



Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W., Co-Chair
Martin A. Finkel, DO, FACOP, FAAP, Co-Chair

Updates from Commissioner Allison Blake

Commissioner Allison Blake provided NJTF CAN with the following updates on the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' (DCF):

- **Trauma Informed System of Care:**

Commissioner Blake announced that DCF's Trauma Readiness Assessment Report is available on DCF's website.

DCF and NJTF CAN hosted a 2014-2015 Series on Trauma Informed Care featuring four national experts (Bruce Perry, Dan Segal, Vicky Kelly, and Ken Vernon) with the focus on getting staff ready for the transitioning process to a trauma informed system of care.

Commissioner Blake announced that the "Taming Trauma" training kicked off in April 2016 in which DCF staff and system partners are being trained together, starting with the Care Management Organizations (CMO) Executive Directors, Area Directors and Local Office Managers. Eric Arauz is the trainer and the president of the Trauma Institute of New Jersey. The Taming Trauma introduction video is available to the public and posted on DCF intranet. Commissioner Blake stated that Mr. Arauz has worked with DCF's Children's System of Care (CSOC) around the issue of restraints and children's behaviors in behavioral health programs. Taming Trauma highlights self-regulation of internal feelings while working with children and families in crisis in order to intervene in a way that is needed. Commissioner Blake presented NJTF CAN the Taming Trauma webpage on DCF's website and encouraged them to view the corresponding videos and additional resources. She further informed that Mr. Arauz will be hosting joint training sessions across the state, providing coaching upon request, and writing a blog after each session for staff to read and respond. This Taming Trauma initiative will be executed over three years and a status report will be available shortly.

Commissioner Blake discussed the impact on the trauma of placement for the children and families involved with DCF. She stated that a year ago, DCF launched the First Placement-Best Placement pilot in Mercer County for children entering into foster care. This model assists in connecting the foster parent to the county mobile response agency for non-crisis visits and to help support the placement; there were no replacements in Mercer County with this initiative. Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that the pilot is a success and will be rolled-out across the state.

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that a Request for Proposal (RFP) has been issued to pilot a new trauma treatment of support services for children exposed to domestic violence in Morris and Somerset County. DCF has identified these counties as having the highest rates of domestic violence; referrals will come from DCF's lead domestic violence agencies.



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- **Upgrading DCF Technology:**

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that DCF is in the process of transitioning from flip phones to smart phones for field/front line staff; this transition will begin in Camden and the rollout should be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Commissioner Blake also stated that DCF is in the second phase of a pilot with Dell's Venue tablets. The key functions of the Venues will allow staff to connect to Wi-Fi and the New Jersey Statewide Protective Investigation, Reporting and Information Tool (NJSPIRIT). The pilot began with the Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) and the second phase will cover the Special Response unit (SPRU) workers.

- **DCF Data:**

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that DCF has contracted with the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) to begin building a data system for the Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP) and the Division on Women (DOW). The process will begin with the DOW's Displaced Homemakers programs and the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency contracts.

- **DCF's Independent Living Stipend**

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that in May 2016, the independent living stipend went live and all electronic transfers will now be available to former foster youth on a debit card.

- **DCF's Continuing Expansion of the Child Welfare Supportive Housing Programs**

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has partnered with DCF to provide twelve vouchers for child welfare involved families; the RFP was awarded to Robin's Nest for families in Atlantic County and Gloucester County.

Commissioner Blake stated that DCA has partnered with DCF on their work with youth aging out of the foster care system. DCA gave one hundred vouchers to develop resources youth and seventy of these vouchers have already been awarded. The majority of the vouchers went to the Youth at Risk for Homelessness (YARH) Project, a federal grant to eliminate homelessness for New Jersey youth currently or previously involved in the child welfare system and assist their successful transition to adulthood.

Commissioner Blake shared that DCF also made awards to expand the housing voucher programs for pregnant and parenting teens.



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- **Future NJTF CAN YARH Project and SAMHSA Meeting Presentations:**

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that she will invite Jessica Trombetta, Executive Director of the Office of Adolescent Services, to present on the Youth At Risk for Homelessness Project and Elizabeth Manley, Assistant Commissioner of the Children System of Care (CSOC), to present on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant at a future NJTF CAN meeting.

- **DCF 10th Anniversary**

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that DCF will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary “10 Years - A Decade of Excellence Serving New Jersey” this July. Commissioner Blake shared that DCF planned a celebration the afternoon of July 22, 2016 at DCF Professional Center in New Brunswick; NJTF CAN will receive an invitation shortly. Commissioner Blake also stated that DCF will engage in three months of service activities across the state that will include a 5k walk event in Camden and a literacy initiative in partnership with the New Jersey State Library.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Communication Committee – Dr. Martin Finkel

Dr. Finkel informed NJTF CAN, on behalf of Seetha Holmes, that the Communication Committee welcomed two new members, discussed reviewing and editing of the Task Force and SORS 2016 annual reports, and continues to increase their awareness of the New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund (NJ CTF). The Communication Committee has partnered with the Prevention Committee to create a NJ CTF Campaign Workgroup to research existing marketing strategies to promote NJ CTF. The Committee will submit a draft proposal to NJTF CAN. Dr. Finkel also informed NJTF CAN that the Communication Committee is scheduled to meet next on June 23, 2016.

Prevention Committee – Maura Somers Dughi

Maura Somers Dughi informed NJTF CAN that May is Infant Mental Health Month and Dr. Gerry Costa presented information on Infant Child Mental Health in New Jersey at the May 5, 2016 Prevention Committee meeting.

Maura stated that the Committee is working on developing a curriculum for higher education with the hopes of getting assistance from Doris Duke Fellows and asked Christian Arnold, designee from the Attorney General’s (AG) office, for his legal advice as to whether outside partners would have any restrictions and/or if they would be required to sign a release prior to their participation. Christian Arnold informed NJTF CAN that he is unable to provide legal advice because he is a member of NJTF CAN. However, as an agency that is, in but not of DCF, NJTF CAN is entitled to legal advice



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from the AG's office when needed and an attorney from the AG's office will be designated shortly to coordinate providing NJTF CAN with advice on any legal questions it has.

Maura reiterated that the Prevention Committee and Communication Committee are collaborating on the development of a proposal to market NJ CTF in hopes of increasing its awareness and funding.

Protection Committee – Martin Finkel

Dr. Finkel announced that the Acting Chair Donna Younkin has retired from state service effective May 1, 2016. Dr. Finkel stated that Donna was a valuable resource to the Protection Committee. NJTF CAN is currently searching for a Committee Chair. Dr. Finkel informed NJTF CAN that the Protection Committee heard presentations at their March 29, 2016 meeting from Lt. Louis Andrinopoulous on missing children, the role and function of the State Police, reporting requirements, statistics on missing persons and the clarification of the amber alert system and John Esmerado on sexual exploitative images; child protection research titled "Building a Prevention Framework to Address Teen Sexting", the sexting law; the diversionary programs for juveniles and the issue of the dark web.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

Rita Gulden reported that SORS is working on finalizing their staff survey and revising their strategic plan.

NJTFCAN Business – Votes:

- **NJTFCAN Bylaws**

The Task Force voted to approve the March 18, 2016 amendments to the NJTFCAN Bylaws.

- **Subcommittee/Committee Application Renewals**

NJTFCAN voted and approved the subcommittee/committee applications for the following:

- Prevention Committee: Aldina Hovde, Kathleen Roe, and Charmaine Thomas
- Protection Committee - Nydia Y Monagas
- SORS - Lisa Nemeth

- **Subcommittee/Committee Elections – Protection Committee Chair**

Commissioner Blake stated that NJTFCAN is still searching for a Protection Committee Chair and that person would have to be a NJTFCAN. Commissioner Blake and Dr. Finkel will make another recommendation and report back to NJTFCAN at the July 22, 2016 meeting.



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Children’s Trust Fund Grant - Improving Early Childhood Outcomes in Newark Project

Maura informed NJTF CAN that the Prevention Committee made a recommendation for NJTF CAN to approve use of the NJ CTF in the amount of \$50,000 to continue the “Improving Outcomes for Families with Young Children (Birth to Age 3)” pilot in Essex County for another twelve months. The program will continue to focus primarily on the three Newark offices. Commissioner Blake provided background information from the Capstone Project in Burlington County that lead up to the Essex County Project.

Commissioner Blake informed NJTF CAN that there is \$475,000 in NJ CTF which includes new allocations that will not expire. NJTF CAN discussed that NJ CTF was utilized for the Standards for Prevention training and the Prevention Committee should continue to identify service gaps for DCF to develop an RFP. NJTF CAN discussed the current NJ CTF procurement process and their described NJ CTF roles.

Due to the NJ CTF discussion, Commissioner Blake stated that DCF will find alternate funding for the “Improving Outcomes for Families with Young Children project” and will expand this project in another county without the use of NJ CTF. Based on the NJ CTF discussion, NJTF CAN did not vote to approve the Prevention Committee’s NJ CTF recommendation to further fund this project.

Commissioner Blake stated that she will meet with DCF’s attorneys and staff to come up with a summary of the NJ CTF process (i.e. DCF managing the NJ CTF and the clarification from the State Ethics Commission (SEC) on NJTF CAN’s role as it pertains to the NJ CTF grant process) for Task Force members to identify their questions/concerns before the July 22 meeting.

Announcements

Maura Somers Dughi presented Commissioner Allison Blake the plaque from the Child Abuse Prevention April 14, 2016 celebration of 30 years of service. The NJTF CAN and Commissioner Blake were honored at the event. The plaque will be displayed alongside other plaques of recognition in another conference room at DCF.

Ifeanyi Pole informed NJTF CAN that the 2016 Skill Building Conference will be held on Friday, September 9, 2016 from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm at Pines Manor in Edison, New Jersey. Ifeanyi stated that the Conference’s theme is, “The Digital Realm of Child Abuse” and that the location has been changed to accommodate the high registration interest.



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Ifeanyi also shared that the New Jersey Multidisciplinary Team Coordinators' Association and the New Jersey Children's Alliance's 2016 conference is being held on Thursday, May 26, 2016 from 9:30 am until 4:00 pm at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Ifeanyi informed NJTF CAN that the Conference's theme is, "The MDT Response to High Tech Crimes and Resilience in the 21st Century"; the conference is free and Ifeanyi will email NJTF CAN the registration information.

Marygrace Billek announced that her agency was one of three agencies that received the Youth At Risk of Homelessness (YARH) Grant for Burlington, Mercer and Union counties. An RFP will be going out for wrap-around housing for runaway homeless kids aging out of the foster care system to compliment support for up to two years.

Next Meeting - July 22, 2016 in New Brunswick, Room 102