



## STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Suzanne Kreie, Chair  
Lisa Chapland, Co-Chair

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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.”

*\*Please note the meeting was recorded for the transcription of minutes.*

Meeting Minutes  
November 18, 2025

**Attendance:**

Marygrace Billek, Public member  
Christine Beyer, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families  
Laura Jamet, Department of Children and Families  
Angie Waters, CASA of New Jersey  
Amanda Melillo, NJ Legislature  
Gina Hernandez, Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey  
Lisa Chapland, Relative Resource Parent  
Linda Porcaro, Somerset County Department of Human Services  
Mary Coogan, Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Mary Hallahan, Resource Parent  
Lynette Rente, Office of the Public Defender

**Guests:**

Emily Douglas, Montclair University  
Svetlana Spiegel, Montclair University  
Wendy Zeitlin, Montclair University

**Staff:**

Bethany D’Amelio, Department of Children and Families

I. Research partners presented data highlights to help identify priority topics to inform the 2026 workplan and recommendations.

- Disparities and Placement Trends
  - Disproportionality persists in initial reports to the Central Registry for Black and Hispanic children; lower kinship placement rates for these groups were noted; possible increase in congregate care placements for Hispanic youth.
- Family and Sibling Contact
  - Modest decline in the proportion of children placed with siblings and a larger decline in weekly parent-child visitation; potential analysis by local office and barriers to visitation suggested.
- Case Practice Metrics
  - Continued declines observed in timely caseworker–parent contact, family team meeting engagement, and timeliness of termination of parental rights (TPR) filings.
  - CoQI results indicate relatively low scores in family engagement assessment and safety/risk assessments; suggested learning from high-quality assessments and current DCF data review projects.
- Transition to Adulthood
  - National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) parameters were referenced to frame potential analyses of older youth outcomes in New Jersey.

## II. Potential priority Topics Emerging from Discussion

- Family Engagement (cross-cutting)
  - Interest in disaggregating data by county/region to understand whether issues are systemwide or localized; emphasis on avoiding duplication with ongoing DCF monitoring.
  - Committee members highlighted the need to identify barriers to visitation and improve consistent, timely contact.
- Educational Stability and Outcomes
  - Concerns raised about timely transfer of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), monitoring report cards, and using flexible funds for

tutoring; recognition that case managers face workload limits and may need support from partner roles.

- Suggestion to ensure court orders explicitly address educational roles and responsibilities.
- Flexible Funds (statutory intent and practice)
  - Clarification requested on spending categories and data transparency; discussion referenced legislative language focusing on individualized service plans, preservation/reunification, and preventing placement disruptions; questions raised about use, cases, and accounting.
- Court Process Intersections
  - Broad agreement that court process considerations are interwoven across topics (education, reunification) and should be treated as an embedded element rather than a standalone topic.

### III. Notable Contextual Items

- Federal Executive Action
  - A recent federal executive order related to child and family services was briefly noted; additional details will be sought from federal partners; suggestion to include a footnote in the report.

### IV. Proposed Analytic Directions for 2026

- Family Engagement and Visitation
  - Examine local office variation in weekly visitation, identify documented barriers, and propose targeted remedies (e.g., transportation, scheduling, service coordination).
- Case Practice Quality
  - Analyze characteristics of high-quality safety/risk and family engagement assessments to generate practice guidance and peer learning.
- Education Stability

- Track timeliness of IEP transfer, school enrollment continuity, and academic indicators; clarify roles in court orders and strengthen routine school–caseworker communications.
- Flexible Funds
  - Map existing flexible-fund expenditures, delineate allowable categories, and assess alignment with statutory purposes; consider mechanisms for one-off specialized services versus grants/contract lines.
- Older Youth Outcomes
  - Use National Youth Transitional Database and related datasets to examine education/employment/health benchmarks at ages 17, 19, and 21, noting New Jersey’s sampling approach and limits.

#### V. Recommendations Discussed for 2026 Workplan (for drafting and circulation)

- Establish Priority Focus Areas
- Reduce Duplication and Clarify Interfaces
- Coordinate with ongoing DCF CoQI efforts and other subcommittees to ensure complementary scopes and eliminate overlap.
- Education-Focused Practice Improvements
- Flexible Funds Governance and Data

#### VI. Decisions and Consensus Points

- Prioritization Path
  - Research partners will draft a consolidated list of recommended priority topics based on discussion and circulate for comment rather than conduct an additional survey at this stage.
- Materials Sequencing and structure
  - “Pillars” materials will be sent first, followed by foundational/introductory content, to facilitate manageable review.

#### VII. Next Steps and Timeline

- Circulate draft list of priorities and the “pillars” materials in two parts; request consolidated comments by a specified deadline.

- Finalize 2026 priority areas and accompanying data requests; confirm owners and milestones for each workstream.

*This memo aims to maintain transparency and provide the public with an overview of the task force's recent deliberations. The committee values community input and engagement as we collectively strive to enhance the welfare of children and families across New Jersey. This meeting report was prepared, in part, with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).*

*For further information or queries, the public can reach out via the contact channels provided by the Department of Children and Families.*