

State of New Jersey

Department of Children and Families



Report

of the

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

to

Governor Chris Christie

Proceedings and Findings

For the period of

July 1, 2010 — June 30, 2011

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Co-Chairs, New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

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Department of Children and Families

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Acting Executive Coordinator (August 2010- April 2011)

ANNUAL REPORT
For the period
JULY 1, 2010 - JUNE 30, 2011

Co-Chairs, New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Honorable Allison Blake
Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

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Table of Contents

***Introduction*6**

***NJTFCAN Proceedings*9**

***Summary of Activities - 2010 to 2011*.....9**

***Recommendations*.....15**

***Issues for Follow Up*.....16**

***Minutes*.....17**

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

ANNUAL REPORT For the period JULY 1, 2010 - JUNE 30, 2011

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides Children's Justice Act (CJA) grants to develop, establish and operate programs designed to improve:

- (1) the handling of child abuse cases, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner which limits additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family;
- (2) the handling of cases of suspected child abuse or neglect related fatalities;
- (3) the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation; and
- (4) the handling of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are victims of abuse and neglect.

Children's Justice Act funds are used to develop programs to reform state systems and improve the New Jersey's response to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect fatalities.

Children's Justice Act funding supports experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques to improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases.

Funding for the Children's Justice Act Grant is derived from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) of 1984. In March 2000, the federal government enacted the Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act (CAPE), allowing one half of the increase in VOCA, funds up to \$20 million, to be used nationally for CJA grants. State funding is determined by a formula dependent on the population of children under age 18 within the state.

Since 1988, the state of New Jersey has received Children's Justice Act grants to establish a variety of projects and programs that are designed to address the four purpose areas detailed above. The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) is confident that CJA funds will continue to positively impact and enhance New Jersey's child protection system well into the future.

Moreover, the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) is a statutorily established, multi-disciplinary advisory body to New Jersey's child welfare system. The NJTFCAN also serves as New Jersey's CJA Task Force.

On July 11, 2006, P.L. 2006, Chapter 47 was enabled which established the Department of Children and Families (DCF). This law amended numerous statutes in order to transfer a number of functions from the Department of Human Services to this new department, including the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN). The bill also expanded the responsibilities and membership of the NJTFCAN.

The purpose of the NJTFCAN in accordance with the statute is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services provided or supported by State government, including a review of the practices and policies utilized by the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) and Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships (DPCP) in DCF in order to:

- (1) optimize coordination of child abuse-related services and investigations;
- (2) promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- (3) ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- (4) educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- (5) develop a Statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in coordination with the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships;
- (6) mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect; and
- (7) foster cooperative working relationships between State and local agencies responsible for providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect and their families.

In addition, the NJTFCAN shall receive, evaluate and approve applications of public and private agencies and organizations for grants from moneys annually appropriated from the Children's Trust Fund" established pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1985, c.197 (C.54A:9-25.4). Any portion of the moneys actually appropriated which are remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall lapse to the "Children's Trust Fund."

Grants shall be awarded to public and private agencies for the purposes of planning and establishing or improving programs and services for the prevention of child abuse and neglect, including activities which:

- (1) Provide Statewide educational and public informational seminars for the purpose of developing appropriate public awareness regarding the problems of child abuse and neglect;
- (2) Encourage professional persons and groups to recognize and deal with problems of child abuse and neglect;
- (3) Make information about the problems of child abuse and neglect available to the public and organizations and agencies which deal with problems of child abuse and neglect; and
- (4) Encourage the development of community prevention programs, including:
 - (a) community-based educational programs on parenting, prenatal care, prenatal bonding, child development, basic child care, care of children with special needs, coping with family stress, personal safety and sexual abuse prevention training for children, and self-care training for latchkey children; and
 - (b) community-based programs relating to crisis care, aid to parents, child abuse counseling, peer support groups for abusive or potentially abusive parents and their children, lay health visitors, respite of crisis child care, and early identification of families where the potential for child abuse and neglect exists.

The Task Force shall, in awarding grants, establish such priorities respecting the programs or services to be funded and the amounts of funding to be provided as it deems appropriate, except that the Task Force shall place particular emphasis on community-based programs and services which are designed to develop and demonstrate strategies for the early identification, intervention and assistance of families and children at risk in order to prevent child abuse and neglect.

The Task Force shall adopt such rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) to govern the awarding of grants pursuant to this subsection as may be necessary to establish adequate reporting requirements on the use of grant funds by recipient agencies and organizations and to permit the Task Force to evaluate the programs and services for which grants are awarded.

In November 2010, the NJTFCAN was designated as one of DCF's federally mandated Citizen Review Panels. Consistent with the requirements of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), in general, each panel established shall, by examining the policies, procedures, and practices of State and local agencies and where appropriate, specific cases, evaluate the extent to which State and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with—

- (i) the State plan under subsection (b);
- (ii) the child protection standards set forth in subsection (b)
- (iii) any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children, including—

- (I) a review of the extent to which the State and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs established under part E of title IV of the Social Security Act (*42 U.S.C. 670 et seq.*); and

- (II) a review of child fatalities and near fatalities (as defined in subsection (b)(4)).

NJTFCAN Proceedings

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) met on the following dates: November 19, 2010, February 4, 2011, March 25, 2011, and May 27, 2011. These meetings provided the NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with their statutorily mandated work. The meeting minutes provide a record of the activities of the NJTFCAN during the past year.

Summary of Activities – 2010 to 2011

The charge of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) as outlined in the statute includes the following:

- (1) optimize coordination of child abuse-related services and investigations;
- (2) promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- (3) ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- (4) educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- (5) develop a Statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in coordination with the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships;
- (6) mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect; and
- (7) foster cooperative working relationships between State and local agencies responsible for providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect and their families.

NJTFCAN attended to this charge by the following actions in 2010-2011:

1. **Implemented professional development and training programs.** Each year, the NJTFCAN sponsors multidisciplinary training programs to improve the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. All Task Force sponsored professional training programs are child-focused and designed to promote skills that prevent additional trauma to child victims and their families.

In FY 2010, CJA funds were used to support the following professional development projects to enhance the knowledge of persons involved in the investigation, prosecution, assessment and treatment of child abuse and neglect:

- a. ***Finding Words, New Jersey: Forensic Interviewing & Preparing Children for Court.*** Since 2002, the DCF and NJTFCAN have supported *Finding Words NJ* a forensic interviewing program developed in collaboration with the American Prosecutors' Research Institute (APRI) and based on the national Corner House protocol. The goal of the project is to train professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse to conduct an effective and legally defensible interview of alleged child sexual abuse victims of various ages and prepare children for court. At the completion of the five day training, participants have a meaningful understanding of important concepts, including: child abuse dynamics, children's language and development, memory and suggestibility, the impact of certain questions and the process of abuse disclosure.

Finding Words Trainings were held/will be held for a maximum of 40 participants each as follows:

May 9 – 13, 2011. Camden County, NJ – Participants from Cumberland, Gloucester, Camden, Atlantic, Cape May and Salem Counties attended the Southern Regional Training.

June 6 -10, 2011. Bergen County, NJ – Counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Warren.

September 12 -16, 2011. TBD Location, NJ – Counties: Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Mercer, Ocean, Somerset, Union.

October 24 – 28, 2011. Monmouth, NJ - Counties Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Mercer, Ocean, Somerset, Union.

The *Finding Words, NJ* child-focused forensic interviewing project continues to reform the investigation and prosecution process and improve civil and criminal court proceedings. To date, close to 1,000 professionals involved in investigating child sexual abuse have been trained in the *Finding Words-NJ* protocol and have demonstrated, through role play, effective child sensitive interviewing skills. Multidisciplinary team members are more knowledgeable about the process of disclosure, age

appropriate guidelines, child development, barriers to disclosure, memory, perpetrator/victim relationships, suggestibility and problems encountered during the interview.

Some of the outcomes of the training are:

- Prosecutors have adopted Finding Words, NJ as their protocol of choice when interviewing alleged child abuse victims.
- Criminal cases are strengthened with accurate information to withstand legal scrutiny and child victims are better prepared for courtroom testimony.
- Child victims experience fewer traumas during the investigation and prosecution process.
- Prosecutors are more sensitive to the special needs of child victims and actively support the development of Child Advocacy Centers (CAC).
- The project is in compliance with the goals of the Task Force CJA Three-Year Plan to reform the investigation and prosecution process and improve civil and criminal court proceedings.
- The NJTFCAN continues to work with the DCF to facilitate child-focused forensic training for DYFS child abuse investigative units.

- b. ***Multidisciplinary (MDT) Team Training.*** In 2010, CJA funds were provided to the Multidisciplinary Coordinators' (MDT) Association for training to improve case management of the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases referred to the prosecutor's office. The NJTFCAN and the MDT Coordinators' Association collaborated on the annual MDT conference. The conference was delivered using lectures and classroom workshops to improve the knowledge of professionals involved in investigating and prosecuting child abuse and providing medical and mental health services to alleged child victims

Most county prosecutors employ MDT coordinators to ensure that members of the MDT are kept informed about changes in cases and to ensure that child victims receive appropriate medical and psychological evaluations and services to prevent additional trauma during the prosecution process and prepare children for courtroom testimony. Accordingly, training is provided in joint investigation protocols, prosecution strategies, psychological and medical evaluations, preparing children for court, legal and ethical issues, mental health services to child victims, case management, and the role of each discipline on the MDT.

The MDT Conference was held on April 7, 2011 and was entitled, "A Symposium for Child Abuse Professionals Conference." The two presentations offered were : (1) Child Abuse Victim Breaks Silence: Raising awareness to the silent epidemic of child sexual abuse with Erin Merryn, a victim survivor of childhood sexual abuse and (2) Bridging the Gap – Protecting Our Kids: Working together affects the lives of so many kids: Multidisciplinary Training Keynote: James Holler, Retired Chief of Police. Over 200 child protection professionals attended and received training that will enhance their skills.

- c. ***Skill Building Conference.*** To continue to advance the knowledge of those who serve New Jersey's children, the NJTFCAN, in collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), hosted a statewide multidisciplinary skill building conference on September 16, 2010 for over 250 child protection professionals. The conference featured a full day presentation by John Myers, Distinguished Professor and Scholar and Professor of Law at McGeorge School of Law on the subject "evidence" in child abuse cases.

Professor Myers is an expert on child abuse. He has traveled throughout the United States and abroad, making more than 200 presentations to judges, attorneys, police, doctors, and mental health professionals. Professor Myers is the author or editor of eight books and more than a hundred articles on child abuse. His writing has been cited by more than 150 courts, including the United States Supreme Court and the California Supreme Court.

- d. ***Biennial Conference.*** In January 2011, the NJTFCAN in collaboration with DCF distributed a Request for Proposals (RFP) statewide to colleges and universities and other agencies and community organizations with experience planning and coordinating a conference. NJTFCAN and the selected organization, Rutgers University, will sponsor a statewide conference for professionals in the field of child welfare in October 21, 2011. The interdisciplinary conference will provide an opportunity to learn from experts in child welfare issues and disciplines serving children and families. CJA funds will provide free registration for 150 DCF child protection staff. The conference topics and speakers are currently under discussion by the NJTFCAN.

- 2. **Distributed Children's Justice Act Community Grants.** In FY 2010, CJA funds were used to establish and support programs to improve New Jersey's child protection system in a manner which limits additional trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect. In accordance with the NJTFCAN Three-Year Plan, model programs and innovative approaches were implemented to improve the

identification, investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect and enhance the effectiveness of the judicial process.

The NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, distributed a Request for Proposals (RFP) statewide to Human Service Advisory Councils, public and private agencies, prosecutors, CASA-NJ programs, county juvenile services commissions, RDTCs and CACs. The CJA RFP was also available on the DCF website.

The RFP solicited innovative approaches to improve and reform the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse and reduce trauma for children involved in the court process. Priorities for funding included best-practice models to address policy and training issues in the following areas: Child Welfare System Reform; Judicial Civil and Criminal Proceedings; Diagnostic and Treatment Services; Professional Training and Development; and Children with Disabilities.

The RFP was distributed statewide to entities involved in the State's child protection system was initiated in May 2010. The RFP was published on the NJ DCF website. The deadline for receipt of grant proposals was June 23, 2010. Grant applicants were notified of acceptance or rejection in July 2010. An evaluation team, comprised of experts in child protection issues, reviewed all of the proposals received in response to the RFP and selected the highest quality applications for funding. All projects were required to be consistent with the recommendations in the NJTFCAN CJA Three-Year Plan to improve the investigation, prosecution, and judicial proceedings for children in out of home placement.

3. Monitored implementation of the federal Fostering Connections Act.

The NJTFCAN received a detailed presentation and update from the new administrator regarding New Jersey's work to be compliant with the requirements associated with the Fostering Connections Act.¹ DCF representatives detailed their work with the Department of Education and others regarding this act and its impact on DYFS.

The NJTFCAN was informed that DCF began implementation of educational stability in local offices which made the process occur more smoothly. All offices began documenting "best interest" assessments on children placed in foster care. DYFS staff began working closely with local school districts to allow children to remain in their pre-placement schools unless it was not in the child's best interest. In addition, the subcommittee was also equally pleased with the continuous action plan which

¹ The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act will improve the lives and opportunities for children in foster care by addressing several important areas:

Reduction—moving more children out of foster care and into a safe, permanent home

Well-being outcomes—the act improves healthcare, education and opportunities for children in foster care

Indian Child Welfare—The act increases support for American Indian and Alaska Native children

Worker training—The act improves training for people working with vulnerable children

<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/FosteringConnectionsSummary.htm>

reported that DYFS has identified Educational Liaisons to serve as resource people to provide staff guidance on the implementation of educational stability on issues such as how to determine what is in the best interest of the child, how to interact with schools districts and courts around educational stability, and how to coordinate student transportation. These liaisons will serve in each Local Office and will educate Local Office staff – and help facilitate communication with the school system.

4. Engaged in discussion on DCF’s approach to child on child sexual abuse.

Authorities have also seen a rise in the numbers of child-on-child sexual abuse cases which they report tracing back to the access to internet pornography and sexually explicit web sites. There was concern expressed by NJTFCAN members that there were inconsistencies in the way child on child sexual abuse cases are being managed. Process issues exist and there is a need to educate staff on how cases should be managed. One possible effort discussed is to create pilot program to find out the percentage of “older child on child” cases in which families refuse to participate in the process. DCF convened a workgroup to explore best practices and possible training opportunities including concerned members of the NJTFCAN.

5. Received an update on DCF efforts to internal monitoring efforts.

Quality Service Reviews (QSR) are based on a model that has been used around the country. Most states call it the QSR but New Jersey often refers to it as Quality Review or QR. This process is a very intensive case record review that involves taking a sample of cases from a particular county. Certified reviewers review case records and data points provided to them that have been developed in conjunctions with the monitor, interview with stake holders, service providers, with staff and family members. Based on the data points created there is an assessment made about safety permanency and engagement. The plan includes debriefing sessions where stakeholders, DCF leadership and county come together and reviewers provide feedback. This information will be used to plan for practice changes in that particular county.

6. Reviewed DCF’s efforts to improve the handling of the DYFS central registry.

The DYFS central registry is a list in which perpetrators are registered after an allegation of child abuse and neglect has been substantiated. Pursuant to State statute, it is used in some cases to prohibit employment or in a review of backgrounds when approving a foster home. Anyone who has been substantiated for child abuse and neglect will be on this list and other officials and departments have increasingly requested access to the list. However, many judges, constituents, and agency personnel are uncomfortable with the idea that some of the people will appear on the list in perpetuity despite the level of the offense or number of offenses. Additional issues with the list include the hesitation that can exist when caseworkers are completing their evaluations. In addition, some people have also been losing their jobs as a result of the list. As a result of these highlighted issues, a

workgroup was developed with carefully selected members who can assist in helping to inform a process in which is meaningful.

NJTFCAN Recommendations

Based on its Three Year Plan (2010 – 2013), the NJTFCAN is making the following recommendations for action by DCF:

- Provide ongoing training is essential to continued collaboration and partnership building and improved outcomes for children and families in the State of New Jersey. Additionally, it is necessary due to personnel turnover in child protection and law enforcement.
 - Ongoing training for members of the MDT has improved working relationships and coordination between child protective services, law enforcement and the Regional Diagnostic Treatment Center (RDTCs) and CACs.
 - Developing and implementing training for caseworker staff, resource families, the courts, law enforcement, attorneys and other key partners to address the strengths and needs of children with disabilities who are involved in the child welfare system.
 - Prioritize training of child protection professionals for work with children with disabilities and special healthcare needs.
 - Training for law enforcement personnel and child protective service (CPS) workers regarding the roles and expectations of each party during a child abuse and neglect investigation or when allegations of child abuse or neglect are made
 - Continue to provide a biennial statewide multidisciplinary training conference on child maltreatment for professionals
- Although DCF has made great strides in reforming its child welfare system, there are still many challenges that remain. Areas requiring additional attention overlap with the state's CJA assessment and planning. These areas include children's health issues including access to medical and dental care and expanding training for DCF staff and its system partners including those employed within our court and law enforcement systems. NJTFCAN makes the following recommendations:
 - Continue to support New Jersey's child welfare reform in all areas that overlap and are consistent with CJA priorities and utilize CJA dollars to assist the state with addressing CJA related child protection issues cited for improvement by New Jersey's Federal Monitor.

- Subject projects or endeavors funded through New Jersey's CJA funds will be subject to an evaluative process in order to assess outcomes and other indicators to measure the performance of the funded activity.
- Develop a process for gathering and analyzing data necessary to monitor the implementation of the educational stability provisions of Fostering Connections Act, specifically data on the number of children placed outside of their county of residence, number who remain in their home school district after placement, number who are enrolled in the district of their placement and reasons why they do not remain in their home district.
- Implement specialized training in working with adolescents to those caseworkers with specialized adolescent caseloads, beginning with a review of whether there is a curriculum in place or whether one needs to be developed.

Issues for Follow-Up in 2010-2011

The NJTFCAN identified the following activities and issues as priorities for action next year:

- Scheduled retreat to prioritize and develop a strategic plan for the 2011 – 2012 year
- Continued discussion of the central registry proposed improvements
- Continued discussion of DCF progress in better meeting the needs of youth aging out and progress of the Office of Adolescent Services.
- Share the minutes of the NJTFCAN with other citizen review panels to ensure coordination of panel activities.
- Review data reports specific to disproportionality in New Jersey's child welfare system as well as current policies and practices that may affect disproportionality and make recommendations to address this issue.
- Schedule updates and presentations from DCF staff to help provided point-in-time progress reports.
- Revisit the child abuse and neglect calendar project which highlighted child abuse prevention tips and was an educational tool for the community
- Review composition of its subcommittees to develop a more robust and revitalized work effort

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2010

Introduction and Welcome

- Meeting notice was read and introductions were made.

Review of Meeting Minutes

- June meeting minutes were reviewed and approved pending the correction of the proper representation of Judge Gerald Council and his designee, Alfred Frederico, from the Administrative Office of the Courts to Criminal Court.

Update on the Department of Children and Families

- **Appointment of Executive Director of NJTFCAN.** To address the outstanding question about the appointment of a new Executive Director, a candidate was selected but due to personal reasons was not able to accept the position. Discussions with the Governor's Office will continue about filling the position. LaTasha will continue to offer support until the position has been filled.
- **DCF Leadership and Organizational.** Structure has changed in an effort to move towards exiting the lawsuit. All measures of the Monitoring Report must demonstrate change for at least a two year period. DCF has been able to do so in some areas but still a lot of work in other areas.

In order to exit or begin exiting the lawsuit, DCF needs to have its own internal robust performance and improvement and review process. There were already pockets in different places in DCF and different types of accountability systems but really not a department wide system or process in which DCF can take information in and use it to report practice decisions and policy decisions. In an effort to create additional infrastructure at the department level, Christine Norbut-Mozes, former DYFS Director, to become Assistant Commissioner has been appointed to oversee the new Office of Continuous Quality Improvement. Goals of the new department level office are to expand or to integrate the case practice changes across department not just in DYFS case workers. The office of data analysis, reporting and technology has been moved into the Office of Continuous Quality Improvement. In addition, Chapin Hall offers a five day course on Advance Analytics in Child Welfare in which three staff members have been accepted to attend a course in New York. Additional staff who was involved with federal child and family services review were moved into the new Office of Continuous Quality Improvement to integrate that work as well. Quality review or quality service reviews, a pilot that was being done in DYFS, moved from DYFS to the new department level office with the goal of expanding.

- **Quality Service Reviews.** Quality Service Reviews (QSR) are based on a model that has been used around the country. Most states call it the QSR but New Jersey often refers to it as Quality Review or QR. This process is a very intensive case record review that involves taking a sample of cases from a particular county. Certified reviewers review case records and data points provided to them that have been developed in conjunctions with the monitor, interview with stake holders, service providers, with staff and family members. Based on the data points created there is an assessment made about safety permanency and engagement. Debriefing sessions where stakeholders, DCF leadership and county come together and reviewers provide feedback. The information is used to plan for practice changes in that particular county.
- **Child Stat.** Also in the Office of Continuous Quality Improvement is another pilot called "Child Stat". This pilot is to diagnose system problems and develop system responses to those problems. Child Stat will be issuing reports and data has been posted on the website and additional information will be posted as it become available. One session has occurred in which data decision points were given to Burlington and Bergen Counties (the immersion sites when the practice reform began). Child Stat modeled from CommStat which is a police monitoring tool, takes the problem or issue from the caseworker and has it reviewed from a systems perspective. Again, the Commissioner wants to send the message that issues and problems are the responsibility of whole organization. This model provides an opportunity to diagnose problems without being punitive. Caseworkers do not need to attend currently, the supervisors are in attendance.
 - The Child Stat Pilot stemmed from monitors report that indicated that FTMs were not in compliance. Field offices were indicating that there was something wrong with the data. A list of questions was designed and available data was provided to the field offices. Invited participants include Local Office Manger, Area and Assistant Area Directors to provide a presentation addressing the discussion points. Audience participants included management of IT, Legal, and Fiscal departments.
 - Uncovered issues in supervision process, issues raised in relation to training and resources
- **DCF Fellows Program** - One hundred people to begin process in January to identify a project that is meaningful to their county. Funding for this initiative from Federal Grants offered by National Quality Improvement Center (Managing By Data). State does not receive the funding; funding provided to other training organizations that in turn provide training to the State.

- Representatives from Illinois and Georgia were invited to provide TA and discuss improvements to our programs.
- **Personnel Updates.**
 - Jean Marimon appointed Director of DYFS.
 - Jeffrey Guenzel, appointed Director of DCBHS.
 - Charmaine Thomas appointed Area Director for Camden. In process of building a swat team that meets three times a week to work with leadership in offices to addresses challenges.
 - Searching for Director to elevate what was the DYFS office of Adolescent and Practice and Permanency to a department level office.
- In process of expanding summer housing and internship to northern and southern parts of state.
- In court December 16th with latest monitor's report. Issues of concern included family team meetings, visitation issues and working with aging out population.

Subcommittee Updates

- **SORS – Nancy Parello (on behalf of Ceil Zalkind)**
Primary focusing is on Employee Surveys. Draft of survey completed and going through review process to refine it. Will meet December 1st with National Resource on Workforce Improvement technical staff to refine survey and distribute by end of year. SORS wants to produce report on what are our strengths, staffs ability to do their jobs and help children and families, and get feedback on what would help them to do their job better.
- **Protection – Mark Ali**
Teleconference call meeting was held to brainstorm topics in which to focus for the upcoming year. Main topic that received most attention involved child abuse and domestic violence. Child abuse and domestic violence is very broad and needs to be narrowed down to define the project. Upcoming meetings will address how to narrow the focus.

New Quality Control MDT Statewide guidelines are out and needs to be implemented.

National Children Alliance (NCA Track) – The tracking system connected to prosecutor's office and CAC; DYFS has access to system. Some funding issues exist and needs to be looked at.
- **Prevention – Bob Guarasci**
Role of Prevention on Task Force - With new bylaws put into place the roles

have been diminished and have become a victim of its own success because there has not been a Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships. It's trying to find a balance. Revision of prevention standards are in the process of being revised.

Old Business

- **Child Sexual Abuse** – There are inconsistencies in the way cases are being managed. Process issues exist and there is a need to educate staff on how cases should be managed. One possible effort is to create pilot program to find out the percentage of “older child on child” cases in which families refuse to participate in the process.

New Business

- **Balance of Funds – CJA Funding – Allison Blake**

Children's Justice Act (CJA) funds reflect that there is approximately \$70,000 uncommitted funds available. In discussion on how the funds should be distributed, a proposal was made to spend down the dollars to supplement the contract for finding words training. According to the last CJA report approximately 850 professionals have been trained. Motion was passed to use funds to do training on finding words.

Request for Information for 2011 Biennial Conference

CJA funds will be used for conference. There is not enough administrative staff to manage conference which leads to putting this out to bid. Put out an RFP, create a committee and see who is interested in assisting in the planning and execution of the conference. Conference should be held in fall. Motion to recommend that department source out the RFP was passed.

NJTFCAN – Citizen Review Panel – Allison Blake

- DCF requested that NJTFCAN become one of its federally mandated citizen review panels. A presentation on what that means for members will be facilitated most likely by Erin O'Leary.
- Discussion around if the Task Force should change name to reflect the broader role the task force undertakes ensued. However, in order to get funding for task force, due to restrictions, children justice acts needs approval. DCF will conduct research to provide clear understanding on how to proceed.

Revitalizing the work of the NJTFCAN and Strategic Plan – Martin Finkel

No enforcement of bylaws concerning attendance of task force meetings. Forfeit position if number of meetings is not met. Extend meetings to include consumers including youth memberships.

Next Meeting – Friday, January 28, 2011 – 9:30 am

- Next meeting to be held tentatively on January 28. However, due to scheduling conflicts may take place first week in February.

Announcements and Closure

February 4, 2011

Introduction and Welcome

- Meeting notice was read and introductions were made.

Review of Meeting Minutes

- November meeting minutes were reviewed and approved pending the correction of the proper representation of Judge Gerald Council and his designee, Alfred Federico, from the Administrative Office of the Courts to Criminal Court.

Update on the Department of Children and Families

- **Executive Director of NJTFCAN.** To address the outstanding question about the appointment of a new Executive Director, the title has been changed to better represent the work involved. The new title is Executive Coordinator. An internal candidate search and interviews will occur in the near future. LaTasha will continue to offer support until the position has been filled.
- **DCF is Moving** – DCF offices will be vacating 222 Warren Street. The Commissioner's Office and select staff will be located at the Mary G. Roebling building. NJTFCAN meetings will take place there as a result. Directions and address will be provided.
- **Budget Update**
 - The budget appears to be healthy for the Department of Children and Families. Commissioner is expecting limited budget cuts.
- **Children's Trust Fund Grant.**
 - A RFP for PreSchool Child Mental Health will be released in the coming weeks. The ideal award will include representation in the northern, central and southern areas of the State of NJ.

Subcommittee Updates

- **SORS – Nancy Parello (on behalf of Cecelia Zalkind)**
Primary focusing is on Employee Survey. Draft of survey completed and going through review process to refine it. Continued work with the National Resource on Workforce Improvement technical staff to refine survey and distribute by end of year. SORS expects to complete the survey by mid to late April. In addition, SORS wants to produce report on what are the strengths are , staff's ability to do their jobs and help children and families, and get feedback on what would help them to do their job better.
- **Protection – Mark Ali**
No Report
- **Prevention – Bob Guarasci**
No Report

Old Business

- **NJTFCAN Child Abuse and Neglect calendar.** Discussion ensued around the discontinuation of the calendar. Members of NJTFCAN informed that the calendar was made possible by grant funds from Johnson and Johnson. Moreover, members would like to resurrect this initiative if possible. Additional DCF research is required.

New Business

- **Revitalizing the work of the NJTFCAN and Strategic Plan – Martin Finkel**
 - Members of NJTFCAN were requested to review the 3-year plan and identify areas in which they believe are actionable items.
 - Commissioner Blake made suggestions for presentations from DCF staff to NJTFCAN for continuous communication on upcoming initiatives. Immediate presentations to include Child Health Units, Educational Stability Act, Family Success Centers, etc.

Next Meeting – Friday, March 25, 2011 – 9:30 am
Announcements and Closure

March 25, 2011

Introduction and Welcome

Meeting notice was read and introductions were made.

Review of Meeting Minutes

February meeting minutes were reviewed and approved pending the correction of the proper representation of Judge Gerald Council and his designee, Alfred Frederico.

Update on the Department of Children and Families

Commissioner Blake offered appreciation and thanks to members for all of their efforts towards strengthening families and offered certificates of appreciation to them. She would like to address issues of subcommittees feeling constrained by structure and role issues at first meeting. In addition, she would like to request assistance and input from members about upcoming legislation as they impact children and families in the state at part of meetings. Concern that the Task Force had become a group that lost some of its recognition and that the stakeholders represented by the Task Force are underrepresented when decisions are made was discussed as issues for the newly constituted members to address.

Presentation on State Central Registry – Erin O’Leary, Deputy Commissioner

The DYFS central registry is a list in which perpetrators are registered after an allegation of child abuse and neglect has been substantiated. Pursuant to State statute, it is used in some cases to prohibit employment or in a review of backgrounds when approving a foster home. Anyone who has been substantiated for child abuse and neglect will be on this list and other officials and departments have increasingly requested access to the list. However, many judges, constituents, and agency personnel are uncomfortable with the idea that some of the people will appear on the list in perpetuity despite the level of the offense or number of offenses. Additional issues with the list include the hesitation that can exist when caseworkers are completing their evaluations. In addition, some people have also been losing their jobs as a result of the list. As a result of these highlighted issues, a workgroup was developed with carefully selected members who can assist in helping to inform a process in which is meaningful. Consideration will be given to a few different options. Any feedback about the current work in this area can be directed to Erin O’Leary.

Presentation on Child Health Units – Debra Lancaster and Director of Child Health Program, UMDNJ FXB, Nina Corabelli

An update was provided by Debra Lancaster began by giving an update on the Psychotropic Policy based on the recommendations based of the psychotropic advisory group which is a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders. The policy is posted on the DCF website. Some of the highlights are the prescribing parameters and medication monitoring guidelines. Child Health Units are charged with knowing who is on psychotropic medications through a process involving Medicaid. They are also looking for prescribers which should be child adolescent psychologists. There is also a push to focus on provider outreach. In addition, the Child Health Units are working with adolescents to help inform and provide assistance with navigating the health care systems. Statistics were provided about dental records and well visits status among DYFS involved units.

Child Health Unit Program is fully integrated into DYFS local offices with 47 child health units. It is incorporated into the Case Practice Model in which nurses attend meetings such as Family Team Meetings. The Child Health Units are comprised of nurses and nurse practitioners with 50 children per nurse. The main purpose is to provide a health care plan specific to each health care needs. The program is in year 4. The program

was developed as a basic healthcare case management model from three sources. It is also designed to meet the needs of the children in need of behavioral health care. Sustainability and quality care are the current focus. Healthcare maps have been developed to help provide a visual review of what happens when a child enters the program.

Discussion ensued about how the nurses have been a valued addition because they offer appropriate and clear communication. Nurses were identified as true partners in the DYFS local offices. Concerns were raised around aging out youth and their healthcare needs.

Presentation on Educational Stability – Michele Safrin, Administrator

Michele Safrin provided a presentation on the new educational stability requirements. The mandate was a part of the Fostering Connections Act which passed on September 9, 2010. Decisions about education will be made through best interest determination. There is a liaison in each local office. The training academy will be working to incorporate new information and protocols into new worker training. Department of Education has been a great partner and there has been a joint commitment. Data was provided to illustrate current state of implementation. Enhancements to NJ SPIRIT will need to be done. Currently, educational stability staff is utilizing a standalone database. Michele offered to provide continued updates to the task force as requested. Discussion ensued around the transportation and communication of responsibility and education of the local schools and school districts.

Subcommittee Updates

Subcommittee updates were tabled due to new appointments.

Next Meeting and Announcements

May 27, 2011

Closure

Meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.

May 27, 2011

Introduction and Welcome

Meeting notice was read and introductions were made.

Review of Meeting Minutes

March meeting minutes were reviewed and approved. A historical overview of the Task Force was presented. The Task Force was formed as an opportunity to address statewide issues; Children's Justice Act (CJA) provides federal funds with a focus on issues of protection and investigation. The Task Force has a 3-year plan that is submitted to the federal government to articulate how the aforementioned funds will be spent.

Role of the Task Force presented by Erin O’Leary, Deputy Commissioner

The Task Force serves three roles/responsibilities. Firstly, the NJ statute defines the Task Force and describes general oversight requirements. Additionally, the statute informs of the Task Force’s responsibility to distribute Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) dollars; Secondly, each state is required to by the Children’s Justice Act (CJA) to form a task force in order to qualify for CJA dollars; Finally, the Task Force has been recently assigned the role of being one of the federally mandated Citizen Review Panels (CRP). There are 3 federally mandated CRPs: Task Force, Staffing and Oversight Subcommittee (SORS), and Child Fatality Near Fatality Review Board (CFNFRB). CRP’s have a responsibility of general oversight, annual report, and public outreach.

Task Force membership was discussed as well as efforts employed to finalize appointments for the vacant senate and assembly seats.

While membership has been a struggle, there has been great work around child sex abuse. To that end, additional accomplishments and work of the Task Force were presented. Notable accomplishments indicated that the Task Force is responsible for the creation of Child Advocacy Centers (CAC), Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) across the state, and statewide Finding Words training.

Discussion about the possibility of alternate meetings ensued. Task Force members were asked to think about holding alternate meetings either in the evening or Saturday morning to increase parents and youth involvement/participation. The statute will be reviewed to assess whether or not another youth could be included to “share” the role to increase the likelihood of the youth voice at meetings.

Subcommittees

Task Force is a voting body and given the new appointments of members coupled with the amount of information communicated, a planning retreat may better serve to inform the members and plan the upcoming activities. Additionally, a decision to change chairpersons of subcommittees was tabled. At this time, Mark Ali has been a Task Force member for a while and has served as Chair of the Protection subcommittee and will remain in this capacity until finalized at planning retreat. Similarly, Cecilia Zalkind has been the chairperson of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee and will remain in this capacity until election at September’s Retreat. Moreover, Diana Autin and Maura Somers Dughi have been providing leadership for the Prevention subcommittee in the absence of a Chair. They will continue providing leadership during this transition until the election at September’s Retreat.

Mark Ali shared the focus of Protection subcommittee. Ideally, the subcommittee seeks to engage and involve experts on emerging child protection issues and that ideas are exchanged and filtered to the Task Force. MDT guidelines were reviewed and established. Issues of child abuse and domestic violence will be discussed at the next Protection subcommittee on June 16, 2011.

A historical perspective was offered relative to subcommittees and subcommittee membership, noting while there was a period of disenfranchisement it is now a thing of

the past and a new dawn. Subcommittee's ideas are valued and are important for success. Task Force members are encouraged to actively participate on the subcommittees, and non Task Force members are welcome to join a subcommittee.

Diana Autin and Maura Somers Dughi shared the work of the Prevention subcommittee. Prevention had been under the radar so experts were engaged with experience to join the committee. Together, they decided what was needed in the State resulting in a Prevention Plan and the execution of the plan. The Subcommittee wrote a white paper on home visitation. It was the first evidence-based prevention model in the US; and New Jersey was viewed as one of the leaders in home visitation initiatives. The Federal Government authorized 1.5 billion for home visiting initiatives. The Prevention subcommittee wrote a prevention plan, which is a requirement of the Task Force to write a prevention plan for the State. Standards for Prevention were originally developed by Prevention Subcommittee and adopted nationally, developed training on the Standards as well as a resource manual; trained DPCP staff and grantees who are now required to have the Standards as part of their work and demonstrate same on their application. Additionally, the Prevention Subcommittee developed and trained Strengthening Family for Early Care and Education for the County child care resource and referral agencies, and survey of existing parent training programs. Active participation on the prevention subcommittee/workgroup resulted in the aforementioned. While membership decreased in the past, many potential members want to return because of the Commissioner's outreach and leadership. However, the subcommittee would like the following issues to be clarified 1) define how we determine who is on the subcommittee and have a formal roster/establish a requirement as to who is a voting member 2) look at prevention subcommittee strategic plan.

Furthermore, there was discussion indicating that there is a change in view in Government/Legislator around prevention. There appears to be an understanding that there is a need for prevention efforts to minimize long-term economic impacts and is evidenced in the continued funding of prevention initiatives. However, to maintain this momentum, evidence-based programs need to be implemented and data needs to be gathered in support of positive outcomes.

Relative to the subcommittees, a discussion about the bylaws ensued. It was noted that the bylaws indicate members of each subcommittee shall be approved annually by agreement of the Task Force, and each subcommittee shall have a minimum of three Task Force members. It was enumerated that there is an application process in which to update membership on subcommittees. The Task Force can change the Bylaws if they so choose and further discussion is warranted.

There was mention of the Task Forces' calendar that focused on providing education on prevention of child abuse and neglect and parenting tips. The calendar project developed by the now defunct communications subcommittee generated some interest.

It was noted that a general message should be developed from Task Force members to past members and the community advising the Task Force is "alive" and "it's a new

day". The same message could be used by Subcommittee Chairs in which they would send a letter to their contacts.

Cecilia Zalkind shared the work of the Staffing and Overview Subcommittee (SORS). SORS was created by legislation in 2001-2002 and existed as an independent committee. The subcommittee has a responsibility to report directly to the legislature. In addition, as one of the three federally mandated Citizen Review Panels, SORS submits an annual report with recommendations to the Governor; this report is separate and apart from Task Force report. SORS had relationship and membership concerns in the past similar to those of Prevention and Protection subcommittees.

Traditionally, SORS looked at staffing levels as there was huge turnover in DYFS and made recommendations for increased training; programs to assist staff obtain MSW or recruit BSW staff. SORS also explored turnover and why staff left the DYFS, but struggled on outcomes of children and families. Last year, SORS looked at exit surveys and found that staff leaving DYFS were decreasing in number and retention rates were higher. Currently, SORS shifted its focus to existing staff and recently issued a researched-based survey to DYFS staff noting the raw data/preliminary feedback is favorable. SORS meets the second Tuesday every other month and the workgroup will meet through the summer. SORS would like to increase membership; youth aging-out and permanency issues are agenda items.

Commissioner Blake and DYFS Director are headed into the Department's planning season. They are looking at training issues and corrective action plan.

Task Force members were interested in receiving the meeting dates of subcommittees as well as the roster of members of the Task Force. Adrienne will send meeting dates and roster following the meeting.

Planning Retreat/Election of Chairs

At the agreed upon upcoming planning meeting, the following items were identified as agenda items:

- Election of Chairs
- Bylaws
- Subcommittee member application process
- Voting parameters

Members agree that subcommittees should continue work through summer months. Additionally, the application process for new membership should not hold up work of subcommittees, but invited guests will not be allowed to vote.

Ethics Training – Bonny Fraser and Margaret Cotoia – Q/A

Bonny Fraser and Margaret Cotoia offered a brief explanation of forms provided. Bonny as the Ethics Officer of DCF is a resource to all members and available to answer any questions. Members were provided the following ethics documents:

- Plain Language Guide to New Jersey Executive Branch Ethics Standards
- Uniform Ethics Code
- Supplemental Code of Ethics

- *Personal and Business Relationships Disclosure Form
- *Conflict of Interest Form
 **will also be provided electronically*
- Ethics on-line training receipt collected

The screening documents requested by the Governor's Appointments Office prior to appointment is different than these ethics documents. Ethics training is valid for three years. The most recent ethics training provided to Task Force was 2006-2007. Task Force members are considered Special State Officers.

Adrienne will be monitoring the submission of all the aforementioned documents/forms/receipts and will provide updates to Bonny Fraser

Biennial Conference October 21, 2011 – East Brunswick Hilton

A Request for Proposal was executed for the Biennial Conference. Rutgers University Office of Continuing Professional Education won the award. There are 150 slots reserved for DCF employees. As the RFP indicates, Rutgers University, as the award winner, is to work collaboratively with the Task Force to identify the theme, keynotes and breakout sessions. The Task Force offered the following conference ideas/themes:

- Trauma
- Issues of healing which deals with trauma
- Preventing and Healing
- Wellness and recovery
- Sexting, bullying, social network issues
- Doing the right thing, caring for children experiencing abuse and neglect
- Strong families helping communities
- Judge Glenda Hatchett as possible keynote

In order to best handle this task, members agreed that a workgroup should be developed to help expedite the process through the summer and maintain the deadlines critical to the success of the conference. Members agreed to notify Adrienne of their interest by May 31, 2011

Maura Somers Dughi would like to explore a theme for next year's conference that goes beyond child abuse and neglect. Consideration should be given to economists, planners, and the business community that help provide the framework of partnership. Task Force members were interested in possibly developing a workgroup around this

Next meeting July 22, 2011

Members would like to tour SCR in November 2011

Announcements:

ACNJ pocket guide brochures were distributed.

CARES Institute is sponsoring Quarterly Experts in Child Abuse and Neglect – July 26, 2011, Enterprise Center Burlington County. Controversies in Head Trauma in children is the focus. The event is free.

Focus groups for parents and caregivers have been convening across the state as per the Commissioner's desire to obtain meaningful feedback from the stakeholder community about the services offered by DCF. These events have been held regionally throughout the state in coordination with Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), Parents Anonymous, and NJ Alliance for Family Support Organizations.

Adjournment

Note: May 27, 2011 minutes are pending final approval by NJTFCAN members