

State of New Jersey
Department of Children and Families



Report
of the
New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

to
Governor Jon Corzine
and
The New Jersey Legislature

Proceedings and Findings
For the period of
July 1, 2007 — June 30, 2008

New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee

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

Honorable Eileen Crummy
Acting Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

Debra Gise Jennings, Acting Co-Chair
Co-Executive Director
Statewide Parents Advocacy Network

Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee Members

Debra Gise Jennings, Chair
Co-Executive Director
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

Cecilia Zalkind, Vice-Chair
Executive Director
Association for Children of New Jersey

Paul Alexander, President
Communication Workers of America -
Local 1034

Angela Estes, Chief Executive Officer
Robins' Nest, Inc.

Janet Farrand, President
Foster and Adoptive Family Services

Sherryl Gordon, President
American Federation of State, County

Rita Gulden, Executive Director
Court Appointed Special Advocate

Nancy Parello, Policy/Communications
Manager
Office of the Child Advocate

Mae Lang, Assistant
American Federation of State, County

Craig Levine, Sr. Counsel & Policy Director
NJ Institute for Social Justice

Christine Mozes, Director
Division of Youth and Family Services

Patricia Myers, Supervising Social Worker
Legal Services of New Jersey

Elizabeth Susan Hodgson, M.D.
Office of the Child Advocate

Clarence Whittaker, Constituent Affairs
Officer
Division of Child Behavioral Health
Service

Hetty Rosenstein
Communications Workers of America –
Local 1037

Joseph Vitale, Senator
NJ State Senate
District 19

NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Staff

Jonathan Sabin,
Executive Director

Sharon Surette,
Assistant Director

Marge Caldwell-Wilson,
Project Manager

**New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee**

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For the period
JULY 1, 2007 - JUNE 30, 2008**

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**Honorable Eileen Crummy
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Executive Co-Director
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc.**

Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee

**Chair
Mrs. Debra Gise Jennings
Executive Co-Director
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc.**

**Vice Chair
Mrs. Cecilia Zalkind
Executive Director
Association for Children of New Jersey**

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New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee

ANNUAL REPORT For the period JULY 1, 2007 - JUNE 30, 2008

Introduction

On July 11, 2006, P.L. 2006, Chapter 47 was enabled which established the Department of Children and Families (the “Department”). 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 (“Task Force”). The bill also expanded the responsibilities and membership of the Task Force. Further, the law included provisions whereby the Division of Youth and Family Services Staffing and Outcome Review Panel established under N.J.S.A. 30:4C-3.1 was dissolved and its roles and functions were assumed by the Task Force through the creation of a Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS). The charge of the SORS is to review staffing levels of the Division of Youth and Family Services (the “Division”) order to develop recommendations regarding staffing levels and the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within the division. In addition, the subcommittee was mandated to review the Division’s performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes and prepare a report of its findings to the Governor and the Legislature. On February 1, 2007, Governor Corzine appointed 29 members to the Task Force. The Commissioner of Children and Families, co-chair of the Task Force designated members of the Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee. Debra Gise Jennings was named Chair and Cecilia Zalkind, Vice Chair.

Subcommittee Proceedings

The Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee met on the following dates: July 31, 2007; September 25, 2007; November 27, 2007; February 27, 2008; May 13, 2008; and June 24, 2008. At their first meeting for the year, the subcommittee established the following priorities for 2007-2008:

- Expand the membership of the SORS to include representation from the Legislature, Office of the Law Guardian, Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS), and the Administrative Offices of the Court (AOC)/Children in Court Improvement Committee (CICIC).
- Review the development of the DCF case practice infrastructure in the following areas: workforce (including review of data related to workforce recruitment training and retention); permanency (including review of data regarding concurrent planning training and the number of legally free children awaiting adoption); and services to families (including review of RFPs for service expansion).
- Review outcome requirements and results that are specified in the Modified Settlement Agreement, federal outcome data and data from the Chapin Hall study.

- Continue monitoring staffing levels and the Division's progress in achieving manageable caseloads.

Expanding Subcommittee Membership

During this year, the SORS identified the need for additional members in order to increase the involvement of stakeholders in its deliberations and decision-making. The SORS requested that the NJTFCAN Executive Director reach out to the legislature, Office of the Law Guardian, Division of Child Behavioral Health Services, and the Administrative Offices of the Court/Children in Court Improvement Committee to request that representatives be included in SORS membership and/or as meeting attendees. The results of these outreach activities are as follows:

- The Public Defender's Office was contacted regarding the inclusion of a Law Guardian on the SORS. The Public Defender responded to this request by assuring NJTFCAN staff that a Law Guardian would join the subcommittee. The SORS is currently awaiting the assignment of a representative.
- The DCBHS has assigned a representative to the SORS in order to provide the subcommittee with feedback on child behavioral health issues.
- The AOC has recently instructed the NJTFCAN staff that a specific AOC representative will be a part of the SORS.

DYFS Caseload Standards

Currently, the Division is reporting progress on achieving targets by average caseload size. After 2008, as required by Phase II of the Children's Rights lawsuit settlement agreement, the targets will focus on caseloads of individual staff members. Tracking caseload size by worker was the method employed by the SORS' predecessor, the Staffing and Outcome Review Panel; and likewise the SORS believes the transition from average caseload targets to targets by individual workers will provide data that will more accurately assess attainment of the goal to achieve caseloads that meet best practice standards. The Modified Settlement Agreement requires that 95% of offices and 95% of individual workers meet the following caseload standards by June 2009:

- Permanency Workers: No more than 15 families and no more than 10 children in placement;
- Intake Workers: No more than 12 open cases and no more than 8 new case assignments per month;
- Adoption Workers: No more than 15 children; and
- Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit Workers: No more than 12 open cases and 8 new case assignments per month.

Caseload standards were developed based on the historical data on referrals and were phased in over time with new targets every six months. From December 2006 through December 2008, targets are focused on average caseloads per office.

At the September meeting, the subcommittee was provided with a staffing update, indicating that DYFS met all caseload targets for June 2007, with at least 80% of offices having an average caseload that met each standard. More notable, 90% of offices met targets for adoption caseloads. The Division also reported that by June 2007, 97% of staff had caseloads of 20 families or less.

The local offices' caseload averages continued to improve in December 2007, with 100 percent of permanency workers meeting the standard and 98% of offices meeting the 5:1 worker-supervisor ratio. The adoption standard grew more stringent from June to December 2007, requiring workers to be responsible for no more than 15 children, down from 18 children. In December 2007, 71% of offices were in compliance with this more rigorous standard, compared to 90% that met the less challenging standard in June 2007.

The standard for intake workers who investigate reports of abuse and neglect also became more rigorous in December 2007. The new standard requires no more than eight new investigations per month, down from 10. Consequently, the offices meeting this standard fell from 82% in June to 76% in December 2007.

While the State was able to achieve the targeted goals for both of these measures, the declines raise questions about how the State will meet increasingly stringent caseload requirements, as the Fiscal 2009 budget includes no new funds for hiring additional staff. DCF officials have told the SORS that the standards will be met primarily through "redistribution" of staff. This raises concerns, particularly with intake, since the total number of child protection investigations and families that require services are often unpredictable. In addition, SORS members expressed concern that the focus on caseload reduction could foster unintended consequences, such as premature case closings, insufficient service provision or failure to open cases for families that require services.

Caseload Compliance, Statewide Averages

	Jun-07	Dec-07	Change
Intake	82%	76%	-7.30%
Permanency	84%	100%	19%
Adoption (18 children)	90%	93%	3.30%
Adoption (15 children)	n/a	71%	n/a
Supervisor Ratio	87%	98%	12.60%

Source: Department of Children and Families

Staff Recruitment and Retention

The SORS is charged with making recommendations relative to staff retention, recognizing that a stable workforce improves the Division's ability to develop its staff and maintain continuity of care for the children and families under its supervision.

DCF provided information regarding the recruitment and hiring of DYFS staff. The Division reported that separation rates for direct service workers remain extremely low, at 10.8%

in October 2006 (compared to 14.0% for the previous six months) and 10.7% in June 2007. Similarly, the separation rate for supervisors in June 2007 was 3.8%.

In response to the recommendations of the SORS as well as of the subcommittee's predecessor, the SORP, the Division reported that it has begun to conduct exit interviews with employees who are leaving their positions at the Division. Even though exit interviews have begun, the results have not been reported to the SORS. This information should be reported to SORS with assurance that the Division is getting feedback from a sufficient number of people to ensure that the data is representative of those exiting.

Staff Development and Training

Case Practice Model Training. In calendar year 2007, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) reported that it worked on building the infrastructure and assembling the resources that would be needed to deliver new Case Practice Model (CPM) training to approximately 4,000 Division of Youth and Families Services (DYFS) caseworkers, supervisors and managers.

DCF leadership worked closely with the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (CWPPG) to customize the selected curriculum to ensure it supported the new CPM both conceptually and in practice. "Engaging Families and Building Trusting Relationships" was chosen as the first module. The training focuses on the basic tenets of engaging families and developing a practice that is driven by family meetings. This curriculum teaches the skills for building trusting relationships, working through resistance, using solution-focused questions, assessing a case worker's relationship with a family, and developing and using a plan to build a trusting relationship. The second curriculum module, "Making Visits Matter," further stresses the value of family engagement and family meetings.

Three regional training teams comprised of members of the Child Welfare Training Partnership (Rutgers University, Richard Stockton College, Montclair State University) and the DCF Training Academy were established in November 2007. The training is delivered by trainers who have completed the train-the-trainer CPM program and are certified by CWPPG and DCF.

Since training on Module 1 began in January 2008, the Division has reported that it has trained a total of 3,795 staff on the Case Practice Model. This number is broken down as follows:

- Adoption Workers- 117 staff trained
- Caseworkers-2,090 staff trained
- Resource Family Workers- 178 staff trained
- Other Staff and Partners– 1,410 staff and partners trained

An additional 352 personnel have completed training in the immersion sites.

In addition, since the Division began the process of training Module 2 in May, more than 200 executive staff and leadership have been trained, and the full roll-out to all staff is under way.

The Division reported that the immersion sites have completed two modules of the Case Practice Model training, Engaging and Building Trust-Based Relationships and making visits matter. The leadership staff in the immersion sites have completed module three, Planning and Intervention. The immersion sites also receive coaching and mentoring from trainers from the CWPPG (Child Welfare Policy Planning Group). The Division further reports that the remaining staff are currently participating in module 3 (See above).

NJ Spirit Training. NJ Spirit was developed to improve record-keeping and case management practices, providing caseworkers and management with a reliable data source of information about caseloads in order to keep children safe and to improve practices in helping children achieve permanency.

The DCF Training Academy currently trains staff in how to use the State's new Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, NJ Spirit. This training includes instruction on navigating the Department's computer system including automated records management, case planning, service planning, and data tracking.

Since launching the formal training on NJ Spirit in May, 2006, the Division reports it has extensively trained DCF staff, along with various DCF partners, on the system, as follows:

- Web-Based Navigation Course - 5,356 staff trained
- Financial I - 727 staff trained
- Financial II - 146 staff trained
- Investigations - 1,433 staff trained
- Ongoing Case Management - 3,342 staff trained
- Resource Family Management - 759 staff trained
- Supervisor - 1,043 staff trained
- Investigations (1 Day Refresher Course) - 14 staff trained
- Ongoing Case Management (1 Day Refresher) - 9 staff trained
- Litigation - 392 staff trained
- Resource Recruitment - 235 staff trained

* Totals include individuals who completed courses within each category; individuals may have attended one or more courses.

Outcomes

The SORS is charged with reviewing the Division's performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes. The Division provided a presentation to outline the three-prong reform strategy to improve child and family outcomes: focus on the fundamentals; create a change in the culture of practice, moving from a case management service delivery model to a strength-based, family-centered and child-focused model; and deliver results.

1. Focus on the fundamentals;
2. Create a change in the culture of practice, moving from a case management service delivery model to a strength-based, family-centered and child-focused model; and
3. Deliver results.

Focus on the Fundamentals. The Division's tactics for this strategy include;

- Reduce caseload size;
- Expand pool of resource families;
- Improve training capacity;
- Establish adoption units in local offices; and
- Develop data capacity

Changing the Culture and Model of Practice. The Division reported its tactics for this strategy which include:

- Develop the family and child-focused case practice model;
- Train and coach staff in the new case practice model;
- Increase investments in family-focused resources;
- Improve service coordination across DCF divisions; and
- Build child health units through the local offices to ensure access to health services.

Deliver Results. Tactics to improve positive outcomes include:

- Expand the pool of resource families; and
- Fully implement the case practice model.

The intent of the above three-pronged approach is to deliver results that improve child and family outcomes. Some indicators of improved outcomes include: reduction in the number of multiple foster placements; placement of sibling groups together; placement of children in their home communities; and improved permanency outcomes.

Although the Division provided information around progress in several of these areas, the subcommittee was often unable to assess the results of this progress. For example, the subcommittee was advised of the numbers of DYFS staff who had completed training in the new Case Practice Model; however, the subcommittee did not have outcome information to assess how this training is impacting the way caseworkers actually deliver services or whether the change in practice has had a positive effect on child well-being and permanency outcomes.

Obtaining Data Reports Needed for Subcommittee Mandates

During this year, significant time was expended in an effort to receive reports that addressed the indicators identified in the subcommittee's 2007-2008 priorities. The subcommittee requested data that included a sufficient level of detail including comparisons over time. In addition, the subcommittee was concerned that it must be provided adequate time for SORS members to review the data in preparation for scheduled meetings. Conversion of the management and information system to NJ Spirit resulted in significant challenges to the Division staff's ability to generate data requested by the SORS by the mutually agreed upon dates. Several meeting dates were rescheduled because data reports had not been finalized, and

the SORS was told that data being generated by NJ Spirit during this period required significant checking for accuracy and reliability.

The review and analysis of data relevant to the Division's results and challenges in improving the State's child welfare system are integral to the role and function of the SORS and its ability to monitor the Division's implementation of the reform plan. Further, although the lawsuit settlement provides a certain level of oversight, this mechanism will eventually conclude as the terms the lawsuit settlement are achieved to the satisfaction of Children's Rights. A strong internal oversight body which has the authority to acquire accurate data and provide meaningful feedback will help to ensure that the Division maintains a commitment to continuous quality improvement which improves child well-being and permanency for New Jersey's most vulnerable citizens. In May the SORS Chair and Vice Chair met with Acting Children and Families Commissioner Crummy and expressed their frustrations with the receipt of information from the Division. The Acting Commissioner invited them to a follow-up meeting which included Division staff, representatives of the federal monitors and staff from the Office of the Child Advocate. At this meeting and through further discussions at the May meeting of the entire SORS, the SORS developed a list of data reports that are needed in order to meet its responsibilities, including the organization of the data and timeframes for distribution of the data. The list is included in this report as attachment A. In addition to this list, the SORS had the opportunity to review Appendix C to the Monitoring Report for Charlie and Nadine H. v. Corzine July 1 – December 31, 2007, with the Acting Commissioner and federal monitors and provide suggestions and recommendations for aligning these reporting requirements with the subcommittee's data needs and priorities.

Recommendations

In keeping with the third of our three deliverables, delivering results for children and families, the subcommittee feels it is important that the child welfare system work together with all stakeholders. The Judicial system is an important part of the system for children who have been removed from their homes, and presently the Court is looking to embark on a major initiative to track all adoption cases, which it previously has not done. The Judicial system has successfully been working to improve their tracking of all Family cases over the last three years, and DYFS has been working with NJ Spirit to enable tracking of their work with children and families. However, there is still a discrepancy between open cases with the Court and DYFS. In order to address this challenge with adoption cases, the SORS encourages dialogue between DYFS and the Court in order to coordinate with the Court at the beginning of their project. Once successfully completed we would hope that both systems would continue to find ways to have their systems align in order for our complete child welfare system to ensure that all children are captured by both DYFS and the Court.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee - Priorities For 2008-2009

The work of the Staffing and Outcomes Review Subcommittee of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect for 2008-2009 is directed by the charge of this subcommittee as determined in the statute, including:

- Reviewing staffing levels of the Division of Youth and Family Services;
- Developing recommendations regarding staffing levels;
- Developing recommendations around the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within the division;
- Reviewing the Division's performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes; and
- Reporting annually the Subcommittee's findings to the Governor and the Legislature.

Therefore, the subcommittee has established the following priorities for 2008, which are in direct alignment with these charges:

1. The subcommittee will continue discussions with DCF related to establishing outcomes and obtaining the needed data for ensuring the continuous improvement of the Division's performance on behalf of children and families in New Jersey. Activities to address this priority may include the following:
 - a. In collaboration with the Department, develop a plan for the Subcommittee to receive quantitative data relevant to the statutory responsibilities and annual priorities of the Subcommittee. This plan will include timelines for data report submissions to the Subcommittee.
 - b. Establish Subcommittee workgroups that will focus on each of the statutory responsibilities and/or annual priorities. Workgroups will not only review and analyze data reports to monitor progress, but may also inform the agenda for meetings of the Subcommittee with suggestions of presentation topics and presenters that can provide qualitative and experiential data on Department progress, programs and initiatives addressing the Subcommittee's priorities.
2. The DCF Case Practice Model has been developed as the primary framework changing the way that DYFS operates in engaging families for better outcomes for children. Professional development of caseworkers and supervisors in this new model is key to its implementation with fidelity. The Subcommittee will monitor the progress of implementation of the Case Practice Model, including its impact on DYFS management outcomes and other areas of the State's child welfare system, through the following:
 - a. Observations of Case Practice Model implementation activities, including participation in training;
 - b. Visits to local offices, including interviews with DYFS staff;
 - c. Discussions with families through the Statewide Family Council(s); and
 - d. Regular progress reports from DCF staff.

3. The SORS has identified youth aging out as a priority issue for committee review next year. Demographic data on this population has not been available. The SORS is interested in exploring the development of data to identify not only the age, race, gender, placement status and length of care for youth under DYFS supervision, but also data related to outcomes, including the number graduating from high school and college, the number in transitional living, the number unemployed, in jail or having babies, and the number adopted or in Kinship legal guardianship arrangements. The SORS will also examine services available to, and needed by, this group.

The members of the Staffing and Outcomes Review Subcommittee of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect appreciate the opportunity to share with the Governor and Legislature this report of our proceedings over the past 12 months and also to outline our priorities for this year. We are committed to the subcommittee's roles as supporters of the improvement of our State's child welfare services and as consistent voices for transparency and accountability.

**Staffing and Outcomes Review Subcommittee
Of the
New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect**

***ATTACHMENT A: Data Reports Needed for Accomplishing 2008-2009
Priorities and Meeting Statutory Requirements***

	Reporting Region	Reporting Period
STAFFING/CASELOAD		
Total number of DYFS active caseload-carrying workers and trainees	By local office	Quarterly
Worker caseloads (intake, permanency, adoption)	By local office	Quarterly
Average DYFS caseload (1-10, 11-20, 21-30, more than 30)	By local office	Quarterly
Supervisor to caseload staff ratio	By local office	Quarterly
Total number children and families under DYFS supervision*	By local office	Quarterly
Total number children 18-21 receiving DYFS services*	By local office	Quarterly
Total number children 18-21 in a DCF placement*	By local office	Quarterly
Total number children under DYFS supervision in their own homes*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of cases opened	By local office	Quarterly
Number of cases closed	By local office	Quarterly
DCF separation rates	By local office	Quarterly
STAFF TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT		
Number of staff members who received development/training in each of the following topics/areas:		
- Pre-Service	Statewide	Quarterly
- In-Service	Statewide	Quarterly
- Concurrent Planning (By module)	Statewide	Quarterly
- Case Practice Model (By module)	Statewide	Quarterly
- Investigations/Intake	Statewide	Quarterly
- Supervisory	Statewide	Quarterly
- Adoption	Statewide	Quarterly
- IAIU	Statewide	Quarterly
% of field staff who have received training in the Case Practice Model (by module)	By local office	
REFERRALS		
Total calls coded No Action Required**	Statewide	Quarterly
Total calls coded Related Information	Statewide	Quarterly
Total calls coded Information/Referral	Statewide	Quarterly
Total calls coded Information Only	Statewide	Quarterly
Total calls coded differential response referrals (pilot counties)*	By local office	Quarterly
Total IAIU referrals*	By local office	Quarterly
Source of referrals for IAIU and CPS	Statewide	Quarterly
PLACEMENT/RESOURCE HOMES		
Total number of children in out-of-home placement*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of children entering care, broken down by first time and subsequent*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of children exiting care*	By local office	Quarterly

Reasons for Placement	Statewide	Quarterly
Breakdown of placement type by relative home, resource home, residential treatment center, group home, treatment home, shelter***	By local office	Quarterly
Number of juveniles in detention awaiting placement*	Statewide	Quarterly
Total number of out of state placements, by setting*	Statewide	Quarterly
Number new resource home applications	By local office	Quarterly
Number of newly licensed family resource homes (kinship and non-kinship)	By local office	Quarterly
Net gain of resource families	By local office	Quarterly
Total number of resource families, broken down by non-kin, kin, suspended and restricted	By local office	Quarterly

CHILD ABUSE DATA

Number a/n substantiations*	By local office	Quarterly
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PERMANENCY

Median time children spend in placement*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of finalized adoptions*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of subsidized adoptions*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of subsidized kinship legal guardianships*	By local office	Quarterly
Number of children legally free and awaiting adoption and reasons for delay*	By local office	Quarterly

* Data should be disaggregated by race, gender, age & geography.

** Local office would refer to the office receiving the referrals

*** Data should be disaggregated by RTC, group home, etc.