



## STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, 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.*

March 11, 2025

Meeting Minutes

### Attendance:

Marygrace Billek, Chair, public volunteer  
Gina Hernandez, Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey  
Lisa Chapland, Resource Parent  
Katherine Stoehr, Department of Children and Families  
Eleanor Gilliam, Department of Children and Families  
Elizabeth Sherwood, Division of Law  
Mary Coogan, Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Angie Waters, CASA Of New Jersey  
Traci Telemaque, Office of the Public Defender  
Garnet Roberts-Batson, DAD's Council  
Linda Porcaro, County of Somerset, Department of Human Services

### Guests:

Wendy Zeitlin, Montclair University  
Svetlana Spiegel, Montclair University  
Lauren Korczakowski, Department of Children and Families  
Victoria Perez-Zetune, Department of Children and Families  
Georgia Kioukis, Department of Children and Families

### Staff

Bethany D'Amelio, Department of Children and Families

#### 1. CFSR data presentation regarding DCF re-entry rate.

- CFSR data aligned with national data.
- Members discussed patterns and thoughts about needs that impact this data.

#### 2. Agency Responsiveness and Community Engagement:

- The committee emphasized the importance of authentic engagement and the agency's capacity to respond to community needs. This effort began with a listening tour, during which significant insights were gathered from over 600 stakeholders across New Jersey.

- *Strengths Identified:*
  - Successful prevention services
  - Robust family support organizations
  - Effective programs such as Keeping Families Together and the Kinship Navigator Program
- *Areas for Improvement:*
  - Addressing housing needs
  - Enhancing educational initiatives
  - Improving transportation services
  - Addressing financial concerns
- In response, the agency has established new offices, including the Office of Housing and the Office of Family Voice, to ensure ongoing incorporation of community feedback and family perspectives in agency operations.

### **3. Child Welfare and Case Management:**

- Discussions highlighted the challenges in achieving timely case resolutions, specifically regarding the length of time it takes to consider termination of parental rights. It was noted that less than the desired percentage of cases met the federal benchmarks for timeliness.
- A data review indicated that as of May 31, 2024, a notable portion of cases were experiencing delays in the termination process despite the establishment of adoption goals.
- The committee outlined factors contributing to these delays, emphasizing the need for increased judicial efficiency and improved process streamlining.

### **4. Future Recommendations and Action Items:**

- To address the identified gaps, the committee recommendations include:
  - Conducting further needs assessments and surveys to pinpoint specific community barriers, particularly focusing on service accessibility.
  - Extending engagement efforts through more frequent community meetings and focus groups.
- A proposal was made to incorporate additional feedback mechanisms, such as family interviews and staff surveys, to continuously refine processes and policies.
- A suggestion to pursue scheduling adjustments for monthly meetings and explore the potential for an in-person meeting in June for collaborative task force engagement.

### **Conclusion:**

The committee concluded that significant progress has been made and that there are areas requiring attention and improvement to better serve our stakeholders and maintain federal standards. Recommendations have been designed to bridge gaps in service delivery and case management efficiency, ensuring the agency's objectives align more closely with community needs and expectations.

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.