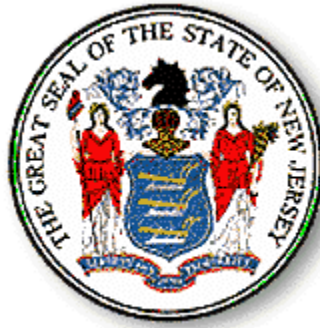


State of New Jersey

Department of Children and Families



Report

of the

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

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

to

Governor Chris Christie

and

The New Jersey Legislature

Proceedings and Findings

For the period of

July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

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

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Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee
FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

For the period of
July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

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

Honorable Alison Blake
Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

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

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- 1037

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NJ State Senate
District 19

NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Staff

Jonathan Sabin,
Executive Director

**ANNUAL REPORT
For the period
JULY 1, 2009 - JUNE 30, 2010**

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**Honorable Alison Blake
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**Mrs. Debra Gise Jennings (Acting)
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**Chair
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Executive Director
Association for Children of New Jersey**

**Vice - Chair
Ms. Rita Gulden
Executive Director
Court Appointed Special Advocate**

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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, 2009 - JUNE 30, 2010

Introduction

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 (“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.

Subcommittee Proceedings

The Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee met on the following dates: September 8, 2009; December 14, 2009; February 9, 2010; April 13, 2010, June 8, 2010. These meetings provided the SORS with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with their statutorily mandated work. The following meeting minutes provide a record of the activities of the SORS during the past year.

Summary of Activities - 2009 to 2010

The charge of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) is outlined in the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) statute and includes the following:

- 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.

SORS, which is also a subcommittee of the NJTFCAN, attended to this charge by the following actions in 2009-2010:

1. Requested and reviewed data regarding DYFS staffing and case/client outcomes.

The subcommittee's review of child welfare data is a primary priority of the subcommittee. The SORS engaged in ongoing discussions with DCF related to the use of data and the tracking of outcomes for the state child welfare system. Data on the following issues were reviewed and discussed:

- a. Child Placements by age
- b. Staffing Levels
- c. State Central Registry data
- d. Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Data was reviewed on two separate occasions. Subcommittee members expressed concerns with regards to continuing differences in how AOC data and DCF data are collected and reported, making it difficult to compare.

2. Reviewed reports of the federal monitor and other reports of case practice and outcomes.

The SORS worked with DCF in monitoring outcomes associated with New Jersey's child welfare reform. Information was presented to the subcommittee regarding phase II of the Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA). Portions of the federal monitor's report were reviewed, including measures of the Case Practice performance outcomes as well as quantitative and qualitative measures.

The results of the federal Child and Family Services Review¹ were also discussed. The subcommittee was concerned about New Jersey's performance in the area of permanency and out-of-home placement and had a presentation from DYFS staff on the review. The subcommittee requested a copy of the improvement plan the state is required to submit to the federal Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to address the areas in which the state had fallen short.

The subcommittee also asked for an update on the development and implementation of the qualitative assessment process, which the modified settlement agreement requires to be implemented by June 2009. The SORS was told that DCF has been working with the monitor to develop a mutually acceptable tool.

¹ The Child and Family Services Reviews are designed to enable the Children's Bureau, within in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, to ensure that state child welfare agency practice is in conformity with federal child welfare requirements, to determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in State child welfare services, and to assist States to enhance their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

The DYFS director informed the SORS that the state is in the process of reviewing assessment models and choosing one that can be adapted for New Jersey. The subcommittee asked for updates on this since the subcommittee is charged to review child and family outcomes.

3. Discussed DYFS efforts to address the needs of youth aging out of foster care.

An issue of great concern to the SORS continues to be the difficulties of youth aging out of New Jersey's child protection system. The subcommittee examined the new role of DYFS Adolescent Workers who work under the Office of Adolescent Practice and Permanency. As of December 2009, there were 860 adolescents in placement. Adolescent Workers are a type of permanency worker and serve youth 14-21 under DYFS supervision.

Youth who were in DYFS placement on their 18th birthday are generally eligible for the Medicaid Extension for Young Adults program after their DYFS case closes. These young people are eligible for a range of continued services until age 21.

The SORS had several discussions with DCF regarding children that opt out of these extended services. The SORS believes that it is critically important for children to keep Medicaid and any other available support services and is concerned that information may not be given to youth in a uniform or engaging way by DYFS field staff. The subcommittee recommended that aging out youth be provided with a list of services that will be lost if a youth decides to voluntarily withdraw from DYFS support services.

The SORS also coordinated discussion of this issue with the Citizen Review Panel,² which had also prioritized services to aging out youth as an issue for action. Panel representatives presented their activities and plans to the SORS, which included a survey of older youth and service providers. In April 2010, the panel released the findings of their survey in a detailed report. The Panel is working to follow up on the report's recommendations to improve services to aging out youth. The SORS will continue to work with the panel on this issue.

4. Examined DYFS staffing and training.

In keeping with its mandate to look at how the state hires and retains staff within DYFS, the SORS examined DCF separation rates and exit surveys. Currently DCF attrition rates are very good. Members of the SORS hypothesized that this could be partially due to the slow economy and high unemployment rate.

The SORS also reviewed DCF Exit Surveys. Subcommittee members questioned the sample size associated with the exit surveys and made suggestions regarding ways to encourage exiting DCF staff to complete the survey. Subcommittee members expressed concern regarding their perception that the number of exit surveys that they reviewed only represented a small percentage of those who complete the surveys or

² The New Jersey Child Welfare Citizen Review Panel (CWRCP) is one of three citizen review panels established under the New Jersey Comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CCAPTA).

that too few surveys were collected from exiting employees. SORS members suggested the following steps be taken by DCF in order to obtain more information from exiting staff:

- Conduct face-to-face Human Resources exit interviews to ensure exit survey completion.
- Request anonymous employee feedback on a regular basis vs. the exit reviews.
- Conduct follow-up activities to find out where exiting employees are going.

In discussing the value of exit surveys, subcommittee members suggested that a survey of current staff might be more valuable in getting feedback on job conditions, training needs and other issues related to job performance and satisfaction. A subgroup was formed to develop an online survey for staff. The subgroup, which includes SORS members and DYFS staff, presented a draft survey for subcommittee review at the April meeting. The survey is targeted at DYFS employees in order to obtain information regarding the stability of the workforce and provide SORS with staffing insights regarding the Division.

After discussions and recommendations for changes to the survey, the subcommittee agreed to a process in which DYFS would test the survey before conducting it with all staff.

5. Monitored implementation of the federal Fostering Connections Act.

The SORS received information regarding New Jersey's work to be compliant with the requirements associated with the Fostering Connections Act.³ DCF representatives detailed their work with the Department of Education and others regarding this act and its impact on DYFS. The subcommittee examined the major challenges associated with keeping kids in their own schools, which is a significant consideration of the program.

Specifically, the subcommittee discussed proposed legislation, sponsored by Senator Vitale, to meet the educational stability provisions of Fostering Connections in regard to efforts to maintain children in placement in their original school district, if it is in their best interests. The challenges to implementing this provision were discussed. SORS members asked whether there was data on how many children this may affect, such as the number of children currently in out-of-home placement who are not in their original home community, and was told that DYFS does not have data on this question.

³ 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>

The issue of preschool was raised. If a child lived in a school district that provided state-funded preschool and was placed in a district that did not provide preschool, would DYFS continue to ensure that the child was able to remain in their preschool program. DYFS did not view preschool as part of their obligation, but several subcommittee members disagreed. The issue was left unresolved. The SORS plans to follow up on this in its monitoring of the educational stability provisions of Fostering Connections.

Subcommittee members asked to be informed of the progress of the legislation.

SORS Recommendations

Based on its discussion in 2009-10, the SORS is making the following recommendations for action by DCF:

- Complete a one-page handout providing information to youth on the benefits of remaining under DYFS care beyond age 18; distribute this to youth at age 14 at the beginning of the transition planning process. This handout should be reviewed with youth annually.
- Take administrative steps to improve the process of conducting exit surveys with staff leaving DYFS, as recommended by the SORS, including conducting face-to-face interviews and identifying where exiting employees plan on working after leaving DYFS.
- Develop a process for gathering and analyzing data necessary to monitor the implementation of the educational stability provisions of Fostering Connections, 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.
- Implement the DYFS staff survey developed by the SORS, and use the survey results to inform hiring, retention and other employee-related issues.
- Provide sufficient data for the SORS to meet its statutory obligation. As noted in prior SORS Annual Reports, the SORS has had significant difficulty in obtaining the data requested from Division. This year saw some improvement in the division's response to the SORS requests for information at the end of this year. This improvement should continue.

Issues for Follow-Up in 2010-2011

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

- Oversee the administration and analysis of the online survey of current DYFS staff and an action plan based upon the results
- Continued discussion of the Program Improvement Plan submitted by DYFS to the federal government to address areas of concern identified in the recent Child and Family Services Review in New Jersey
- Monitor the development and implementation of a qualitative assessment of DCF case practice as required by the Modified Settlement Agreement, including follow up on involving outside stakeholders in the QSR process to conduct case reviews.
- Continued discussion of DYFS progress in better meeting the needs of youth aging out of foster care.
- Increase the membership of the SORS, including representatives from Foster and Adoptive Family Services, employee labor unions, the Office of Law Guardian, Office of Parental Representation service providers, and other stakeholders.
- Share the minutes of the SORS and the citizen review panels to ensure coordination of panel activities.

Meeting Minutes

September 8, 2009

Subgroup Conference Call

Due to the cancelled July meeting, a conference call was held that included Ceil Zalkind, Debra Jennings, John Ducoff, Christine Mozes, and Jonathan Sabin to discuss the data request. The SORS requested data was reviewed. John Ducoff was invited to present the data which was discussed via the conference call, which was also included in the September meeting packets. Both John and Ceil believed the conference call to be beneficial and productive. Ceil reviewed the DCF website to see what data was posted and in need of updating. John reported on what data was available and what could be provided. As a result, Ceil and Debra were able to help prioritize a schedule to produce the data, some which was provided at September's meeting.

Outcomes and Measures

John's presentation included the information tracked by the monitor in Phase II of the MSA, outcome measures published and the exit data of the placement of the youth aged 18-21. John also informed that the web data Ceil noted for updating was updated.

Monitor's Report

- John reviewed portions of the monitor's report. In the report, outlined in Appendix C, are the measures of the Case Practice performance outcomes. The posted pieces are on the Reference Areas and Quantitative or Qualitative Measures. The measures of the new version should be released in the December '09 Monitor's Report and available for posting.

Measures

- SCR operations notes all calls made to the SCR including the total number of calls abandoned, timeframe for answering calls, calls screened non-related to SCR issues, CPS, CWS, response time to investigations, etc. A qualitative review captures how the screeners should respond, how they handle the calls and respond which is how the monitor reviewed SCR in 2008.

SCR

- Measure of SCR response to alleged child abuse and neglect in 24 hours. Suggestion to track the time the call is received at SCR; when it gets to field; and time of response during a 24 hour period. This will assist in identifying where the breakdown in the system may occur.

Investigations

- Monitoring to ensure investigations are completed in 60 days continues.

IAU Practice

- The monitor will perform a qualitative review to ensure the system is working appropriately, i.e., making sure the investigations are completed in 60 days. Focusing on the feedback to other divisions and implementation of corrective actions plans.

Quality of Investigations

- Monitoring the division's practice of visiting the child outside of the caretaker's presence. Monitor wishes to determine if the appropriate interviews are conducted and good decisions are made on behalf of the child, etc.

CAN in Placement

- A widely used outcome indicator to determine if children in placement are abused or neglected. Information outlined in the MSA identifying children abused or neglected while in the care of a foster or resource caretaker within 12 months.

CAN in Home

- Determines the percentage of children who were substantiated within the year following an investigation. This measure targets the benchmarks, timelines and final targets. Only the final target information is provided to the monitor for the Modified Settlement Agreement.

Reunification

- Measures the outcome of children who were victims of substantiated abuse and neglect and reunified with their families within one year of reunification.

Timely Permanency

- Tracks time to permanency, most recent entry into care, how long it took for permanency exit, i.e., reunification, KLG, adoption, and the longest waiting.

Re-entry to Placement

- Captures those who leave custody by tracking the percentage of those who exited and re-entered placement within the year.

Stability of Placement

- Tracks the percentage of those with two or fewer placements in 12 months.

Sibling Placement

- % of children placed with siblings

Shelter Placement

- Placement of children 13 and under and those 13 and up

Adoption Process Measures

- Once a determination of a goal of adoption is made, what % of TPR petitions are filed within 6 weeks
- Adoptive home identified
- Recruitment plan created within 30 days as of date of goal change

Select Home Permanency

- % that are placed in an adoptive home within 9 months of TPR
- Adoption finalized, how many are finalized within 9 months of adoptive placement
- Are there an ample amount of DAGs are representing division

Casework Contacts/Visits

- Two visits per month during 1st two months, monthly after
- Visits with parents when reunification is involved
- Visitations with children in custody with their parents
- Visitations with siblings
- % age of kids w/plans in place within 30 days
- Are case plans updated every 6 months

Quality Case Planning

- Developing good plans
- Good service, timetables, articulating goals well
- Educational needs provided
- Engaging with families and kids

Medical

- Pre-placement assessments
- Medical exams
- Semi-annual dental
- Mental health assessments
- Follow-up care and treatment
- Immunizations

- Health passports

Prevention

- Family Success Centers, Differential Response
- Effective use of family teams
- % of closed cases that receive safety and risk assessment completed prior to closure
- Support of successful transitions
- Post adoption support
- Independent living assessment
- Services provided to youth 18-21
- Housing, employment training, and educational programs

Guests from the Citizen Review Panel were invited to discuss the concerns of the aging out issues presented at the last meeting.

Aging Out

- John provided data around those youth 18 and older, as well as the adolescences aged 13–17 showing their length in care.
- Data included the expansion of services to teens who exited and those who have marked the 18 year old milestone. The cross tab information of the youth showed the following:
 - Those at 18 who exited care
 - Where they were at the time of their exit
 - The median time they spent in care.
- Assisting those aging out of the system to permanency requires a lot of work. Nationwide the statistics are disappointing. It was difficult to locate the needed information to identify the concerns of housing, schooling, education, employment, and primarily their life basic skills, because there were no documents and practices in place to track the data.
- Randi Mandelbaum discussed the Rutgers Clinic Aging Out book project. The book focused upon on the rights, services and entitlements of youth who range in ages 14-21 and receiving services. The project has been very successful. To connect with those receiving services, two sets of labels, provided by DYFS for youth in the specified age group, was used.
 - The CWCRP has partnered with CASA and Junior Leagues to conduct fairs for children at local community facilities.
- A statewide community education survey project was conducted for the youth and professionals who assist them. Although primarily utilized to capture the responses directly of the youth, both youth and providing agencies participated in the survey. The intent of the project was to gather information regarding the services needed to

connect youth with the appropriate services. The findings and recommendations of the responses from both the youth and professional surveys will be compiled into a report. Once completed, the report will be forwarded to the members of the SORS.

- Christine noted her interest in the youth perspective from the survey. It could provide information beneficial for her offices. The voice of the youth is vital in getting the information in the policies and practices to appropriate the service needed throughout the Division.
- Programs in California conducted a three day training seminar for their youth through age 28.
 - Youth were trained in public speaking and received life skills presentations to prepare for job interviews. Sessions included components regarding moving into adulthood.
 - Presentations by those who took part in the seminar to explain what they have learned while attending the training.
 - This type of project is something to consider for New Jersey's youth.
- More work and effort needs to be done to convince youth that it's more beneficial to remain in care.

December 14th, 2009

Introductions

Members of the subcommittee introduced themselves. Group was informed of John Ducoff's departure from DCF. Jessica Pena will be assisting the subcommittee on data matters.

Transition to new administration

Christine Mozes provided a brief update regarding the transition to the new gubernatorial administration. Current DCF staff can not provide much information since the new administration's transition team only arrived a day or two ago. Members of the transition team will be meeting with senior DCF leadership in order to learn more about how DCF functions.

CFSR

Donna Younkin provided information and answered questions regarding the [New Jersey Federal Child and Family Services Review](#) which is an evaluation of a state's child welfare system to determine how well the system performs in promoting outcomes for the safety, permanency, and well-being for children. The CFSR is intended to focus states on results and performance improvement.

In response to the Federal report of findings, the state and federal government develop a Program Improvement Plan, or PIP to addresses criteria in which the state was found to not be in "substantial conformity." The PIP outlines strategies the state will implement

to improve performance, along with responsibility and timeframes for each. The new PIP has not yet been approved by the Children's Bureau.

Data Review

Jessica Pena and Christine Mozes provided feedback to the subcommittee regarding the following data sets:

Placements by age

Group reviewed data.

Report on DYFS employee exit surveys

Subcommittee members questioned the sample size associated with the exit surveys and made suggestions regarding ways to encourage exiting DCF staff to complete the survey. Want to know total number of people that left in comparison to the 42 surveys. Of the people who left where did they go? Does DCF have additional records stating where departing employees go?

SCR data

Group discussed idea of comparing these numbers with same data from same time last year.

AOC TPR Data

Subcommittee members stated that they had difficulty understanding the provided AOC TPR data and requested that an AOC representative be invited to the next meeting to assist them with understanding this information. Joanne Dietrich from the AOC was suggested as a possible guest to provide the needed TPR data information.

SORS 2010 Calendar

Ceil Zalkind questioned the subcommittee about continuing the current meeting schedule of gathering on the 2nd Tuesday of every other month. The subcommittee was generally in favor of this schedule but several members of the subcommittee expressed concerns related to the ongoing value of the meetings and the subcommittee's work.

New Business

Next Meeting

February 9, 2010

Agenda items:

- AOC TPR Data
- Caseworker Turnover
 - Who is leaving and why
 - PICWIC numbers – how many apply vs. how many accepted
 - Number of staff who left in 2008 possibly 2009
- PIP for 2010 (if available)
- Role of Adolescent practice specialists

- Fostering Connections Act

February 9, 2010

Minutes

The last month meeting minutes were inadvertently deleted but steps were taken to prevent a reoccurrence.

Minutes were approved without additions and or corrections and omissions. A motion was made to accept. There was one abstention.

Christine Mozes

Staff Separations

- The 2008 and 2009 staff separation comparisons show a decline in 2009.
 - The numbers will be finalized in March 2010.
 - Changes to the numbers can be due to employees who are not separating on own accord. Union appeals may occur.
- Some retention is also due to the economy, employee satisfaction, and feeling supported in their jobs.
- Family Service Specialist Trainees enter the Division and participate in training for 6 months.
 - May extend beyond 6 months due to concerns of performance, participation.
 - Only 9 trainee separations in 2009 compared to 38 in 2008. Would like to believe it is a result of the improvement measures.
 - Big improvement from two years ago.
 - The workforce data on the website shows there are 704 trainees out of 2025 caseworkers. In 9/09 there were 82 out of 2371.
- Trainees move into the family service specialist 2 position, which is the permanent status after 1 year.
- Family service specialist 1 is promotional opportunity; staff is tested and is moved from FSS 2 to FSS 1.
 - Intentionally held promotions of staff in 2009 for FSS 1 positions to acquire equity throughout the state in the FSS 1 titles for about 6 or 9 months.
 - Worked with HR to determine the FSS 1 needs across the state.
 - In October 2009, began hiring staff into FSS 1 positions. 21% of caseload carrying staff are FSS 1. Including the non-caseload carrying FSS I positions the average is about 25% per local office. The goal is equity amongst the local offices and reduce the transfers and movement between offices solely for promotional opportunities.
- Other DCF Titles
 - Assistant family service workers (ASFW) are transportation aids. The amount of AFSW turnover has significantly decreased.

- AFSW's with degrees and who meet the basic qualifications are encouraged to apply for casework positions.

Staff Separation & Exit Survey Discussion

- Christine to follow-up with HR to determine the breakdown of the staff separations within the divisions of DCF.
 - When considering the hiring freezes and rebuilding the staff, the numbers reflect a more stable workforce.
 - Caseload reporting is still a concern, but is lower than previous years.
 - Information provided by NJSPIRIT is an accurate account of caseload data in particular offices and by caseworkers.
 - Employees completing cases under other employees' names.
 - Some workers question why they are working out of their title.
 - Complaints raised are minimal.
- Exit surveys still only include a small percentage of those who complete the surveys.
 - Creating additional ideas and suggestions were discussed at the previous meeting.
 - A face-to-face HR exit interview would be ideal to ensure completion.
 - Employee feedback can anonymously be requested on a regular basis vs. the exit reviews.
 - SORS to explore the development of an online survey to capture the employees' feedback.
 - > Nancy (lead) and Pat to begin the subcommittee process of the survey which will include an HR and DYFS individual.
 - > The purpose of the survey need to be clear. Need to show how it will be beneficial for the worker.
 - > Need to review current surveys and the fundamental questions.
 - Employee self evaluations can be a part of annual reviews.
 - Training curriculum exists for current supervisors related to elements of the Case Practice Model.

Acting Commissioner Rosenzweig Visit

- Acting Commissioner visited and was briefed on the roles and tasks of the subcommittee.
 - Acting Commissioner was provided with the website turnover data.
 - Acting Commissioner noted that the SORS can assist with issues.
 - Aware of new and public data systems.
 - NJSPIRIT data will be better used when data is clean.
 - The MSA can not be the only thing that drives what comes out of the office.
 - Would like to see more of the community than department staff at the meetings.
 - Looking to have old members back to strengthen committee.
 - DCF Commissioner is willing to assist in pulling persons back.

PICWIC Program

- 443 applications.

- 243 interviewed.
- 171 admissions, 7 withdrew, 104 are currently in program.
- Approximately 3 years to complete.
 - 55 graduated.
 - 9 graduating in May.
 - 2 completing in January.
 - 7 expected to complete in February
 - By July/August another 10 to have completed.
 - Students can participate in Rutgers graduation
 - A special ceremony is provided by the department.
 - Staff within the Division with a history receives priority.
- Established in Fall 2006 with Child Welfare Training Academy.
- Developed various cohorts in fall '06 - spring '07 to track the pilot staff before introducing the second cohort.
- Fall '06 – current, 443 applications for staff interested in participating in MSW program.
 - BSW staff is placed in separates cohort and can participate in advanced standing programs.
- Staff that have completed the program have formed bonds, have share experiences and learned more about the agency.
 - Faculty of the program appreciates the opportunity to teach the classes.
 - It was noted that the staff have applied the lessons learned in classes to their jobs and feel that they can be change agents.
 - The internship is completed within DYFS in other capacities; some are obtain after hours in private agencies.
 - Internship is encouraged to obtain outside of DYFS to broaden the educational experiences.

Adolescent Workers

- Staff needs to understand their role as an adolescent worker.
 - With training, workers still have difficulty accessing the appropriate services the adolescent population need.
 - The issue is to develop the workers with the necessary tools and skills to assist the adolescents with the options and opportunities available.
 - Local offices have not completely grasped from the central office the expectations of the adolescent workers.
 - Ann Gunning is gathering the components of the work but need to clarify what the expectations are.
- DYFS is reviewing the data by local office and the worker ratio to local office.
- SORS will determine how they can provide their input.
 - Caseworker Survey will be a starting point.
 - Interested in the Division's practices of how and when the youth are entitled to services.
 - Youths are assessed at age 14.
 - NYTD – National Youth in Transition Database, federal database, is requiring surveys be completed at ages 17, 19, and 21.

- Agency is required to find and complete the survey of a 21 year old if they are no longer in system.
 - SORS may want to consider this within the DYFS worker's realm.
 - The aged-out group is to also be explored.
 - Practices have been changed to reopen closed case and to reinstate services.
 - A list of provided services may be helpful for the adolescents.
- Case Practice reform – workers will develop a real understanding of how to engage with parents and understand the importance of family connections.

Fostering Connections Act – Education Stability

- Internal workgroup met for over a year to meet the specific demands of the Act.
 - Deputy Directors, policy and DOE personnel, Adoption, Title 4E have met regularly.
 - Highlights around Fostering Connections are around Title 4E assistance for KLG families.
- 4B Family Connection grants are available to states.
- Worked with International Social Services on a grant received to assist staff in working effectively with families of trans-national kids.
- Education stability and health care.
 - Health care with focus on physical, emotional, health and dental health.
- 4E adoption assistance program.
 - If eligibility linked for adoption assistance from AFDC, it broadens the pot.
 - Foster care adoption subsidy and KLG assistance up to age 21.
- Erin will discuss how it's operating and how it is being reflected with the staff.
- Challenge is to keep kids in their own school - based on best interest considerations.
 - DYFS Internal workgroup met to identify best interest considerations.
 - July through October 2009, DCF, OCA and DOE meet regularly to view the elements of educational stability and develop language for a legislative bill.
 - Sen. Vitale proposed adoption of S1333. It was available for review.
 - Assemblyman Connors indicated he will propose his version of the Bill.
 - The Connors's version is expected to be introduced at the next full assembly quorum on Feb. 18th.
 - The Senate Health and Human Services committee will review the Bill.
 - Senator Weinberg is considering taking it up on Feb. 18th.
- The requirement of the federal law and the proposed bills is that children remain in their own district of the residence when put in a placement.
- Traditionally child attends school in district of resource family.
- Currently, relatives are first preference and then a resource home in the child's community.
- Resource home recruiters are asked to identify communities with a high removal rate of children and are asked to focus on resource parent recruitment within those areas.
- Presumption is when removed, children will stay in school currently attended, pending the best interest assessment. Must consider:
 - Safety considerations,
 - Proximity of resource home to current school,

- Priority with appropriate relative over proximity to school
 - Non-kin should be as close to home community as possible.
 - Age, grade level, needs, and preference of the child,
 - Performance in the current school,
 - Special education,
 - Point and time of school year,
 - Child's permanency goal, and
 - Anticipated duration of current placement.
- Division has 5 days to complete the best interest determination.
 - If the student remains in school, no court is required.
 - If determined for child not to return to school and parent and child agree, no court is required.
 - If it's not in the child interest and child and/or parent do not agree, the court must be notified within 3 days.
 - It is the responsibility of DYFS to transport child to home school.
 - Once best interest has been determined, the local district has 5 days to work out transportation. DYFS may transport for at least 2 weeks.
 - The business office managers are reaching out to DOE's contracted transportation vendors, in each county, to act as DOE's vendor during the 2-4 week timeframe.
 - The program is applicable to children entering the DYFS system.
 - The eligibility for pre-school children will be reviewed with Erin.
- The cost of transportation could average about \$200 per day.
 - Not reasonable for resource parents to transport.
- Resource facilitator staff was requested to include the transportation language in conversation.
- Nancy's office research in terms of other states, found transportation was a huge problem.
 - Court involvement was important for dispute resolutions.
 - NJ may be a trailblazer if legislation is implemented.
 - A policy brief is on Legal Service's website.
- Advocacy for the Bill is needed to ensure all are on the same page.

New Business & Agenda

- Report from subcommittee on staff survey development
- Adolescent practices update - Ann Gunning
- Fostering Connections Overview – Erin O'Leary
- Determine current members' involvement
- Re-staffing
 - Jonathan to forward a letter to former members regarding interest in continued involvement in the subcommittee.

April 13, 2010

Minutes

A motion to accept minutes was made; minutes were approved with one abstention.

AOC Data – Joanne Dietrich

- Review of AOC TPR data
- Cases Reopened consist of two scenarios.
 - Cases transferred to different counties are reopened.
 - Cases are reopened.
- The Reactivated Cases column shows any inactivated TPR. Under current judiciary policy, TPR cases can not be inactivated.
- Cases Disposed in all Other Manners reveal the old data.
- Disposed by Default reflects cases where parents are neglectful in showing for court. The court will hold a proof hearing and if the Division meets the TPR four prong test, default will be entered.
- The Total Cases Added column will be confirmed as to how the totals are tallied.
- The reports allow the division to manage their resources.
- The FG Cases by County provides the backlog of the cases within the county.
- An adoption case management system is being developed to track the-adoptions.
 - Currently, the County surrogates will provide the information to the family practice division which forwards the information to the federal government.
- The FC docket tracks the child in foster care through placement and will stay intact but is closed if the child is returned home or obtains permanency.
- The FN and FG dockets are family based.
 - The FN remains open possibly to maintain oversight of the family and or parents.

Staff Survey – Nancy Parello

- Targeted at DYFS employees in order to obtain information regarding the stability of the workforce and provide SORS with staffing insights regarding the Division.
 - Initially focus on the casework staff and expand incrementally based on the result.
- Participants will answer questions related to their particular roles.
- A pilot survey will be completed.
- A series of emails will be forwarded on behalf of the SORS explaining the purpose of the survey.
- IAIU's survey will be conducted separately.
- C3, include the case practice model training question.
 - Remove “*meaningful*” from second part of question.
- C5, add the more than one month timeframe.
- “*Support*” will be used for questions 13 and 15(o) under Job Satisfaction and Retention.
 - Q13 will be a 2 parts to include understanding and meeting the needs of the field rep.
 - Q13 change policy to “*case practice standards*”
 - Q15 will include *understand* and *supporting*.
 - Q15(q) will be moved to the overall satisfaction section.
- Q20 modified to include choices from Q15 and Q19.
- Other questions to be forwarded for implementation.

- The survey will be resent to the group.
- The subgroup will discuss the concerns of standardized measures as noted by the Commissioner.

Office of Adolescent Practice and Permanency– Ann Gunning

- The Office of Adolescent Practice and Permanency supports the office adolescent workers.
 - Guide practice and policy decisions with DCF and DYFS leadership.
 - Share services and contract monitoring.
 - Maintain liaisons relationships with various other state agencies and community partners to ensure the needs of the adolescents are addressed.
 - Apply for grants, review federal and state legislation related to practices.
 - Sponsor training for adolescent workers and provide tech support to field offices.
- There are 860 adolescents in placements as of December 2009.
- Adolescent workers are trained and is a type of permanency worker
- The adolescent caseworkers serve youth and stand-alone youth, aged 14-21 when they are:
 - The only open case,
 - Teen mothers with babies, when babies are not removed b/c of abuse or neglect,
 - Siblings groups of adolescents and pre-adolescents,
 - Youth involved in multiple systems, and
 - Youth with special needs around permanency and special prep around adulthood.
- The Annie Casey Life Skills Assessment is a tool used by youth and care givers to help youth identify areas where they have strengths and challenges in the area of independent living skills.
 - Results are emailed to the caseworker and/or others identified by the youth
 - Results are discussed and the youth (with assistance of the caseworker develops a transitional living plan. Goals are set in small increments.
- When other permanency options are exhausted, DYFS seeks the involvement of caring adults. Case record “mining” is done to find positive people who were in the youth’s life in the past and a may be available to become involved with being a resource to the youth. Commitment to the youth can be achieved by Permanency Pacts which are non binding statements by adults who assist youth with various life needs.
- Youth who were in DYFS placement on their 18 birthday are generally eligible for the Medicaid Extension for Young Adults program after their DYFS case closes
 - Must meet other federal eligibility requirements.
 - Don’t have to reapply for services.
 - Services are extended to age 21.
 - It was recommended a list of services, that will be lost, be provided for youth that desire to withdraw from services.
- National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) - a federal initiative requiring DYFS to report independent living services provided to youth 14-21.
 - Youth 17, 19 and 21 years old in placement for a day after 17 are to be surveyed.
 - Reporting period begins October 1, 2010 and is reported in 6 month increments.

- It was proposed that providers monitor youth after they have left the system.
- A workforce development pilot is underway in Union County. DYFS is working in collaboration with Casey Foundation with hope to provide better employment outcomes for youth.
- Safe Space Liaisons in area and local offices provide peer support and identify resources.
- Housing initiatives, the youth supported housing steering committee is working to leverage funds from various sources to provide more housing for youth.
 - Shelters are experiencing unfilled beds, due to the limited days youth may stay in shelters.
 - SORS may want to assist DYFS with a model for shelters to transition into some housing for the youth.