



Protection Committee
Richard Stagliano, Chair
Liza Kirschenbaum, Esq, Vice-Chair
December 15, 2021
Virtual Meeting
Minutes

In Attendance:

Joyce Applegate	Catholic Charities - Diocese of Metuchen
Jacqueline Augustine	NJ Administrative Office of the Courts
Eileen Caraker	Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office
Jacquelynn Duron	Rutgers University School of Social Work
Martin Finkel	CARES Institute
Joanne Hatt	Passaic County Prosecutor's Office
Liza Kirschenbaum	CASA of New Jersey
Lisa Landsman	Attorney
Nydia Monagas	NJ Children's Alliance/Montclair State University
Debbie Riveros	Monmouth 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 15, 2021 Minutes

The September 15, 2021 minutes were approved without edit. Jacqueline Augustine, Martin Finkel, and Lisa Landsman abstained from the vote.

Discussion: DCF Policy, DCPD RDTA referral process

The Committee was informed that DCF Commissioner Beyer, DCPD Assistant Commissioner Diaz-Petti, and CSOC Assistant Commissioner Greene have agreed to join the next Protection Committee meeting scheduled for March 16, 2022 to discuss DCPD policy and DCPD response to child-on-child sexual abuse cases. Nydia explained that the current policy states that the child initiator must be in a caretaking role for a referral to be made in a child-on-child sexual abuse case. It was felt that this conversation should take place to make sure that these children are receiving the necessary services. Dr. Finkel explained that, several years ago, DCPD began coding child-on-child sexual abuse cases as "Child Welfare" cases so that an investigation could be completed and the children would receive the appropriate services, but parents would not be held accountable for the actions of the child. Dr. Finkel



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stated that a recent change in DCF policy may put children at risk of not receiving the appropriate referrals, assessments, and treatment.

Dr. Finkel read an email that he received from a staff member at DCF relating to DCF's change in practice regarding child-on-child sexual abuse cases. Dr. Finkel reported that the email stated that non-caregiver sexual abuse would not constitute an incident of child abuse or neglect but is a criminal matter and should be investigated by law enforcement and referred to a prosecutor's office, Child Advocacy Center, or Victim Advocacy Office to refer the family for assessment and services. The Committee discussed reviewing the DCPD policy and formulating clear questions that can be provided to DCF in advance so that the March meeting can be as productive as possible. Richard asked if the Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors workgroup would be able to meet prior to the March meeting to develop a list of questions. Nydia agreed and informed the Committee that they will extend the invitation to all members in the event that there are others that would like to participate in the discussion.

Protection Committee Charter – Committee Mission and Goals

Liza explained that a small group of members met to discuss the input that was provided by members at the last meeting regarding the Protection Committee Charter. A draft of the charter was sent to all members prior to the meeting and was displayed during the meeting so that members were able to review as a group. The Committee discussed the following edits/additions:

- The members section lists "service providers". As "service providers" is a very general category, members decided to add specific providers to the charter including MDT Coordinators, Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Coordinators, and RDTC members.
- Under Roles and Responsibilities section, "recruitment" was added.
- Expand membership to include researchers in areas of Committee interest
- Include collaboration with other agencies, departments, stakeholders and committees in Objectives Section

Richard informed the members that if they had additional thoughts or ideas to include on the charter, they can reach out to Daniel in the next week and it will be considered.

Committee Initiatives

Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors Workgroup

Nydia informed the Committee that they are looking into how they can develop curricula for the Child Welfare Training Partnership for the Children's System of Care (CSOC) staff. As CSOC staff will be more involved in this type of case, it is important to ensure that they have the appropriate education. In terms of legislation about investigation of child-on-child sexual abuse cases, the workgroup is monitoring what is occurring and concurrently planning for the possibility that there may need to be legislative change.



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Nydia also informed the Committee that the Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team (CAC-MDT) Advisory Board created a subcommittee and held a meeting regarding the medical referral process. One of the outcomes of that meeting was the necessity to provide training with respect to medical evaluations. The training would be specifically about what a medical exam entails, when children should be referred, why children should be referred, how to talk to parents about why they should bring their child to a medical exam, etc. The subcommittee discussed the possibility of the Protection Committee creating a workgroup to collaborate with others to create this training and discuss what the training would entail. This would be a newly created workgroup to provide education across all stakeholders about medical exams, particularly in child sexual abuse cases. Dr. Finkel stated that there are two separate issues that need addressing. The first issue is educating parents and caretakers about what a medical evaluation entails when there is suspected sexual abuse. The second issue is educating professionals about specifics of medical evaluations for sexual abuse victims as it is a therapeutic experience for children if done correctly. Dr. Finkel suggested that there should be two separate trainings for professionals so that the education includes sexual abuse cases as well as physical abuse cases.

Richard agreed that the Committee should create a new medical referral workgroup. The following Committee members volunteered to join the workgroup: Nydia, Dr. Finkel, Debbie Riveros, Joanne Hatt, and Eileen Caraker. Nydia stated that Dr. Julia DeBellis has applied for membership of the Protection Committee and would like to join the workgroup. Dr. Finkel informed the Committee that he also recommended that Dr. Silliman-Cohen from the CARES Institute join the Protection Committee and the workgroup.

The Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup

A draft of the Online Safety Flyer that has been in development by the Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup was sent to Committee members prior to this meeting and was shared for review during the meeting. Lorene explained that she reached out to the NJ Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and they have agreed to review the document and provide input. Lorene stated that if she receives any edits from the PTA, the edits will be sent to the Department of Education (DOE) to be considered. Lorene was hopeful that a final draft of the document will be ready by the end of January 2022.

The workgroup is still discussing what other agencies or groups should have access to this document. Lorene stated that she felt that DCF should have access as DCF can share the information to children they serve, foster parents, etc. The workgroup is also considering providing the information to umbrella as they provide training to foster parents. A question was raised regarding whether this information would be provided to private schools, charter schools, religious schools, children that are home-schooled, etc. Lorene stated that the workgroup will discuss the issue with the DOE to see if they plan to provide it to those populations.

Dr. Finkel suggested that an item be included regarding exposure to age-inappropriate materials that can result in sexualized behavior or sexual behavior problems. Lorene agreed and stated that she



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would make a note that this should be included in the flyer. Richard stated that the document identifies children ages 5 to 12 in the study, but we should also emphasize that the information is for younger children as well.

Review 2022 Meeting dates

The proposed meeting dates for 2022 were approved by the Committee.

Announcements

Dr. Finkel announced that on March 9, 2022 at 1:00 p.m., Dr. Christopher Greeley from University of Texas, Baylor, will be providing a presentation entitled "The Impact of Disparity and Inequality on Child and Family Wellbeing".

Meeting adjourned – Next Meeting March 16, 2022.