for children. Also, for resource parents who have either been exposed or tested positive for COVID-19 and who are willing to maintain children in their home during that time, DCF has increased the board rate to the highest board rate that is offered. This also applies to resource parents that are willing to care for children who have been exposed or tested positive.

The Committee discussed what it would take for resource parents to be comfortable allowing in person visits between the children in their home and their parents. Darlene explained that this issue was raised by Commissioner Beyer as well and it is currently being discussed in DCF focus groups.

Update on DCPD Staffing and Service Provision

Carmen Diaz-Petti explained that when COVID-19 first began and DCF staff were told that they had to work remotely, DCPD asked for volunteers and developed COVID Response Teams. As face-to-face visits are limited to the amount of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that we have, initially there were only enough PPEs for 24 staff per area. This resulted in 216 volunteer staff that had respirator masks. Each respirator mask is good for approximately 5 face to face visits. In order to prioritize our work, the referrals were prioritized based on fatalities, near fatalities, severe abuse, etc. Over the course of time, DCF has been able to obtain additional PPEs and have expanded the response team by an additional 20 staff. At this point, DCPD has 40 staff in each area that are able to do face-to-face visits. Half of the team focuses on referrals and the other half are focused on permanency work. DCF has prioritized our most vulnerable population – those that have very high risk and have children under 3 years old as well as previous incidents of maltreatment. All of these families have been seen at least



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, Chair
Mary Coogan, Vice-Chair

once. Going forward, all of these families will be expected to be seen face-to-face twice a month and two video conferences per month. DCF has included guidance on their website that has been provided to DCPD and CSOC staff.

DCF has also reached out to law enforcement and have developed a training with the intention that law enforcement would be able to be trained to investigate child abuse in the event that DCPD did not have enough staff. There have been approximately 20 officers trained and are currently on standby. DCF is also partnering with the Department of Health to be able to access information regarding families that have tested positive for COVID-19 so that DCPD workers will be prepared if they need to enter a home where a family member is positive.

In terms of services, there is guidance out for in-home providers and congregate care providers. Visitation at this point is being done remotely with the exception of family members that had already been seeing each other, supervised by family members themselves. As there are not enough PPEs, DCPD cannot do face-to-face visits between children and parents. If resource parents are unable to facilitate video visitations, DCPD workers are required to do so.

A question was raised regarding adolescents that would normally be residing on college campuses during summer months, that will now have no place to live. DCF is having conversations about that issue at this time. All services for aging out youth have been extended until December 31st unless the individual explicitly wants to exit care. There is a scheduled conference call to discuss how providers will continue to provide services to aging out youth. DCF Office of Adolescent Services is also working on those issues as well so that there will be funding and plans for those that will be affected.

Staff Well-being

The Committee was informed that DCF is still working with Worker to Worker. Worker to Worker consists of specially trained former DCPD workers and clinicians that provide support for those that need it. They are making individual calls to all of those on the COVID-19 response teams as well as holding workshops. Worker to Worker also provides updates to DCF regarding how the staff are doing. Each local office was hosting groups for those staff as well. Dr. Gerry Costa from Montclair State University was providing workshops for staff focused on the well-being of staff. This is in addition to the services provided by the Employee Advisory Service.

Meeting Adjourned – Next meeting July 14, 2020.