



STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, Chair
Lisa Chapland, Co-Chair

"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.*

July 9, 2024
Meeting minutes

Attendance:

Lisa Chapland, Kinship Resource Parent
Marygrace Billek, Public Member
Amanda Meiliio, Senator Joseph Vitale's staff
Angie Waters, CASA of New Jersey
Corine LeBaron, Embrella
Eleanor Gilliam, Department of Children and Families
Elizabeth Sherwood, Division of Law
Garnet Roberts-Batson, DAD's Council
Gina Hernandez, Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey
Katie Stoeher, Department of Children and Families
Mary Coogan, Advocates for the Children of New Jersey
Robyn Veasey, First Assistant Public Defender
Linda Porcaro, County of Somerset Department of Human Services
Laura Jamet, Department of Children and Families
Mary Hallahan, Freehold School Dist.
Joshua Levy, Public Member
Traci Telemaque, Office of the Public Defender

Guests:

Colleen McCauley, Camden Coalition
Stephen Singer, Camden Coalition
Kathleen Noonan, Camden Coalition
Rozalyn Masi, Department of Children and Families
Amanda O'Reilly, Department of Children and Families

Staff:

Bethany D'Amelio, Department of Children and Families

1. Introduction

The session was dedicated to discussing the ongoing initiatives and outcomes in child welfare, with a focus on the themes of permanency and reentry into out-of-home placements. The committee remains committed to identifying and implementing strategies that enhance outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system.

2. Observations and Data Analysis

The following key data points were presented:

- **Permanency Outcomes:**
 - A comprehensive review of current permanency trends was conducted. It was noted that there is a significant focus on speeding up the reunification process and ensuring that children can return safely to their families or find permanent homes through guardianship or adoption.
 - The percentage of children reunified within 24 months has seen a slight decline, highlighting the need for streamlined processes and support services.
- **Reentry Statistics:**
 - There was a reported increase in children re-entering care between 2020 and 2021. Efforts are underway to better understand the underlying causes of reentry and prevent such occurrences.
- **Youth Aging Out:**
 - The committee discussed the challenges faced by youth aging out of resource care. Emphasis was placed on the need for better transitional programs that support long term success and self-sufficiency post-foster care.

3. Framework and Methodology

A strategic framework—comprised of the four pillars of child welfare—was the focal point of the discussion. These pillars aim to ensure tracking and improving the efficacy of the work done across different dimensions of child welfare, specifically focusing on:

- **Kinship and Guardianship:**

Reflecting on strategic directions to enable swift kinship placements.
- **Directionality in Measures:**

It was proposed that guidelines should be established to clearly interpret whether specific metrics, such as time to permanency, are improving or deteriorating, helping to create clear goals and evaluation benchmarks for the public and stakeholders.

4. Future Directions and Next Steps

The committee underlined its dedication to transparency and accountability, aligning with federal measures while also forming interpretations that reflect local needs and data realities. Initiatives such as:

- **Enhanced Support for Families:**

Crafting action plans focused on preventive services to curtail the probability of reentry into foster care.
- **Youth Transition Programs:**

Development of more robust pathways for youths aging out, involving partnerships with education and employment services to foster independent living skills.

The committee will continue to engage with stakeholders, using evidence-based strategies to advocate for sustained improvements.

5. Committee Engagement and Feedback

Towards the end of the meeting, the committee opened the floor to feedback from members. Ensuring these discussions continue to guide service adaptations remains a priority to reflect the needs of New Jersey's diverse family community.

6. Conclusion

The Committee reaffirms its dedication to enhancing child welfare outcomes through collaborative efforts and data-driven strategies.

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.

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