

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**

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT

to

Governor Chris Christie

and

The New Jersey Legislature

Proceedings and Findings

For the period of

July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

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

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

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Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

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

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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 (Division) in 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 SORS met on the following dates: September 28, 2010; January 11, 2010; March 8, 2011, May 10, 2011. These meetings provided the SORS 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 SORS during the past year.

Summary of Activities – 2010 to 2011

The charge of the (SORS) is outlined in the New Jersey Task Force 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.

DYFS Employee Survey

Recognizing that a stable, experienced child welfare workforce is the cornerstone of an effective child welfare system, the subcommittee's primary project in 2010-11 was creating and disseminating a survey to current DYFS employees,

While the Division of Youth and Family Services currently enjoys a relatively low staff turnover rate (12%), little data have been gathered to provide deeper insight into the strengths and needs of the DYFS workforce. Such information can lead to effective recruitment and retention strategies, as well as provide ways to build a more effective workforce.

In a 2003 report, *Workforce Data Collection Field Guide for Human Service Agencies*, the American Public Human Services Association said:

“One of the most important workforce applications of social research is the employee survey... Although more complex than exit interviews and focus groups, employee surveys can provide invaluable information about an organization's workforce strengths and weaknesses. Since it is widely agreed that any agency is only as good as its employees, it is critical to get direct, honest feedback from those employees on their workforce needs, perceptions, ideas, and suggestions.”

To assist the Department of Children of Families, and specifically the Division of Youth and Family Services, to better understand its workforce's challenges and needs, the subcommittee undertook a survey of DYFS employees to measure their job satisfaction and identify areas of strength and concerns. DCF provided significant assistance and expertise in carrying out this project.

The type of information gathered

The survey focused on both work-related and practice-related, issues. Primary areas of exploration were:

- Job satisfaction, including salaries and benefits and work environment
- Supervision
- Training/professional development
- Case practice
- Services for children and families
- Retention
- Workload

Survey Development

The survey was developed over a period of several months, with input from DCF and DYFS staff and SORS members, who represent a wide range of professions within child welfare. SORS also received technical assistance from the National Child Welfare Resource Institute for Organizational Improvement, which provided help from seasoned researchers from the University of Denver, the University of Iowa, the University of Maryland and Portland State University. These organizations provided significant guidance in the development of the survey instrument. The final version of the survey used evidence-based scales that have proven reliability.

An e-mail was sent to approximately 2,500 DYFS employees on March 28, 2011, providing a link to the survey on Survey Monkey, encouraging them to complete the survey and explaining its purpose. The SORS' also provided an explanation of its involvement in the survey. All communications to DYFS staff made it clear that the survey was anonymous and they should complete it honestly. The survey focused on eliciting information from caseload carrying staff, their supervisors and managing supervisors in each of the Division's local offices.

How will it be used?

The survey garnered 524 responses. The SORS, with significant help from DCF staff, is in the process of analyzing the data, which will be compiled into a report that will be shared with DCF and DYFS senior management and DYFS staff, the Legislature and members of the public.

The report will detail the survey findings. It will identify areas of strength that should be built upon, as well as areas that may need further improvements. It is anticipated that survey results will lead to concrete recommendations for additional recruitment and retention strategies. The SORS may also use this information to identify additional areas for examination and analysis.

It is important to note that in the layers of literature available on the topic of employee surveys, experts consistently say that it is critical for the organization to be fully committed to responding swiftly to the opinions and suggestions of its staff.

“Such a survey implicitly represents a contract with the employees and sets an expectation that there will be a legitimate effort to fully explain the results of the survey with the employees and to take constructive steps where possible to eliminate, or at least mitigate, any conditions or circumstances that are causing discontent or problems. A critical preliminary question agency management must answer is whether they are serious about the survey. If there will be widespread hesitation or reluctance to use the findings for positive change, it is best not to even begin the survey process.”

**--American Public Health Association
*Workforce Data Collection Field Guide for
Human Service Agencies, 2003***

Other Activities

In addition to the survey, the SORS attended to its charge with the following actions in 2010-2011:

Requested an update from DYFS Director regarding DYFS initiatives, staffing and case/client outcomes.

The subcommittee's review of child welfare data is a primary priority of the subcommittee. Although 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, due to the transition of the new administration, the DYFS Director provided an overview of the status of the Case Practice Model and initiatives, departmental strengths, and areas of improvement.

Received a detailed report on the development and implementation of a qualitative assessment of DCF case practice as required by the Modified Settlement Agreement (MSA).

A presentation from the Assistant Commissioner of the newly created Office of Continuous Quality Improvement provided an in-depth overview of the Qualitative Review (QR) process. This process, which is not a typical case review, is a self-monitoring mechanism that allows the Department to look at the results of cases with a focus on improvement rather than blame. The QR process is an opportunity for DCF to begin employing self-monitoring techniques that begin the shift from court-appointed monitoring. The SORS was also informed that outside stakeholders have been included in the QR process.

The SORS discussed with DCF whether this review process would be by the Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board (CFNFRB), which, among other broader issues, examines case handling concerns in the deaths of children who were known to the Division prior to the death. DCF reported that QR is expected to be part of their process and protocol. The Board issued an annual report for 2009, with a 2010 report expected in June 2011.

Reviewed educational opportunities in social work programs with a specific focus on child welfare.

Two presentations were made to SORS on educational opportunities from two social work programs in which staff members are attending: Public Child Welfare Weekend Intensive (PCWWI) Program and Baccalaureate Child Welfare Educational Program (BCWEP). The Director of the PCWWI Program provided a brief history and overview of the program and made a presentation of data findings detailed in her annual report.

Similarly, the Principal Investigator of the BCWEP Program also provided a presentation on the current status of the program and provided a detailed review of the programs annual report and findings. Statistics provided are presented in the table below.

Baccalaureate Child Welfare Education Program (BCWEP), 2004-2011	
Number of Applicants	534
Number/percentages offered and accepting traineeship	319 (60%)
Number terminated prior to completion	9
Number completing traineeship (AYs 2004-05 to 2010-11)	280
Number not graduated yet	36
Number hired (as of 5/4/11)	249
Number not hired	8
Number waiting to be hired	15

Efforts to address the needs of youth aging out of foster care.

As mentioned in last year’s SORS report, an issue of great concern to the committee continues to be the difficulties of youth aging out of New Jersey’s child protection system. Last year, 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 who serve youth 14-21 under DYFS supervision. This year the subcommittee was informed that a newly created Office of Adolescent Services was elevated to a department level office, with the expectation that this would help improve services to this population.

Monitored implementation of the federal Fostering Connections Act.

In 2010, New Jersey changed its school residency laws to comply with the federal Fostering Connections Act.¹ One of the Act's provisions requires states to provide children in foster care with the ability to stay in their home school when they enter the foster care system, even if they are placed outside their parents' district, if that is in the child's best interest. The goal is to provide educational stability that minimizes further disruptions in the lives of these fragile children and help them succeed in school.

New Jersey's new law, signed by the Governor in September 2010, says that the school district where the child attended before entering foster care is legally responsible for that child's education, even if the child is living in a foster home in another town. Previously, the foster parent's district became the "district of residence" for children placed in resource home.

The new law requires DYFS to make a "best interest" determination for each school-age child entering a foster home. The law outlines "best interest" factors, including:

- Safety considerations
- Distance of the current school from the foster home
- The child's age and grade
- The child's needs and desires
- How the child is doing in the current school and how connected the child is to that school
- The child's special education programming, if applicable
- The point of time in the school year
- Whether the child is likely to return home and the expected amount of time the child will be in the foster home

With the law now in effect for about one year, the SORS requested a presentation on the implementation of this new law.

DCF reported that implementation began in the local offices, with all offices documenting "best interest" assessments of 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, DYFS has identified Educational Liaisons to serve as resource persons to provide staff guidance on the implementation of educational stability issues, such as how to determine what is in a child's best interest, how to interact with schools districts and courts around

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>

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.

These efforts appear to have resulted in a significant number of children remaining in their home schools, increasing the educational stability for these children. According to DYFS staff, 82 percent of school-aged children who entered foster care between September and October 2010 remained in their home school. Eleven percent changed school and data was unavailable for 7 percent.

This is positive and should continue to be tracked.

SORS Recommendations

Based on its discussion in 2010-11, 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.
- Share with the SORS additional information gleaned from the qualitative assessments, including a more in-depth explanation of the findings of the case reviews and steps that DCF took to address issues identified in the case reviews.
- Continue to work with the SORS to analyze the data from the employee survey, identify action steps DCF will take in response to employee's feedback and develop a plan for disseminating the information to DCF staff.
- Provide the SORS with data (in written form) on the education stability of children from January 2011 through June 2011 and in six-month periods thereafter.

Issues for Follow-Up in 2010-2011

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

- Work collaboratively on the analysis of the online survey of current DYFS staff and report on the findings.
- Continued discussion of DCF's progress in better meeting the needs of youth aging out and progress of the Office of Adolescent Services.

- 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.
- Discussion with the National Child Welfare Resource Center about new employee outcomes.
- Examine visitation practices between children in care and their families.

In addition, after the SORS' last regular meeting for this reporting period, a tragedy occurred in Irvington where an 8-year-old girl died from abuse and neglect. DYFS had been involved with the family. Based on DCF's internal review, Commissioner Blake made a series of recommendations aimed at improving family engagement, information gathering and supervision.

Specifically, the commissioner recommended:

Training:

A review and revision of the current training for investigators with emphasis on Interviewing skills is necessary along with the engagement of the family and community providers. This will help staff to gain an understanding of the family's dynamics, as well as have the ability to verify information provided by the family and service providers. This will assist investigators in making informed decisions regarding case outcomes. The Chief of Staff will work with the Director of Training and all training outlets to review relevant training, including training for investigators, to meaningfully incorporate this recommendation and to provide recommendations for areas requiring practice enhancement and updates to curriculum and retraining.

Supervision:

Supervisor training and engagement of staff during case conferences is necessary to ensure best case practices are being exercised. Documentation of supervisory conferences in New Jersey Spirit by supervisors must be reinforced as well. With assistance and support from community providers and advocates, I have established an executive level workgroup to develop additional clinical supports and a mentoring program for front line supervisors. This workgroup will also explore the importance of case conferencing and how best to engage staff in the case conferencing process. This will help to ensure thorough and timely reviews of all cases open with DYFS, and will assist workers in decision-making and case handling.

Risk Assessments:

The review identified concerns regarding how workers assess risk to children and the extent to which family history is incorporated in that assessment. Therefore, a clarification to field staff on risk assessment will be forthcoming.

Family Engagement:

We will reinforce with field staff the importance of searching and identifying fathers, Regardless of their current role in the family or their previous history. In addition, specific guidance will be provided on how to search and locate fathers and identify other

system partners that can assist DYFS in these searches.

The SORS will monitor the progress of these reforms in the coming year.

The sub-committees' minutes are included as an addendum to this report.

Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2010

Task Force Update

- The appointments of the current membership of the NJTFCAN have expired but the current membership will remain until appointments are finalized by the Governor's Appointments Office. NJTFCAN meetings are held every other month. The Task Force is reviewing issues and ideas, submitted via the subcommittees, for its work ideas in the near future. The Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee is statutorily mandated. The Prevention and Protection subcommittees remain while the Communications subcommittee's work has been absorbed by the Department of Children and Families Communications department.

Discussion Issues

- SORS formerly referred to as SORP has been around since 2002 when it was created in legislation that was part of an initiative that bought funding for staffing of DYFS.

DCF Updates

- Changes in leadership throughout department and organizational development include:
 - Barbara Rusen, Chief of Staff replaces Kara Wood
 - Kara Wood moved to DYFS Office as the Chief of Staff
 - Erin O'Leary was Director of Legal and Licensing has been promoted as Deputy Commissioner.
 - LaTasha Holmes is Special Assistant to Commissioner. Staffing boards and assisting the Commissioner with some additional projects.
 - Christine Norbut-Mozes, Assistant Commissioner
 - Jean Marimon, Director of Youth & Family Services
 - Jeff Guenzel, Director of Child Behavioral Health
 - Lisa Von Pier, Director of Prevention & Community Partnerships
- On Commissioner's 2nd day of employment, she attended a hearing on the last Monitoring Report in which the judge inquired about the "sunset" of the lawsuit, more specifically questioning when the lawsuit will end. Following this inquiry, DCF staff engaged in discussions with the Monitor and Attorney General about what is needed to exit the lawsuit. In addition to DCF's need to sustain the changes that are required over a two-year period, DCF will also need to have a very robust internal quality review process.
 - After reviewing successes in other States and Commissioner's experience, Commissioner made decision to create Department Level of Office of Continuous Quality Improvement.
 - This new office provides the ability for real time assessment and performance improvement. In addition, it furthers the Commissioner's message that the reform is about the entire Department.
 - It will be led by Christine Norbut-Mozes who has been promoted to Assistant Commissioner.

- A lot of the work she has done for DYFS need to be replicated across the Department. The goal is to connect disjointed services and departments and integrate them using this Office and tools within it.
- The Office of Information Reporting, Technology and Data Analysis will be moved under Office of Continuous Improvement (OCI) to gather data analysis more efficiently.
 - In order to have a robust internal quality review process it is a necessity to be able to perform data analysis.
 - Staff has opportunity with Casey Family Programs and Annie B. Casey Fund to attend the technical assistance course in which is provided every year through Chapin Hall. Three (3) new members of the OCI staff will be attending the Advance Analytic Course which will be held in New York.
- Federal Grants for the 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.
- DCF Fellows Program
 - 100 applicants will be admitted over an 18-month program.
 - Requires homework on behalf of participant from their office and provides real world application
- Oversight for CFSR and PIP moved under Department Level of Office of Continuous Quality Improvement. Staff has been working with the Monitor to determine how big the teams need to be in order to roll out across the entire state.

- Quality Service Reviews has moved to Department Level of Office of Continuous Quality Improvement.

- Child Stat modeled on 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 those issues and problems are the responsibility of the 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. Two immersion sites, in Bergen and Burlington County were chosen because they have been involved for a long period of time. 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, Fiscal departments.
- Uncovered issues in supervision process, issues raised in relation to training and resources

- Visitation – extensive discussion at last SORS meeting. If the subcommittee is interested, for a future agenda, how many community services have been developed and curious about how the visitations are taking place. Subcommittee would like to be educated on visitations.
- Reunity House Program (located in Paterson, East Orange) is a program from a family preservation RFP. The goal is to provide visitation for children in foster care in a home like setting to reunite families and engage in healthy family activities. Staff works in partnership with DYFS and are apart of the Family Team Meetings.
- Data issues are a challenge because DCF staff waited so long for the NJ SPIRIT system and thought it might answer the needs for correct reporting of data. However, after an edict to all staff to enter all existing data, reports did not change much. Thus, there are other challenges that effect visitation that need to be addressed.
- Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships – one of the first changes the Commissioner has done is promoting Lisa von Pier to Director. Recruited to staff from Division on Women. Feds came in recently to discuss identification of additional funds and resource opportunities.
- Office of Family Support Services brought someone in to supervise and hired new staff to operate differential response pilots and family success centers. Met with the Nicholson Foundation and their family success centers and found out about a lot of services of which we were not aware. Newark Family Success Center that is located on the Essex County College Campus. Some have agreements with their municipalities to take GED and apply for welfare benefits onsite. There seem to be a lot of services but untapped resources. Lisa to work with SCR and other divisions to get the word out about them.
- PCP is a major arm of grant writing. Full staff may generate more federal funds to put out into communities.
- Office of Adolescent Services
 - Removed Office of Adolescent Practice and Permanency out of DYFS and elevate it to a department level office. Apparently, when DYFS Director was coming to the table to discuss budget, protection and safety for younger teens seem to be the priority out of the competing priority of the adolescent population.
 - Recruiting for Director for Adolescent Services, nonprofit experience, grant writing, out of the box thinking.
- Office of Advocacy to be led by Jacqueline Zavaglia
 - Discussions about credibility issues and if office of Advocacy were to go away
 - Create Office of Advocacy within Commissioner’s office
 - Real time intervention to get answers, people in place that are in place that have experience across the department to handle constituent concerns
 - Transfer hotline from the Office of Child Advocate to Office of Advocacy
 - Thought it was going to be DYFS cases, but customer service issues, licensing, contracting, and communication issues are majority of the sources.

- Training that takes the principles of the Case Practice Model and indicates appropriate customer service interactions at all levels of DCF.
 - One of the concerns was that cases were entering DCF at several different points, the director's action line, from Governor's Office, email address: ASKDCF@dcf.state.nj.us and depending where it came in it could be a different diversion. Office will be central point for all cases coming in so that an immediate response can be made.
 - Currently, three(3) people staffing, but in the process of reassigning some additional staff. Also working on having a warm line transfer to SCR as there may be referrals at different points in time.
- Staff Satisfaction Survey
 - The Commissioner was made aware 3 weeks prior to this meeting of this SORS initiative and requested to review the staff satisfaction survey. She was interested in the type of support that was provided to the Subcommittee and if it could be expanded to include DCF. As a great supporter of staff satisfaction surveys and the data that is collected, she is aware that the National Resource Center provides technical assistance for work like this. Donna Younkin did not think DCF TA sessions had been used. Therefore, Barbara Rusen, as the Chief of Staff, has been asked to work with the National Resource Center and the Subcommittee on this. Although the Commissioner believes the existing survey is long, but would like to use it across the Department of Children and Families and welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively.
 - The National Resource Center also provides opportunities to provide early intervention interviews where supervisors are meeting with staff to decide if work and staff are a good fit. Provides information and feedback as to what is working and what is not.
 - Barbara Rusen has reached out to contacts at the National Resource on Center for Workforce Development. She hopes to leverage some knowledge and share current practice so there is identification of common themes. Mary McCarthy, Principal Investigator and Nancy Dickinson completed a lot of early research on child welfare workforce are the staff in which were contacted. Encouraged us to send them the survey and they would review and give feedback.
 - Members of the subcommittee expressed that this is a great opportunity to expand and strengthen the survey. However, concerns from the subcommittee are that collectively the subcommittee had limited the focus of the survey to DYFS because of their charge. Additionally, there is a strong belief that broadening the survey will eliminate the ability to receive information that will be revealed from the worker perspective. Fine tuning is well received, but do not want to change the target population or focus of the survey. The Commissioner, recognizing that the subcommittee's consensus, plans to discuss with the National Resource Center about the possibility that DYFS population remain an isolated focus, but also encourage the development of a staff satisfaction survey that can be used across DCF.

- The Commissioner is attempting to send a message that DCF is one department and her concern is that distributing a DYFS satisfaction survey will impede that message.
- Timeline includes completion of technical assistance, revisions and implementation by the end of the year in time for strategic planning in January.
- Subcommittee Staffing – A dedicated staff person will be found. In the interim, LaTasha will be staffing NJTFCAN and its subcommittees. Additional staff may assist as necessary.
- Subcommittee Membership – Members would like to have a broader membership and make it a priority in the coming months. Subcommittee has in the recent past identified potential subcommittee members and will review and reiterate. Staff will review the NJTFCAN bylaws to provide guidance about the membership of the subcommittee.
- Guest speaker – Ericka Deglau, Director of Public Child Welfare Weekend Intensive Program at Rutgers
 - Discussed overview of how program got started, how it's structured, purposes, goals and intentions
 - Program focuses specifically on child welfare employees; infusing the curriculum with child welfare, child welfare policy, child welfare management issues, clinical practice. Her report reviewed maintaining retention in program, impact on office workload, managing workload, team work, stress issues, co-worker relationships, and sources of tension.

Next Meeting

- Schedule meetings 2nd Tuesday of every other month – Sept, Nov, Jan, Mar, May
- Continue to work on development of the staff survey in partnership
- Review the annual report to identify priority issues
- Presentation or discussion around the exit interview or staff survey
- Evaluation data from BCWEP program
- Interested in what National Resource Center can provide around new employees
- Christine to attend next meeting to do presentation on QSR and information gathered from pilot sights
- Review staffing of committee
- Update on Aging Out
- Educational Stability- there are plans to track how many children are staying in their districts and implementation discussion around new law.
- Next meeting November 9, 2010

January 11, 2011

Review of September Meeting Minutes

Introductions were made. Meeting minutes were approved.

Update on the Department of Children and Families

Office of Adolescent Services

Commissioner Allison Blake reported that she is working with the Summer Housing and Internship Program which is a wrap around program for foster care scholars. Project Myself, a multi-service program for youth in post-secondary educational settings, will also be reviewed to offer improvements and offer it more widely to aging out youth. The Monitor will be issuing a special report on adolescents within the next month and it will be a public report.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Since last meeting the Office of Continuous Quality Improvement is now a functioning office. One of its main initiatives as mandated by the lawsuit is quality reviews which are intensive case record reviews which includes interviewing children and families. CQI is finalizing a regular schedule of these with a certification process to become a reviewer. Also, CQI held its third ChildStat which takes the problem or issue from the caseworker and has it reviewed from a systems perspective. Christine Norbut-Mozes, Assistant Commissioner, will come to the next meeting to discuss.

Contract Reform Workgroup

This workgroup looks at contract documents in an attempt to eliminate unnecessary redundancies. A peer technical assistance was held by Casey Family Programs to assist in this effort. The workgroup seeks to reduce redundancies, coordinate with other state agencies and provide deemed status or reciprocal status to vendors. An example would be that a site visit would be done as a state team to eliminate the disruption of the non-profit or provider agency.

Report from BCWEP

Dr. Diane Falk from The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey will be asked to provide a presentation with updates about this program which is still funded by DCF.

Review of Annual Report – Setting Priorities

In reviewing the annual report, the subcommittee found that many of the priorities enumerated in the report have been initiated and are currently being worked. Subcommittee members will review and revisit this item in a later meeting.

Presentation on Educational Stability – Kara Wood and Michelle Safrin

Kara Wood and Michelle 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. The 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. Michelle offered to provide continued updates to the subcommittee.

Staff Satisfaction Survey Update

Nancy Parelo informed the subcommittee of the survey workgroup's progress. She indicated that the workgroup met with the technical assistance experts via teleconference to provide preliminary information about the purpose and scope of the survey. Information and recommendations have been provided in response. However, the workgroup can benefit from a review of the information by the technical assistance group. A meeting will be scheduled via email to discuss and follow up.

Next Meeting & Announcements

March 8, 2011

Adjournment

March 8, 2011

Introductions and Review of Minutes

Introductions were made. Meeting minutes for January's meeting were approved.

Updates on the Department of Children and Families

The Commissioner provided brief remarks indicating that she expects to testify with regard to the Department's budget in late April, early May although no official dates have been set. She expects that the reduction in staffing due to the closing of the residential treatment centers should protect the DCF from having to make any layoffs. In addition, all contracts should still be fully funded.

Additionally, she informed that the Commissioner's suite will be moving to the Mary G. Roebing building at 20 West State Street which is across the street from 50 East State Street. Finalization of the move should be completed by mid-May.

Update on the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) – Jean Marimon, Director

DYFS Director, Jean Marimon provided an update about the state of affairs in DYFS. She indicated that 34 local offices have completed the roll out of the case practice model. There are 5 local offices currently going through the process. By July, 39 of the 47 local offices should be complete and the remaining 8 will begin between July 2011 and May 2012. Part of the immersion challenge she has found is how to embed it into the process and ingrain it in such a way that it will become an institutionalized process. In addition, a large amount of staff are being trained in Quality Review process and this training provides an enhanced understanding of case practice model.

Additionally, the DCF Fellows program participants are mostly DYFS staff who seek to build upon their skills with the ability to manage by data. The expected outcome is that these fellows will help local offices address any administrative challenges faced. The program offers 18 seminars in an effort to develop the future leadership of DCF. Clear geographic representation of NJ with one staff member from each local office and one from each area office. One future goal is to provide a similar training for support staff.

Presentation on Continuous Quality Improvement and Quality Reviews – Christine Norbut-Mozes, Assistant Commissioner

Christine Norbut-Mozes, Assistant Commissioner, from the Office of Continuous Quality Improvement provided an in-depth overview of the Qualitative Review process. This process, she explained, is a self-monitoring mechanism that allows the Department to look at results and not intent. It is a system used in 20 states that is focused on improvement rather than blame. The QR process is an opportunity for DCF to begin employing self monitoring techniques that begins the shift from MSA monitoring. Additional details identified in PowerPoint Presentation provided to Subcommittee.

Discussion ensued about the Child Fatality Review Board and its structure. Previously, there were four local boards which has been condensed to three. Qualitative Review expected to be part of their process and protocol. An annual report was recently released for 2009. 2010 report should be released in June.

Review of Annual Report – Setting Priorities

Subcommittee agreed that last year's annual report will be reviewed in advance of the upcoming meeting. Rita will review, gather and compile information and input indicating if the subcommittee is on target and if anything has not yet been accomplished. Emails should be sent to rita@casanj.org

Staff Satisfaction Survey Update – Nancy Parello

Subcommittee was informed that the DYFS Satisfaction Survey workgroup has been making progress in the development and implementation of the survey. The workgroup has met with the technical assistance support again and sifted through the scales to decide which scales need to stay in tact and how to maintain reliability. There was great concern and debate about the length of the survey, but has remained lengthy to maintain the integrity of the Subcommittee's intended purpose. The survey was piloted and a compiled report of the feedback was reviewed by the subcommittee yielding changes as necessary.

To implement the survey, a joint email from DCF and SORS should be sent. SORS will provide a message to stress the importance of honest feedback. DCF and SORS will partner to compile and analyze results.

Next Meeting & Announcements

A general Save the Date Announcement was provided indicating that Legal Services will be honoring those who assisted in reunification of families. Additional information to be provided.

Statewide Kids Count Release is scheduled for March 23, 2011 at the Marriot in Trenton. Printed invitations will also be sent.

Next Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Adjournment

May 10, 2011

Introductions and Review of Minutes

Introductions were made. Meeting minutes for March's meeting were approved.

DYFS Survey Results

A report was provided by the workgroup Chair where she indicated background information. DYFS Survey sent to 2500 case carrying staff; approximately 500 responded. The survey was open for two and half weeks and a reminder was sent informing respondents of the close date. The group was concerned with the 25% response rate; however, there was a strong recommendation to evaluate the data first, and then discuss the results. Caution was given that the analysis of the data should be discussed with the National Child Welfare Resource Center's Technical Assistance Consultants. The subcommittee reviewed the raw data noting the results are very preliminary. The group communicated client response is not reflected in the data and would like to explore ways to do so.

Conversation ensued about next steps. Specifically, the subcommittee agreed that analysis, review and subsequent report writing would be a lengthy process. In an effort to work collaboratively with DCF and DYFS, SORS members arrived at a consensus that approaching the task noting strengths, areas of improvement and opportunities for partnership would be the best course of action.

To that end as a first step, a letter of appreciation will be drafted by Nancy Parello thanking all participants for their feedback. In addition, a workgroup meeting will be scheduled during the summer months. Additional information will be provided by DYFS to help establish baseline information such as regions, case practice immersion, access to service questions, and other demographics.

Presentation of Baccalaureate Child Welfare Education Program (BCWEP)

BCWEP is a partnership of the NJ Department of Children and Families, a consortium of eight accredited baccalaureate social work programs in New Jersey, and the NJ Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. SORS members were advised that the intent of the program is to enhance the public child welfare workforce by encouraging students with generalist social work education and additional coursework in child welfare to enter professional positions in New Jersey public child welfare agencies. A review of the annual report of the program was presented including demographics, number of applicants and boasting a 200+ student employment retention rate. Copies of the annual report were distributed and the PowerPoint presentation will be provided following the meeting.

Review of Annual Report – Setting Priorities

In an effort to expedite the process a draft annual report will be distributed to the members of the subcommittee for review due to the transition. In the future, SORS members have agreed to develop the annual report collaboratively.

Next Meeting & Announcements

A general Save the Date Announcement was provided indicating that Legal Services will be honoring those who assisted in reunification of families. Additional information to be emailed.

Next Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 13, 2011.

Adjournment