



Protection Committee
Richard Stagliano, Chair
Liza Kirschenbaum, Esq, Vice-Chair
March 15, 2023
Virtual Meeting
Minutes

In Attendance:

Greta Anderson	NJ Department of Children and Families
Joyce Applegate	Catholic Charities – Diocese of Metuchen
Jacqueline Augustine	NJ Administrative Office of the Courts
Eileen Caraker	Gloucester County Prosecutor’s Office
Martin Finkel	Professor Emeritus, Rowan University
Scout Hartley	National Foster Youth Institute, NJ Chapter
Liza Kirschenbaum	CASA of New Jersey
Sonia Moticha	NJ Department of Education
Jane Reynolds	Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office
Judy Spinney	Therapist
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
Jennifer Underwood	NJ Department of Community Affairs
Lorene Wilkerson	NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Staff:

Daniel Yale	NJ Department of Children & Families
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Introduction and Welcome

The meeting was called to order and the Open Public Meetings notice was read. A brief welcome was provided by Richard Stagliano.

Review and Approve September 21, 2022 and December 14, 2022 Minutes

The September 21, 2022 and the December 14, 2022 minutes were approved without edit.

Protection Committee Business

Protection Committee Member Recruitment

Richard explained that each of the subcommittee of the Task Force are looking into recruitment efforts to bring on members that have expertise in the areas on which the subcommittees are focusing. Richard asked members to consider individuals that they may know that can contribute to the work of the Protection Committee. Liza recommended that members look at the Protection Committee Charter which identifies the experience/expertise that the Committee is seeking.

Discussion topics

Child-on-child sexual abuse



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The Committee discussed updates on the Statewide Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Workgroup (COCSA). Liza reviewed some of the updates that were provided during the Protection Committee's December meeting. Liza also spoke about the report released by the Office of the State Comptroller. Dr. Finkel felt that the report was very thorough and raised considerable concerns about the investigation of this type of case as well as routine child abuse/neglect in terms of children getting the correct services. Dr. Finkel informed the Committee that the Prosecutor's Association is completing their own investigation as well. Dr. Finkel also stated that one of the questions that has been raised is whether the statutory requirements of DCF should be reshaped to include this population. Richard stated that his understanding is that there has been a lot of work done within the subcommittees of the COCSA workgroup to ensure that there is adequate funding for investigation, training, and services provided to families. Richard stated that the Committee will be provided further updates at the next meeting.

Greta informed the Committee that DCPD provided data regarding child-on-child sexual abuse to the New Jersey Children's Alliance. Greta has also asked her staff to indicate if a neglect case for Institutional Abuse involved child-on-child sexual abuse. This included approximately 40 cases over the previous 2 years. Greta stated that she has a unit that is conducting qualitative reviews on these cases and will be in contact with Nydia to discuss the results.

Guidance on Youth Mental Health and Suicide Risk

Richard spoke briefly about the new DCF initiative NJ Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S) Hubs. These hubs will provide prevention and early intervention services to school districts both in schools and community locations. There will be a diverse community-based advisory group to create and deliver programming that best meets the need of each school district and family including services that address substance use prevention, sexual health and pregnancy prevention, suicide prevention, anti-bullying, and other prevention focused activities as determined by the advisory group. Sonia shared that the Department of Education (DOE) offers both mental health and suicide prevention resources to districts. The DOE was recently awarded federal funding to help support additional mental health professionals within school systems as well as diversifying those positions to better reflect the community of students.

Committee Initiatives

The Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup

Sonia stated that, as the current initiative has been completed, the workgroup is trying to determine if there are other initiatives that they want to focus on. Other than continuing to spread the online safety resources that they created, there are no plans for another project at this point.

Dr. Finkel asked Sonia if there are any primary prevention programs put into the school systems as part of a mandated curriculum. Sonia explained that school districts choose their own curricula based on what their schools need. The DOE established student learning standards in each of the different



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learning areas and shares topics that a student might need. However, the DOE doesn't require districts to utilize any particular curriculum. More specifically, Dr. Finkel asked if there are curricula regarding personal space, privacy, and safety. Sonia informed Dr. Finkel that she will look into the issue and provide further information at a later date.

Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors Workgroup

No updates at this time.

Medical Evaluation and Referral Workgroup

No update at this time.

Announcements

Meeting adjourned – Next Meeting June 21, 2023.