



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

# NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

## 15TH ANNUAL REPORT



PROCEEDINGS AND FINDINGS FOR  
THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2024 –  
JUNE 30, 2025

**CO-CHAIRS, NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE  
ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

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*President & CEO*  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction ..... 3
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act ..... 4
- New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund..... 5
- NJTFCAN Proceedings ..... 6
- Summary of Activities ..... 6
- October 2024 NJTFCAN Fall Conference..... 7
- NJTFCAN Sponsored Training ..... 8
- Work of the NJTFCAN Subcommittees ..... 9
- Subcommittee on Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes..... 9
- Staffing and Oversight Review Committee (SORS)..... 9
- The Subcommittee on the Safety of Children ..... 10
- The Subcommittee on Family Support and Child Wellbeing ..... 10
- Marketing, Development and Fundraising Subcommittee..... 10
- NJTFCAN Recommendations to DCF ..... 11
- Task Force Subcommittee Membership ..... 12
- Family Support & Child Wellbeing Subcommittee ..... 12
- Subcommittee on the Safety of Children ..... 13
- Subcommittee on Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes..... 14
- Marketing Development and Fundraising Subcommittee..... 15
- Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) ..... 16

# INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) is a statutorily established, multidisciplinary, citizen review panel to support New Jersey's child welfare system. The NJTFCAN also serves as New Jersey's Children's Justice Act (CJA)-designated entity, authorizing it to receive and administer CJA funds.

The purpose of the NJTFCAN, in accordance with the statute, is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and maltreatment prevention services provided or supported by state government. This includes a review of the practices and policies used by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) and the Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), both within the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in order to:

- optimize coordination of child abuse-related services and investigations;
- promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- develop a statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child maltreatment prevention strategies in coordination with the FCP;
- mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect;
- foster cooperative working relationships between state and local agencies responsible for providing services to survivors of child abuse and neglect and their families; and
- serve as one of DCF's federally mandated Citizen Review Panels.



# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT

The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides CJA grants that are used to develop programs that reform state systems and improve New Jersey's response to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect fatalities. The task force voted to approve funding of multidisciplinary training programs designed to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases that prevent additional trauma to children and their families such as Finding Words/ ChildFirst NJ Forensic Interview Training, Forensic Interview Refresher Training and Expanded Forensic Interview (EFI) Training (ChildFirst® EX)

CJA funds are also used to establish and support programs that improve New Jersey's child protection system in a manner that limits additional trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect. In accordance with the NJTFCAN's Three-Year Assessment for 2025 to 2028, model programs and innovative approaches were, and are being implemented to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect, as well as to enhance the effectiveness of the judicial process.



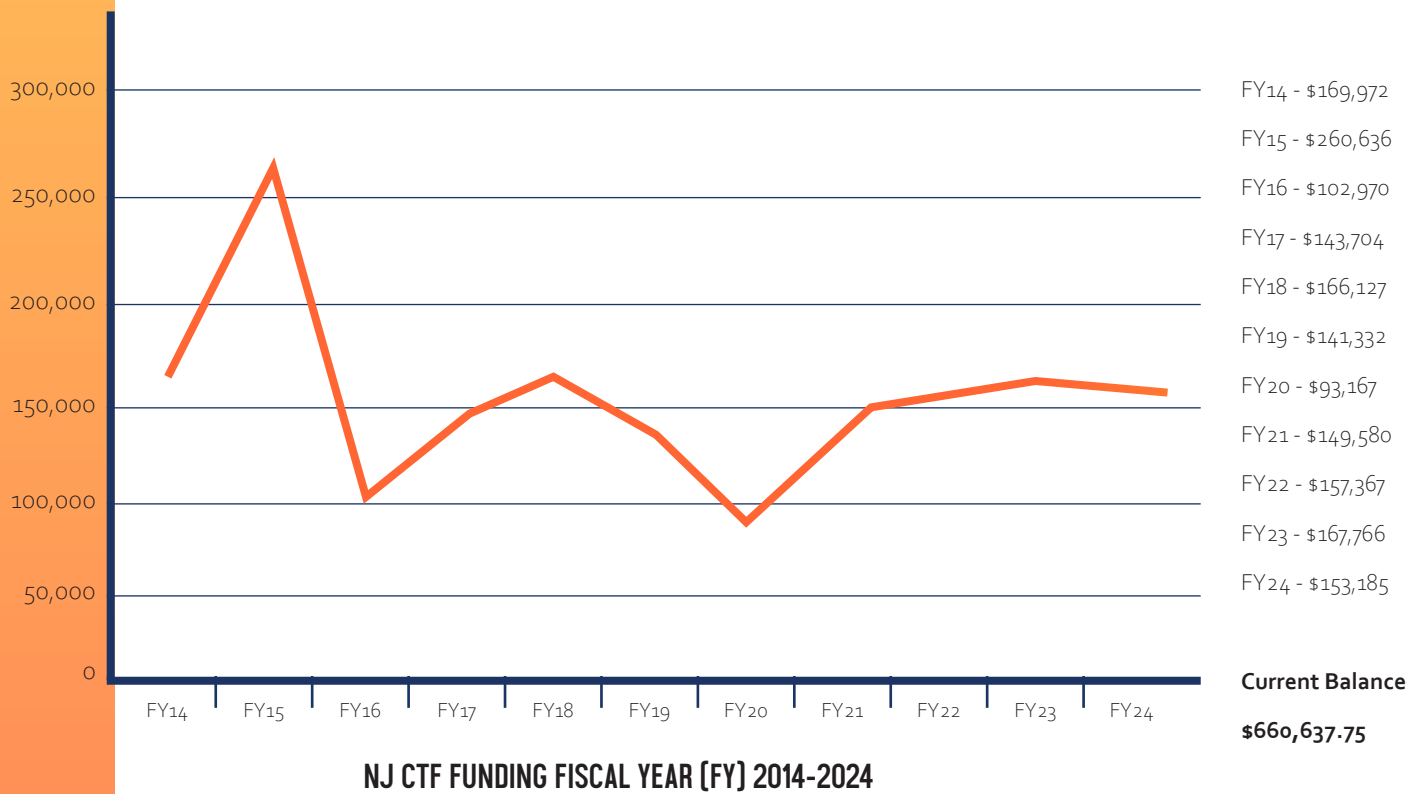
# NEW JERSEY CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND



The New Jersey Children's Trust Fund (NJ CTF) is a public/private partnership created by law in 1985 to fund child abuse and neglect prevention programs in New Jersey communities. NJ CTF receives funds primarily from donations made by residents via a check box on New Jersey income tax forms. Private donors can also make contributions into the fund. Any portion of the NJ CTF funds that are not appropriated to support child abuse and prevention programs is carried forward into the next fiscal year. These carry-forward funds, along with the fiscal year collections from the income tax check-off and private donations,

comprise the total NJ CTF funding available in any fiscal year to support child maltreatment prevention efforts. In the current reporting period CTF funds were used to support the work of the Poverty, Neglect and Communist Outcomes subcommittee to improve mandated reporting in New Jersey as well as co-sponsor the NJTFCAN Annual Fall Conference.

The NJ CTF supports local child abuse and neglect prevention programs that implement evidence-based and evidence-informed programs. Below are NJ CTF's collections from 2014 - 2024:



## NJTFCAN PROCEEDINGS

Quarterly meetings provide NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. The Task Force is supported by five subcommittees, which include the Safety of Children; Family Support and Child Wellbeing; Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes; Marketing, Development, and Fundraising; and, lastly, the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS). These subcommittees meet on a regular basis and report the results of their activities to NJTFCAN in quarterly meetings. There are over 100 individuals that contribute to this important work. The NJTFCAN meeting minutes can be [found online](#).



## SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Thoroughly committed to enhancing child-serving systems, NJTFCAN embarked on a journey to refine its mission and expand its community engagement in the 2024-2025 reporting period. Hosting strategic sessions that led to the refocusing of the prevention and protection subcommittees, which were renamed the Subcommittee on Family Support and Child Wellbeing and the Subcommittee on the Safety of Children. In Fall 2024, the subcommittees worked to draft new vision statements and conduct membership recruitment with a focus on broad representation of the communities served by DCF to include members with lived experience. Each of the subcommittees received numerous applications that were thoroughly reviewed and voted on by the subcommittees, then forwarded to the Task Force for final approval in early 2025.



# NJTFCAN FALL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 2024

The 2024 NJTFCAN Skill Building Conference focused on Building a Community of Support, The Intersection of Race, Poverty, and Neglect in Child Welfare. The conference offered 5.5 hours of Continuing Education (CE) for Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Professional Counselors. The event took place on Thursday, October 7, 2024, in Princeton, NJ.

This conference was largely attended by the top reporting populations in New Jersey, including medical professionals, educators and law enforcement. Information learned at this conference was used to support the Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes work on mandated reporting reform.

Participants enjoyed a robust agenda including the following presentations:

- Dr. Jessica Pryce, Ph.D., MSW, Florida State University: "Strengthening Families Using a Racial Equity Lens"
- Panel Discussion: "Experiences of Professionals and Families when Neglect is Reported" including the following panelists:
  1. Katherine Stoehr, First Deputy Commissioner, NJ Department of Children and Families
  2. Shanita Alvarez Crawley, AtlantiCare
  3. Kayann Foster, Lived Experience Expert Partnership
  4. Laura Jamet, Assistant Commissioner, NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency
  5. Dr. Jessica Pryce, Florida State University
- Mary Coogan, President and CEO, Advocates for Children of New Jersey and Patty Mojta, Institute for Families, Rutgers University "When Mandated Reporters Encounter Families".
- Panel Discussion: "Efforts to Build Support for Families Outside of the Child Protection System" including the following panelists:
  1. Katherine Haver, NYC Administration for Children's Services
  2. Donna Brailsford, NYC Public Schools
  3. Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Commissioner NJ Department of Children and Families
  4. Melissa Acree, Executive Director, NJ 211
- Listening to Mandated Reporters "Overview of mandated reporter focus groups being conducted with health care professionals, educators and law enforcement professionals for NJTFCAN Subcommittee on Race, Poverty and Neglect"
  1. June Simon MSW, Action Research
  2. Tim Ross PhD, Action Research
- NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect: "Strategic Plan and Committee Opportunities" NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Co-Chairs:
  1. Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Commissioner NJ Department of Children and Families
  2. Mary Coogan, President and CEO, Advocates for Children of New Jersey

## NJTFCAN SPONSORED TRAINING

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

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

**Finding Words/ChildFirst NJ Forensic Interview Training** is an intensive five-day training course during which students learn the necessary skills to conduct a competent investigative interview of a child abuse victim using the ChildFirst® forensic interview process. This interactive course combines multi-disciplinary lectures with demonstrations and hands-on experience.

**Number of trainings held: 3**

**Total number of professionals trained: 121**

**Forensic Interview Refresher Training** reviews the content from the ChildFirst® Forensic Interview protocol. Refresher training focuses on the practical application of the Finding Words/ChildFirst protocol to ensure that the interviewer has the skills needed to complete a competent Forensic Interview of a child abuse victim. This training is a 1-day, in-person session, that is held regionally.

**Number of trainings held: 3**

**Total number of professionals trained: 37**

**Expanded Forensic Interview (EFI) Training (ChildFirst® EX)** is a 3-day training that provides a defensible process for conducting interviews with children who may not disclose in a traditional single-session forensic interview due to trauma, development, special needs, and/or other complicating issues, including poly-victimization.

**Number of trainings held: 2**

**Total number of professionals trained: 33**



# WORK OF THE NJTFCAN SUBCOMMITTEES

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON POVERTY, NEGLECT AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

In 2024, the NJTFCAN Subcommittee on Poverty, Neglect and Community Outcomes (previously the Subcommittee on Race, Poverty, and Neglect) embarked on a crucial initiative aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of mandated reporting within New Jersey. The committee contracted the assistance of Action Research to create focus groups, which convened mandated reporters across the healthcare, education, and law enforcement sectors. This effort was undertaken to thoroughly examine the complexities and challenges these professionals encounter in their roles as mandated reporters. The insights garnered from these discussions illuminated areas in need of policy and practice enhancement.

Continuing this important work into early 2025, the subcommittee engaged the expertise of Outside Voice to further the work of mandated reporter reform. Outside Voice initiated three specialized workgroups with a primary focus on analyzing and interpreting the data collected from the Action Research focus groups. Each workgroup crafted a charter, chose co-chairs, and underwent a recruitment process to ensure a diverse and skilled membership. Workgroups were charged with conducting a comprehensive review of current training programs and policies governing mandatory reporting, aimed at advancing educational methodologies and strengthening training outcomes. These workgroups will draft recommendations that the subcommittee will vote on and forward to the Task Force in Fall 2025.

The subcommittee remains dedicated to establishing meaningful change in child poverty reduction and values the continued engagement of diverse stakeholders in this vital initiative.

## STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW COMMITTEE (SORS)

During the 2024-2025 reporting period, the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) maintained its collaborative efforts with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF). This partnership conducted a thorough analysis of comprehensive data briefs that deepened their understanding of DCF's data.

In alignment with its objectives, SORS continued to work with its contracted partners at the Camden Coalition to assess data comprehensively and formulate recommendations. These recommendations were communicated through the First Annual SORS Report concerning DCF's Division of Child Protection and Permanency. The report was disseminated to key bodies, including the Office of the Governor and the New Jersey Legislature, and was made accessible to the public and various stakeholders in early 2025, through online platforms.

Following the publication and distribution of the 2024 SORS Report, the subcommittee enlisted the expertise of Montclair University to consult on the 2025 SORS work plan. This collaboration was pivotal in identifying priority areas for the committee and evaluating both existing data and additional data requirements.

SORS remains committed to its mission of fostering transparency and enhancing the effectiveness of child protection services in New Jersey. The ongoing collaborations and data-driven insights mark significant strides towards achieving sustainable and impactful improvements. The involvement of academic and industry partners underscores a forward-thinking approach dedicated to the welfare of children and families in New Jersey.

## THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN

In 2024, a strategic transition took place that led to the restructuring of the former Protection Committee. The newly formed committee changed its name to the Subcommittee on the Safety of Children, marking a significant evolution in the approach to safeguarding the children of New Jersey. This transition facilitated the induction of new members distinguished by their expertise in child safety, alongside the appointment of a new Chair and Co-Chair to lead the committee's efforts.

Following the establishment of a fully staffed subcommittee, two workgroups were dedicated to the primary focus areas chosen by the subcommittee: Training and Education, and Policy and Legislation. These workgroups have undertaken a comprehensive review of existing training protocols for New Jersey educators and scrutinized legislation pertinent to youth within educational environments.

In pursuit of informed and impactful research, the workgroups have engaged in collaboration with key entities, including the NJ Department of Education, its Office of School Bus Safety and NJ state Senators. These partnerships have been instrumental in shaping the committee's understanding of current policies and guiding their initiatives.

The culmination of the collective research will be articulated in a series of recommendations directed towards the Task Force with the goal of effectuating positive change for the safety of children across New Jersey.

Together, through informed action and dedicated collaboration, the Subcommittee on the Safety of Children is steadfast in its commitment to the welfare and protection of children throughout New Jersey.

## THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELLBEING

In the Summer of 2024, the Prevention Subcommittee was restructured and renamed the Subcommittee on Family Support and Child Wellbeing. This

transformation signifies a strategic broadening of objectives to encompass preventive philosophies and advocacy for family support within the community.

This subcommittee is focused on mitigating service deserts and advocating for the establishment of safe spaces, which are crucial to creating environments that nurture family growth and facilitate healthy child development.

To recalibrate strategic intentions effectively, specialized workgroups have been established to undergo a review and revision of each priority area outlined in the 2022-2025 Prevention Plan. The goal is to enhance these areas and ensure alignment with the subcommittee's new directives. The subcommittee plans to present the proposed amendments to the task force by the end of calendar year 2025, with the objective of securing approval for implementation into the 2026-2029 Prevention Plan.

## MARKETING, DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING SUBCOMMITTEE

Since its inaugural meeting in November 2024, the Marketing, Development and Fundraising Subcommittee has appointed a Co-chair, created an updated Children's Trust Fund (CTF) logo and developed a comprehensive work plan. The plan embodies a commitment to strengthening community partnerships and enhancing awareness of the CTF. The committee is working to recruit additional members who will staff five workgroups intended to support their strategic initiatives. The prioritized initiatives include utilizing the National Children's Trust Fund Alliance's best practices to help guide the subcommittee's objectives and projects. A second workgroup will focus on creating branding and outreach development materials. The community stakeholder engagement workgroup will focus efforts on fortifying relationships with external groups and organizations, while another workgroup will endeavor to foster collaboration, support, and direct engagement with local supports. Another workgroup will be formed to focus on digital outreach and public engagement. This workgroup will use digital platforms to serve as vital avenues for public education and interaction, thereby strengthening community involvement and support for their

mission. Lastly, a final workgroup will convene to focus on corporate stakeholder collaboration. This subcommittee plans to launch targeted outreach efforts to engage corporate stakeholders by aligning with business leaders, aimed at fortifying resources and building a network to help support child-focused initiatives. This committee remains committed to bolstering awareness of the CTF.

We are confident these recommendations will meaningfully strengthen DCF's service delivery and positively impact outcomes for the children, youth, and families we serve across New Jersey.

## NJTFCAN RECOMMENDATIONS TO DCF

- The task force recommends sustained support of the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) ongoing work of the transformational offices to better understand, prevent, and mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Continued investment in this effort is essential to reducing the long-term toll of early adversity on health, behavioral health, educational attainment, and economic stability across New Jersey.
- The task force recommends that DCF continue to support the SORS by providing the requested data necessary for compliance with the legislation and consider recommendations presented in the annual SORS report.
- The task force recommends continued support of the subcommittee on Poverty, Neglect, and Community Outcomes' ongoing work to monitor and refine mandated reporter training and guidance that resulted in recommendations to improve mandated reporter training for top mandated reporting groups.
- It is recommended that the Department uphold its dedication to improving children's safety in schools by sustaining support of the Subcommittee on the Safety of Children's continued work to conduct a comprehensive review of existing training protocols for New Jersey educators and legislation pertinent to youth safety within educational environments.
- The task force recommends continued support of the Family Support and Child Wellbeing Subcommittee's review and implementation of the 2026-2029 Prevention Plan.
- The task force recommends continuing to draw on the perspectives of individuals with lived experience of DCF programs, recognizing their vital impact to the Department's initiatives.



## TASK FORCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Note: All members listed, status of membership, job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2025.

### FAMILY SUPPORT & CHILD WELLBEING SUBCOMMITTEE

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**Sanford Starr, Co-Chair**

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Safety & Trauma Informed Care Initiatives  
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Corissa Kazar  
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### **Katie Stoehr**

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New Jersey Department of Children and Families

### **Kayann Foster**

Lived Experience Expert Partnership

### **Kayla Rivera**

Parent Committee

### **Kimesha Kelly**

Parent Committee

### **Larry Braasch**

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### **Lauren Burd**

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Pediatric Medical Director Division of EMS, Disaster,  
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Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey

### **Wendy Yallowitz**

Deputy Director, Division of Family and Community  
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**Richard Stagliano**

*President and CEO*

*Center for Family Services*

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*Monmouth Vicinage*

*Administrative Office of the Courts*

**Amanda Melillo**

*Designee: Honorable Joseph Vitale*

*Senator, District 19*

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*Executive Director*

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**Honorable Joseph Vitale**

*Senator, District 19*

*Designee: Amanda Melillo*

**Joshua Levy**

*DCF Fatherhood Engagement Committee*

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*First Deputy Commissioner*

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**Laura Jamet**

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