

Report of the

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

7TH ANNUAL REPORT

to Governor Chris Christie and the New Jersey Legislature

Proceedings and Findings for the period of July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013



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

Honorable Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W.,
Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

Dr. Martin A. Finkel
Medical Director
NJ Child Abuse Research and Education
Services (CARES) Institute

Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee Members

Allison Blake, Ph.D., L.S.W., Commissioner
Department of Children & Families

Lisa Lisa Nemeth, DAG
Division of Law and Public Safety

Marygrace Billek, LCSW, LCADC
Human Services Director
Mercer County Department of
Human Services

Nancy Parello, Director of Communications
Advocates for Children of NJ

James Chester
Director of Support Services,
Foster and Adoptive Family Services

Linda Porcaro, M.A., Director
Office of Youth Services
Somerset County

Kathy Collins, L.C.S.W., Executive Director
Monmouth Cares

Barbara Rusen, MA, Chief of Staff
Department of Children and Families

Maura Somers Dughi, Esq.
Child and Family Advocate

Senator Joseph Vitale
New Jersey State Senate, District 19

Senate Designee: Laurie McCabe, District 19

Amy Fischer, Assistant Family
Division Manager – Mercer Vicinage
Administrative Office of the Courts

Clarence E. Whittaker, Jr., Esq., Manager,
Community Services, Department of Children
and Families, Division of Children's System of Care

Rita Gulden, M.S.W., Executive Director
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

Kara Wood, Director, Department of Children
and Families, Division of Child Protection and
Permanency (DCP&P)

Mary Hallahan, M.Ed. L.
Foster Parent

*DCP&P Designee: John Ramos, Jr. M.S.W.,
Executive Assistant*

Debra Jennings, Executive Co-Director,
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc.

Cecilia Zalkind, Esq. Executive Director,
Advocates for Children of NJ

Patricia Myers, M.S.W., Supervising Social Worker
Legal Services of New Jersey

Staff
Adrienne E. Jackson, M.S.W., Executive Coordinator
NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

7TH Annual Report for the period July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013

Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee

Chair

Cecilia Zalkind, Esq
Executive Director

Advocates for Children of New Jersey

Vice-Chair

Rita Gulden, M.S.W.
Executive Director

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

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

7th Annual Report for the period July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013

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 Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP), formerly the Division Youth and Family Services (DYFS), 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 DCPP in order to develop recommendations regarding staffing levels and the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within the DCPP. In addition, the subcommittee was mandated to review the DCPP’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: July 10, 2012, September 11, 2012, January 8, 2013, March 12, 2013, and May 14, 2013. These meetings provided the SORS the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with their statutorily mandated work. To view a copy of the meeting minutes please visit <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/>

Summary of Activities – 2012 to 2013

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

- Reviewing staffing levels of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency
- 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 Task Force, attended to this charge by the following actions in 2012-2013. The subcommittee received comprehensive presentations and/or updates from DCF executive staff around the scope, work, and strategic priorities from the following:

- Division of Child Protection and Permanency
- NJ Child Welfare Training Academy
- Office of Advocacy
- Office of the Commissioner
- Office of Contracting
- Office of Educational Support and Programs

SORS Focused on Training Child Protection Workers & Parent/Child Visitation

In its work this year, the SORS continued to prioritize issues for discussion which met its legislative charge and to which the committee believed it could add value. Staffing issues remained a priority of the committee, along with several practice issues which the committee determined were particularly relevant to positive outcomes for children and families.

Access to data and information is necessary to inform the SORS discussion. As in prior years, the committee made requests for data and information on those issues which it considered were most relevant to the SORS mission and priorities. DCP&P provided staff to present to the SORS at each of its meetings. The committee found these presentations very helpful. Data was also provided to inform these discussions, although there were several areas in which data and further information was requested but not yet received. Quality assurance and its ongoing reports remain an area in which the SORS has expressed and interest.

The SORS continues to believe that it serves a critical role in bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, representing different interests and expertise. This provides an opportunity for rich and vibrant discussion, which can help to improve both staffing and outcomes for children and families, therefore, the SORS is committed to continuing to focus on these priority issues.

Priorities of the SORS

In 2011 the subcommittee conducted a survey of DCP&P staff. As a result of the survey, the SORS focused on two areas identified by DCP&P staff as critical to their ability to do their jobs. These issues were training and services. In specific, the SORS:

- Toured the Child Welfare Training Academy, discussed the merits of the core curriculum, identified the need for continued work in developing outcome measurements and identified the need for additional training in child trauma and additional training for supervisors.
- Followed up with DCP&P staff on plans to map services to determine if services for families are available throughout the state.

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- Examined implementation of the Educational Stability Act. Data on implementation of the act was presented to the SORS in July 2012 and a subsequent discussion is planned later in 2013. The SORS members raised several issues about consequences of the act, both intended and unintended, that they wished to discuss further.
 - Prioritized parent/child and sibling visitation as a critical practice issue in need of improvement. The SORS has been interested in parent/child visitation as a result of the federal monitor's reports identifying this as an area in which DCPP has not yet met its targeted benchmark. The committee analyzed the data from the monitor's reports from 2013 and requested information about DCPP's plans to improve this area. This was presented to the SORS at its March 2013 meeting. Further, the SORS has requested data about therapeutic and supervised visitation program funded by DCP&P to determine the accessibility and availability of such programs with the intent of conducting a survey in regard to worker understanding and training in this critical area. The information has not yet been received.
 - Completed its strategic plan identifying goals, activities and measures for the subcommittee.

Issues for Follow Up in 2013-2014

The subcommittee identified the following priorities for in the upcoming year:

- Qualitative assessment of case practice in securing positive outcomes for children and families
- Parent/child and sibling visitation and services, particularly those that support parent/child and sibling visitation
- Educational stability, particularly the quality and consequences of educational decisions
- Staff training and retention in regard to measured outcomes of the current training curriculum

The SORS will explore these issues to determine what oversight will be necessary to ensure that the improvements being achieved now are sustained for years to come to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable children.