

Chafee Advisory Group Meeting

December 3, 2024

Minutes

Attendees: Nancy Andre, Anthony Cameli, Mary Coogan, Arian Craig, Hailey D'Elia, Josefina Ewins, Patricia E. Jordan, Niambi London, Jonathan Marsh, Stephanie Mills, Kelly Nestor, Kasey Vienckowski, Emel Altomari, Analyse Armstrong, Rachel Barth, Sherry Clark, Filomena DiNuzzo, Eleanor Gilliam, Alyssa Gonzalez, Asia Panzino, Ifeanyi Pole, Safa Simons, Barbara Washington, Candice Webb

Absent: Randi Mandelbaum, Tanya Berry, Konniesha Moulton, Dan Rhoton, Alicia Ramirez

- I. Welcome & Introductions
- II. Meeting minutes approval
 - a. June 4, 2024 CAG Minutes approved and will be posted on DCF's website.
- III. Agency Spotlight
- III. Office of Adolescent Services Updates
 - a. Ifeanyi Pole
 - i. Wraparound Program
 - 1. Eligible youth ages 18-21 receive emergency funding up to \$4,000.
 - 2. Wraparound Program age eligibility was recently extended to youths' 23rd birthdate.
 - 3. Wraparound funds can be used for housing, car repairs, clothing, food, moving cost, transportation, utilities.
 - 4. DCF's Wraparound Program providers are Acenda Health, Center for Family Services, and Oaks Integrated Care
 - 5. Information about DCF's Wraparound Funding can be found on the New Jersey Resource Spot (NJYRS) website at <https://www.nj.gov/njyrs/services-resources/wrap-around/>
 - b. Rachel Barth
 - i. Systems Impact Grant
 - 1. CP&P Workforce Restructure
 - a. Restructuring

- i. Who staff is, where they sit, identified staff
 - b. Training
 - i. Adolescent Learning Pathway with a Supervision and Coaching Model
 - c. Refining the Pathway to Services
 - d. Evaluation and CQI
 - Formative, process and outcome evaluation of the restructuring
 - Rapid cycle Continuous Quality Improvement
 - CP&P Workforce Restructure
 - Focused Youth Population
 - Expansion of LifeSet Initiative
 - e. Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Voucher Program
 - i. FYI Program currently offered in 5 counties.
 - f. LifeSet Program
 - i. LifeSet would provide all required services of the FYI model.
- c. Candice Webb
 - i. Safe Space Program update
 1. On November 12th, the Safe Space Liaisons had their fourth quarterly meeting of the year which was also the first in person safe space meeting this year.
 2. This year Safe Space Liaisons had 3 other regional meeting that were virtual.
 3. Conducted a Safe Space presentation for DCF's Office of Legal Affairs, for their Lunch and Learn series on November 13, 2024.
 4. The Safe Space Liaison's Inclusion Committee updated the LGBTQI (LGBTQIA2S+) policy and updated the TRIANGLE (Teen Resources Intended to Aid & Nurture Gays, Lesbians & Everyone) for caseworkers to have a resource index handy to refer families to services for the LGBTQI population. The TRIANGLE has an affirming healthcare app for LGBTQI young people where they can find affirming health care within the state.
 5. Safe Space program is working with DCF's local offices
 6. OAS will be working with Office on Diversity Equity and Belonging (DEB)
 - a. CAG discussion:

- i. It seems that it has been harder for youth to connect to CMO services. We need to see how the existing systems can work together to serve this special population.

IV. Family and Community Partnerships Updates

Barbara Washington [NJ DCF Office on Housing (OOH)]

- a. My First Place (MFP)
 - i. On Track: Year 1 Evaluation w/Model Developer. Developer's plan is to interview young adults, waiting for approval
 - ii. On Track: MFP is near capacity with full utilization and staffing as of December 2024
- b. Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)
 - i. On Track: Just finalized MOU for expansion for Monmouth County.
 - ii. Planning to Onboard the remaining sites the next half of fiscal year 2025 for Atlantic and Sussex/Warren Counties.
- c. Supportive Housing (Connect to Home-CTH)
 - i. On Track: Develop Practice Profile and Program Manual to support the (CTH) model
- d. National Peer Learning Call held on 12.2.24.
 - i. States Represented: Hennepin County, Minnesota and Tacoma, Washington.
 - ii. Focus: FYI vouchers and Support Service (specifically how communities nationally are implementing FYI services considering the resource gap in funding services.)
 - iii. Key Takeaways
 - 1. In Washington, there is a \$8 million legislative funding allocated for support services and DCF contracts for these services with various providers.
 - 2. Collaborated with 15 PHAs on one MOU for approximately 2,200 FYI vouchers.
 - iv. Similar Barriers (both nationally and in NJ)
 - 1. Independent living stipend counting as income – this may be a barrier for young adults to participate.

Emel Altomari (Office of Family Preservation & Reunification)

- e. Peer-to-Peer Program
 - i. Mentors are young people with lived experiences
 - ii. Currently in 10 counties
 - iii. Young people who reside in those counties
 - iv. Childrens aid and family services

- v. Developed and initiated by the Youth Council
- vi. Extra funds for recreation and food

- V. DCF Youth Council 2024 Priorities (Asia Panzino, OFV; Analyse, DCF Youth Council)
 - a. Youth Council (YC), Parents Council, Fatherhood Council, Consultants with Lived Experience
 - b. 9 Youth Council Priorities (top 5 have been prioritized to work on)
 - 1. Aging Out: Life Skills/Preparing for Independence (before age 21)
 - a. Ensuring youth are aware of these resources and are able to practice these real world experiences.
 - b. Next steps:
 - i. YC is working with OAS and reviewing the local office caseworker role.
 - 2. Aging Out: After 21/Sustaining Independence
 - a. Perhaps supports and services are extended (possibly) to age 26, if possible
 - 3. Mental Health Supports and Services
 - a. YC members would like to receive peer supports in this area, especially related to mental health.
 - b. Also, having therapy and a therapist and an ability to choose their therapists.
 - c. YC has noticed that youth may have a lot of turnover and this includes youth having multiple therapists.
 - d. YC have expressed receiving satisfactory services (i.e. art therapy).
 - e. YC may be interested in the development of a Mental Health
 - 4. Case Files and Documented Info (A)
 - a. A youth requesting a copy of a youth's CP&P case file.
 - b. YC would like to have access to more info about their life history, in a safe way; exploring supports to be in place.
 - c. The YC has had conversations with DCF' Office of Legal Services asking about access to their family/medical info/history/documents.
 - d. YC is working with DCF staff and stakeholders to review/discuss this info.
 - Case Files and Documented Info (B)
 - e. YC wants DCF to review/discuss the language that is used in youths' case files.
 - f. Having the youth have the opportunity to report on this.
 - 5. Congregate Care/Group Homes

- a. YC would like to address group homes, that there is more connections, practicing life skills, and minimize youths' exposure to trauma.
 - b. YC would like DCF to review some overall strict policies in the group home programs (i.e. a youth not having a phone could impact his/her/their future education and/or employment)
 - c. YC wants to advocate for DCF's group homes to have their own Youth Council and the necessary training for agency staff.
- 6. Caseworkers and Support Staff
 - a. How can DCF staff's ability to connect with young people and support these relationships beyond case management.
 - b. YC wants DCF to support staff in providing youth timely communication.
 - c. YC wants to aim to implement peer support for DCF staff.
 - d. YC wants to strengthen the relationship of CASA workers.
- 7. Culture
 - a. YC wants to ensure youths' cultures as respected and having the opportunities to explore different cultures.
 - b. Youth should be able to choose the experiences they want to explore. DCF should consider a youth's autonomy as its number one concern.
 - c. YC wants DCF to be mindful of using acronyms when speaking with youth.
- 8. Family Connections
 - a. YC members expressed sometimes they may have experienced barriers to connecting with their family and/or feeling forced to connect with their biological families.
 - b. YC stated transportation to see their "families" may be limited.
 - c. YC should be able to choose/identify their family whether that are or are not biologically connected.
- 9. Adoption
 - a. YC want to address the supports and services for youth keeping in mind that adoptions fall through often.

VI. Additional Information sharing and Updates

- a. None



VII. Closing

- a. Volunteer for Agency Spotlight
 - i. None
- b. Announcements, resources, etc.
 - i. None

2025 Chafee Advisory Group Meeting Dates:

March 25, 2025

June 3, 2025

September 16, 2025

December 2, 2025

All ideas reflected are not endorsed by the agency.