



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair  
Martin A. Finkel, DO, FACOP, FAAP, Co-Chair

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**Minutes**

**June 25, 2021**

Virtual Meeting

**In Attendance**

Christine Beyer	NJ Department of Children and Families
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County Human Services
Mary Coogan	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Martin A. Finkel	CARES Institute
Christina Lazzaruolo	Attorney
Seetha Holmes	NJ Office of the Public Defender
Natasha Johnson	NJ Department of Human Services
Sonia Moticha	NJ Department of Education
Kaitlin Mulcahy	Montclair State University
Nancy Muñoz	21 <sup>st</sup> Legislative District
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
Mahogany Summers	Youth Representative
Jennifer Underwood	Department of Community Affairs

**Guests:**

Jason Butkowski	NJ Department of Children and Families
Patty Mojta	Prevent Child Abuse NJ

**Staff**

Daniel Yale	NJ Department of Children and Families
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“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**

Dr. Finkel announced that, after 31 years of serving as co-chair of the NJTF CAN, he was stepping down. Dr. Finkel announced that Mary Coogan was identified to fulfill this role going forward and has agreed to serve as the new co-chair of the NJTF CAN. Commissioner Beyer thanked Dr. Finkel for his many years of service and stated that when there is continuity of leadership and knowledge, it makes a large difference in what is able to be accomplished. Commissioner Beyer stated that she appreciated all of the time that Dr. Finkel has dedicated to the NJTF CAN in addition to all of the work that he has done for children in NJ. Several other members thanked Dr. Finkel for the work that he has done with the Task Force and for the work that he has done for children in general.

**NJTFCAN Business**

**Review and approve minutes from the March 26, 2021 meeting**



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The minutes from the March 26, 2021 meeting were not approved at this time due to a lack of quorum.

### **Updates from Commissioner Beyer**

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that there were two pieces of legislation that were passed that had significant impact on DCF:

- Kinship Bill – Judges will be required to rule out relative and relative care providers for children entering foster care prior to looking for other providers. Commissioner Beyer explained that this legislation is not about diversion or providing services to kinship families, it is about DCF not wanting to separate families. It is about children having the ability to be placed with kin, fictive kin, or people they know to reduce trauma when being separated from their biological parents. DCF will still be licensing relatives as has been done in the past, providing resources and support – both to the biological family and resource parents. DCF is not looking to do away with the traditional foster care system and that research shows that there are many benefits to placement with kin.
- Universal Home Visiting – Commissioner Beyer explained that NJ is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> state to consider the idea of universal home visiting. Although it will take a few years, the goal is to be able to fully support every birth in the state with home visiting. Home visiting is a proven way to reduce child abuse and neglect. After the initial visits, there will also be an opportunity to refer people into other types of services if necessary. Commissioner Beyer stated that this is a very exciting and monumental moment for NJ that will change the trajectory for women and babies in NJ.

Regarding the budget for the next fiscal year, Commissioner Beyer informed the members that DCF will receive additional funding for domestic violence services. The budget also includes restored funding for the Child Advocacy Center grants, and full funding for the Children’s System of Care (CSOC). Commissioner Beyer also stated that school-linked services also received additional funding. DCF is working with the Center for Healthcare Strategies (CHCS) to facilitate a process for school-lined services. Currently, there is no clear model for how school-linked services are delivered. With the assistance of CHCS as the facilitator, DCF will convene a workgroup of approximately 20 individuals including: school-linked service providers, legislators, mental health clinicians, and parents. The workgroup will meet 4-6 times to determine what school-linked services should be providing and what the expectations are so that there is one clear meaning and definition.

Commissioner Beyer stated that the DCF Office of Resilience will be offering microgrants around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). DCF will be providing grants to communities, but not in the typical fashion. The grants will be provided to communities and individuals to get deeper into communities and working with parents and people with lived experience to help determine the impact of ACEs and mitigate ACEs within their communities. This program is different than most as it will allow funding to individuals that don’t necessarily need large amounts of money to raise awareness within their community. DCF will also be releasing an RFP for larger agencies and asking if they would be willing to help support individuals in their communities through this “microgrant” process.

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that DCF hired Florence Racine as the Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will not only be doing race



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equity work but will also include work to support gender and other inequities that exist within the Department. They will also look externally at DCF contracts and provider community. DCF launched race equity and bias training within child welfare in March 2021 with Dr. Jessica Pryce from the University of Southern Florida. Dr. Pryce will be providing training for all DCF staff in the form of 4 modules. The final module will be released in July 2021. Also in July, DCF will be making this training available to 1,000 stakeholders within the State. DCF will also be asking Dr. Pryce if they are permitted to use the videotaped sessions to extend into DCF agency providers for a limited period of time. In the Fall, Dr. Joyce James, who has been working with disparity and disproportionality work for many years, will be working with DCF onsite on how to take that theory and what we have learned and put it into practice within DCF.

Commissioner Beyer spoke about DCPD launching Solution Based Casework (SBC) training which is an enhancement to DCPD's practice model. Throughout her listening tour, Commissioner Beyer heard from many families that they felt as though the "goal line" was constantly moving. SBC is focused on behavioral changes within families and being very clear with families about what is needed to change within their situation in order to have their children remain safely at home. It will also have a significant impact on the provider community in that it will make it very clear what DCPD is asking for and what family outcomes should look like. The Department has already trained 50 "Champions" that were certified to be coaches to assist with the rollout.

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that DCF's Youth Council, which is comprised of 20 young people between the ages of 14 and 23 years old who are currently in foster care, formerly in foster care, and currently or formerly involved with the Children's System of Care (CSOC), have been meeting on a monthly basis for the past 18 months. They have been working on various projects within the Department with the goal of improving the system for young people. Commissioner Beyer has met with the Youth Council every other month to discuss the ideas that they have developed. They are working to improve the DCF Youth Resource Website, improve the PRIDE Training, and to create a Sibling Bill of Rights. DCF also released an RFP for a new peer-to-peer mentoring program designed by the Youth Council.

### **Task Force Subcommittee Discussion**

Mary informed the Task Force that she got a sense that some of the subcommittees were not clear on what their mission is or what their focus should be going forward. Commissioner Beyer agreed and suggested that the subcommittees use a charter template to assist with decision making and mission so that members are aware of the subcommittee's focus.

### **Subcommittee/Committee Updates**

#### **Communication Committee**

Jason informed the Task Force that, if the goal of the Task Force is to reinvigorate the subcommittees, effort may be better spent in another area of the work that the Task Force is doing. One of the challenges that the committee is experiencing links to not having a clear vision of their role. Another challenge is not having a wide base of communication practitioners. A majority of the work that has been done recently by the Communication Committee has been to find new ways to reinvigorate the CTF. To better serve the needs of the Task Force and the child welfare system, we may want to consider disbanding the Communications Committee and developing a new Development and Fundraising Committee for the CTF whose sole focus is how to



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generate funding and interest for the CTF. The hope is to attract more people that have that background and can drive those efforts. Commissioner Beyer spoke about asking some of the philanthropic partners in NJ to participate on this type of committee to assist. Dr. Finkel suggested that the business community should also be engaged. Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that the DCF Communications team would still be available to assist with developing campaigns and increasing awareness.

### **Prevention Committee**

Patty informed the Task Force that the Prevention Committee created a workgroup to develop an orientation and guidelines for new members and existing membership. The workgroup created a history of the Prevention Committee to share with the Committee. Patty stated that their next step was to develop bylaws or a charter. Patty informed the Task Force that the Committee is currently working on the statewide Prevention Plan for 2022. The committee completed a visioning exercise and has created a draft of strategies and priorities that they are in the process of fine-tuning. They have developed 3 crosscutting priorities: promotion of racial equity, racial justice, and reducing disparities; increasing opportunities for effective youth and family participation and partnership in program planning, implementation, and evaluation; and promotion of trauma-informed and healing-centered prevention services.

Patty spoke about the Infrastructure and Resources Workgroup of the Committee. Patty explained that the workgroup is charged with building up the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) and the accessibility and availability of resources for prevention and programming. The workgroup provided recommendations and posed questions regarding future plans for the CTF. Patty stated that, prior to the pandemic, there were conversations with the Communications workgroup around strategies to raise funds, but the plans were halted. Commissioner Beyer stated that there are no barriers to raising funds for the CTF so it comes down to looking into how we want to approach it and making recommendations for fundraising. Commissioner Beyer explained that when this administration came into office, they explored whether they could participate in fundraising and in most cases, the answer was "yes". The Communication Committee explored various ways to increase awareness regarding the tax checkoff box to donate to the CTF. The Prevention Committee can also work with the DCF Communication team to determine alternate ways to increase awareness.

Patty also spoke about the Communication Workgroup. Patty stated that this workgroup was responsible for the WE CAN campaign in 2020. The workgroup questioned whether the WE CAN campaign would continue going forward and, if so, what the next steps should be regarding updating messaging.

### **Protection Committee**

Sonia informed the Task Force that the Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup submitted recommendations and data report from their survey to the Department of Education (DOE). The DOE selected several recommendations and have begun to move forward. As June is Internet Safety Prevention month. The DOE posted several social media posts as well as sent a broadcast to all districts. Additionally, the workgroup is developing a parent resource online safety guide. The workgroup has moved it forward to the full Protection Committee and has received feedback. Sonia will be having further conversations with the DOE to determine next steps. The end goal is that this document be sent out to all districts for schools to utilize as would be most helpful in their district.

### **Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)**



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Marygrace read the charge of the SORS as she felt that it was important for the Task Force to understand why SORS struggles to stay within the framework of their charge. Marygrace informed the Task Force that, with Commissioner Beyer's update, there are a lot of initiatives that are now moving forward that the SORS will be discussing including SBC, race equity training, the Office of Staff Health and Wellness, and an update from the Office of Professional Training and Development. Commissioner Beyer stated that DCF has been very staff focused for the past few years. There is a lot more work going into our workforce development and a lot more that we will be looking to do regarding onboarding of new staff. Commissioner Beyer also offered to speak with the SORS about DCF's plans to make some shifts and changes to the infrastructure to support the work of DCF staff.

### **Announcements**

No announcements at this time.

**Next Meeting – September 24, 2021.**