



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect
Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair
Mary Coogan, J.D., Acting Co-Chair

Minutes
April 28, 2023
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Jacqueline Augustine
Christine Beyer
Marygrace Billek
Mary Coogan
Martin Finkel
Natasha Johnson
Nydia Monagas
Sonia Moticha
Kaitlin Mulcahy
Assw. Nancy Muñoz
Richard Stagliano
Wendi White
Lorene Wilkerson

NJ Administrative Office of the Courts
NJ Department of Children and Families
Mercer County Human Services
Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Professor Emeritus, Rowan University
NJ Department of Human Services
New Jersey Children’s Alliance
NJ Department of Education
Montclair State University
21st Legislative District
Center for Family Services
NJ Department of Corrections
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Guests:

Mark Doherty
Lauren Carlton
Joseph Pargola
Neha Gogate
Sonia David
Kate Bradley
Katie Stoehr
Nicole Holt

21st Legislative District
CASA of NJ
NJ Department of Children and Families
Office of the Public Defender
Assembly Majority Office
NJ Department of Children and Families
NJ Department of Children and Families
CASA of NJ

Staff

Daniel Yale

NJ Department of Children and Families

“In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, notice of this meeting was given by way of notice filed with the Secretary of State, the Trenton Times and the Newark Star Ledger and posted at the Department of State, 125 West State St., 1st Floor, Trenton, New Jersey.”

Introduction and Welcome

A brief welcome was provided by Mary Coogan and the public notice information was provided. Mary asked that each member briefly introduce themselves. Mary Coogan informed the Task Force that after 20 years, Judge Stanley R. Chesler signed a court order that ended Federal oversight of NJ’s child welfare system and applauded DCF for the improvements that have been made to the system. Mary congratulated and acknowledged the work of Commissioner Beyer and DCF staff.



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NJTFCAN Business

Review and approve minutes from the December 16, 2022 meeting.

The minutes from the December 16, 2022 meeting were approved without edit. (Richard Stagliano, Natasha Johnson)

Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Commissioner Beyer thanked Mary for highlighting the Federal court appearance and end of Federal oversight. Commissioner Beyer also spoke of the legislation that was signed regarding SORS. One of the concerns of Judge Chesler was that in other states a lot of resources, funding, and time was invested and then over time, those things are stripped away due to a lack of focus in the child welfare area. The legislation that was passed in NJ contains a lot of detail which allows for the report that goes to the Legislature and Governor so if things begin to decline or issues arise, it will be an opportunity to go back to the legislation about what is required and what things need to be addressed moving forward. The end of the lawsuit and federal oversight now initiates a 6-month transition period from the federal monitor to the SORS oversight body. The monitor will complete one final report regarding whether the transition is on track and what is happening with SORS.

- **Universal Home Visiting**

Commissioner Beyer discussed that DCF issued an “Intent to Issue an RFP” to inform Home Visiting Providers that an RFP would be coming. Family Connects International is the evidence-based program that NJ will be implementing.

- **New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S)**

An RFP was released and proposals have been received. 15 hubs were selected and awarded. An initial meeting was held recently to bring all of the providers together to discuss the work that DCF has been doing on the launch of NJ4S. The statewide advisory board for NJ4S has also been convened.

- **Powerful Families, Powerful Communities**

An invitation was sent out for an informational webinar that will be occurring regarding the launching of Phase 2 of this work. Phase 2 will begin another round of community co-design. DCF will use ideas that were discussed during the previous phase in the upcoming work. This phase will include Cumberland, Camden, and Salem counties. The focus will be on providing support to new, young families with children under the age of 5 years old. The participants will be parents between the ages of 18 – 35. DCF has engaged a new design firm, CHI by Design, whose focus is around race equity and building child welfare systems and infrastructure with a lens on equity.

- **Family First Prevention Plan**

DCF submitted NJ’s Family First 5-year Prevention Plan during the first week of April. The plan includes all of the prevention activities for which DCF is able to draw federal funding through the Family First Act. There are between 3-5 new evidence-based programs that DCF will be looking to implement. Commissioner Beyer will send the document to anyone that would like to see it.

- **Intersection of Poverty and Neglect**

Commissioner Beyer invited Katie Stoehr to discuss a proposal around the intersection of poverty and neglect as well as the work that has been done with the “Four Branch Institute” and next steps.



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Katie explained that the “Four Branch Institute” was a group of people that represented the three traditional branches of government – Judicial, Executive, and Legislative – but with an additional fourth branch - constituents that have been impacted by the child welfare system in NJ. The group was convened to make sure that they could develop a shared understanding of the history of NJ’s child welfare system and the history of child welfare systems across the country and the extent to which they have disproportionately impacted people of color. Another topic that was discussed was trauma and the impact of the brains of developing children. This included not only living in a family system in which there is abuse and neglect, but also separation from a parent as a traumatic experience for a developing child and what the lifelong impacts may be. The group then discussed areas that they felt needed to be developed further in our system. Most child welfare systems were constructed in the 1960’s and 1970’s and have evolved in a piecemeal fashion through federal and state legislation. With what our data is currently showing us about brain science with children, what do we need to be doing differently? Some key areas coalesced out of those discussions. Those discussions were stopped for a period of time to allow time to think about how to bring together a team to take action around these domains.

Katie explained that as they looked at the work of the NJTF CAN and the subjects that have been on the table for the Task Force and its subcommittees, particularly the Prevention Subcommittee, there are a lot of the same types of discussions in a number of different forums in the state. The intent is to knit those together to be more effective and to reduce the amount of discussions on the same topic. The proposal is to create a subcommittee of the NJTF CAN that is dedicated to examining issues of poverty and neglect. There are several items that were discussing during the “Four Branch Institute” that would be in the scope of this subcommittee if it were to form. Those were:

- Develop core principles of a family well-being system
- Examine the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) federal legislation and the companion state legislation
- Prelitigation representation
- The impact of foster care placement on the parent’s benefit package (health insurance, housing vouchers, etc.)
- Coordinating family support needs outside of the child protection system
- Notice to families of involvement with DCPP – child protective investigations and child welfare assessments
 - Is case opening being done with informed consent?

Commissioner Beyer added that all of the items that Katie mentioned are also being examined at the federal level. There are different proposals and guidance recommending that states begin to look at some of these issues. This is an opportunity for NJ to be ahead of the curve on these issues as NJ already has these structures in place through the NJTF CAN and subcommittees. It will also be more effective to work together rather than DCF working on these issues alone and then asking for input. Commissioner Beyer also stated that it is an opportunity to come together regarding definitions and language when talking about the delivery of service to families.

When asked for clarification regarding the type of subcommittee that is being proposed, Commissioner Beyer stated that the proposal is to form a 4th subcommittee of the NJTF CAN. DCF will commit to providing a DCF staff member to co-chair this new committee to get it started on this work. The idea is to



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allow individuals other than NJTF CAN members to join the subcommittee, including those that served on the “Four Branch Institute”.

Marygrace Billek made a motion to create a Poverty & Neglect Subcommittee of the NJTF CAN. Sonia Moticha seconded the motion. The Task Force members voted to approve the motion. Commissioner Beyer invited Task Force members to volunteer to be a part of the new subcommittee or to identify individuals that may know that would be able to contribute.

NJTFCAN Biennial Conference Topics/Themes

Task Force members discussed the topics/themes of previous conferences. Nydia suggested that the theme of conference be the intersection of neglect and poverty in order to begin to raise awareness of the issues. Task Force members agreed that it makes sense to use the conference as a platform to share data and announce next steps. Mary also suggested including a discussion on mandated reporting as well as the Adoption and Safe Families Act and how the law has impacted families.

The Task Force created a workgroup to plan the conference with Commissioner Beyer, Mary Coogan, and Nydia Monagas volunteering to be members. The Task Force also discussed whether the conference would be held in person or virtually. Members decided that it would be held in person and also recorded so that individuals that are unable to attend can view the information at a later date. The Task Force also discussed several options for the location of the conference.

NJTFCAN Public Participation in Open Public Meetings

Mary reminded members that this topic has been on the Task Force agenda for the last year and while there has been a draft of rules prepared and some conversation about those rules, a decision has not been made about whether the rules would be adopted. Mary discussed the rules as drafted and asked for comments from members. Members discussed that setting parameters for public participation is important, but it is also important to have flexibility to suspend those rules based on the conversation or the needs of the Task Force. A guest at the meeting, Lauren Carlton, shared that it would be helpful to have rules so that guests are aware of their right to attend and the process to be able to participate.

Members also discussed the possibility of posting notice of the meetings in additional spaces beyond those that are required. Notices of meetings could be posted on social media and other outlets to make the information more accessible to the public. Commissioner Beyer spoke about the importance of members of the public participating in these meetings to better understand what is happening in NJ’s child welfare system. It would also give people the opportunity to learn the depth and breadth of DCF and the relationship to the other state departments. Mary discussed that all members should make a concerted effort to share information about the Task Force. Mary agreed to draft messaging around the Task Force that provides a consistent message and can be posted by Task Force and subcommittee members.

Mary made a motion to adopt the Public Participation Rules as written with the understanding that they are to provide guidance to the Task Force’s process and can be suspended. Nydia seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve the Public Participation Rules.

Children’s Justice Act (CJA) 3-year assessment

Mary discussed the requirement of the Task Force to prepare the CJA 3-year assessment that will be submitted in May 2024. Mary explained that this year, the Task Force would form a subcommittee to review the



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requirements and begin the planning process for the assessment. Sonia, Jacqueline, Dr. Finkel, and Mary volunteered to be a part of the workgroup. Commissioner Beyer also agreed to have a DCF staff member assist in the process.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Prevention Committee

Daniel provided an update regarding the Prevention Committee meeting that was held on February 2, 2023. During this meeting, the committee was provided with presentations from members of the community discussing the 2nd priority of the Prevention Plan - Youth and Family Participation. At the conclusion of the meeting, members were presented with a series of guided questions about the presentations, resulting in next steps and recommendations to the Task Force.

Protection Committee

Richard informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee met in March 2023.

Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors Workgroup

Nydia informed the Task Force that the Youth with Problematic Sexual Behavior (YPSB) workgroup is finalizing a one-page fact sheet on Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) for policymakers. The workgroup plans to develop a factsheet for caregivers on supporting young people who engage in PSB. They have also discussed creating guidelines for law enforcement and juvenile justice on how to collaborate on a coordinated response to this type of case.

Nydia also provided an update on the Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse (COCSA) workgroup. The COCSA workgroup has created the framework for the statewide response to addressing child-on-child sexual abuse cases.

There are a few prongs included in this framework:

- **Training** - Training for providers through the CARES Institute on evidence-based practice (Trauma-Informed – Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Problematic Sexual Behavior (TF-CBT for PSB)) for these children and youth began in March with 27 trainees. The workgroup is also partnering with the University of Oklahoma to provide evidence-based treatment for Problematic Sexual Behavior – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for adolescents (PSB-CBT-A) in the fall of 2023. In the spring of 2024, the University of Oklahoma will return to NJ to provide training for PSB-CBT for school-aged children for children under 12 years of age. In addition, they are collaborating with the University of Oklahoma to provide stakeholder training – 2 virtual sessions and 2 in-person trainings.
- **Centralized Referral Unit** – The DCF State Central Registry has created a new unit (Screening and Referral Team) to assess child-on-child sexual abuse cases. This unit will conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine whether the case will be handled as a child protective service referral of a child welfare service referral. Cases that will not be investigated by DCPP will be connected with Specialized Care Coordinators from a CMO who will be trained to do trauma screenings with the families to connect them to appropriate services.



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- **Child Treatment Assistance Fund** – allows access to funding to fund services that are necessary for children not served by DCPD.
 - **Data** – discussing what data will be collected from whom and how the data will be maintained, analyzed, and disseminated.

The Task Force also discussed two pieces of legislation that are currently being developed. The first is a resolution to urge the American Academy of Pediatrics to issue guidance for pediatricians and family doctors on discussing personal space and privacy with children. The second is a piece of legislation that revised the definition of child abuse or neglect to include additional perpetrators and establishes requirements concerning provision of services to children who engage in problematic sexual behaviors. Several concerns were raised about these pieces of legislation. Task Force members will look at the legislation and discuss how to proceed.

Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup

Lorene informed the Task Force that the online safety materials that were developed by this workgroup were sent out to the NJ Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network during Child Abuse Prevention Month. The workgroup will discuss options for what they will be working on in the future at the next Protection Committee meeting.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

Marygrace informed the Task Force that the SORS has changed their meeting schedule to meet more frequently. SORS has had several meetings with the federal monitor in which they provided members with a lot of information of the past few months. Marygrace also spoke about the support provided by Katie Stoehr and Angela Phillips of DCF. Marygrace also discussed the SORS membership applications that were sent to the Task Force for review to fill the roles required by the legislation.

Marygrace informed members that SORS worked with DCF to release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to hire a partner organization who has the depth and breadth in working with child welfare agencies and is aware of what data benchmarks are necessary to track. The RFQ was released in April and that expectation is that the partner agency will be hired by mid-June.

Marygrace reviewed each application with the Task Force. The following applicants were approved and will fill roles required by statute: Scout Hartley, Joshua Levy, Garnet Roberts-Batson, and Gina Hernandez. Additionally, the application of Traci Telemaque was approved.

Announcements

No announcements at this time.