



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

## **STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE**

Marygrace Billek, Chairperson  
Lisa Chapland, Vice Chairperson

**January 10, 2023  
10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.**

### **In Attendance:**

Marygrace Billek  
Tosca Blandford-Bynoe  
Lisa Chapland  
Mary Coogan  
Mary Hallahan  
Corinne LeBaron  
Amanda Melillo  
Robyn Veasey  
Nicole Holt

Mercer County DHS  
Office of the Attorney  
Kinship Resource Parent  
Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Foster and Adoptive Kinship Parent  
embrella  
19<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
Office of the Public Defender  
CASA of New Jersey

### **Guests:**

Katherine Stoehr  
Kate Bradley  
Nicole Brossoie

NJ Department of Children and Families  
NJ Department of Children and Families  
NJ Department of Children and Families

### **Staff**

Daniel Yale

NJ Department of Children and Families

*"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 is being recorded for the transcription of minutes. Please be sure to state your name prior to making comments, motions and seconding votes.*

### **Welcome and Introductions**

A brief welcome was provided by Marygrace Billek and the meeting was called to order. Each member and guest provided a brief introduction.



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### **Review November 15, 2022 Minutes**

A motion to approve the November 15, 2022 minutes was made by Robyn Veasey. Lisa Chapland seconded the motion. The Committee voted to approve the minutes with the following edit: On page 2, 8<sup>th</sup> sentence, the word “and” should be removed. Amy Fischer and Mary Coogan abstained from the vote.

### **Update on NJ A3707**

Marygrace informed members that since the passing of NJ A3707, the role of the SORS will change dramatically. Marygrace explained that the expanded role may entail an increased frequency of meetings, an increase in the quantity of work that is expected from members, and an increase in responsibilities. Due to these changes, it may result in members deciding that they can no longer commit the necessary time to the Committee. Marygrace asked members to contact her if they feel that they cannot continue to be a member.

The Committee discussed amendments that were proposed but did not make into the final legislation, specifically regarding seats on the Committee. Although the final legislation was passed and signed without those amendments and specific agencies were not included, the Committee may fill seats with individuals from specific agencies that fit the statutory requirement. The Committee also discussed the number of members that SORS will include.

### **Overview and Discussion - A3707 Legislation**

*Katherine L. Stoehr, DCF First Deputy Commissioner*

Katie Stoehr prepared slides to aid in the discussion, breaking down the legislation into specific topic areas.

The effect of the statute on the scope of SORS:

- Redefines the scope of SORS
- Establishes requirements for membership of SORS
- Enhanced reporting

Language in the new statute as it relates to scope:

- The charge of SORS will be analyzing and making recommendations around performance in (A through K in the statute) foundational elements in the context of the sustainability and exit plan that DCF was a party to in the federal lawsuit. These are elements that the federal court has been examining throughout the lawsuit
- Case Practice Model



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- State Centralized Screening
- Ensuring that most appropriate and least restrictive placements are used during out-of-home placements
- Is DCF providing comprehensive, culturally responsive services?
- Medical care
- Training
- Flex Funds
- Foster parent rates
- Permanency and adoption practices

Language regarding membership:

- At least 15 members including DCF Commissioner, DCPD Assistant Commissioner, and 13 public members (9 with defined seats)
- Length of service and terms
- Language about the chairperson and vice-chairperson
  - Prohibition against DCPD serving in either role

Language regarding annual reporting:

- Annually; due no later than the first day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month following the date of enactment (December 1<sup>st</sup>)
- DCF will allocate funding to the NJTF CAN to permit SORS to hire resources to issue the report

At the conclusion of the discussion, Katie stated that while there are many questions about how things will work, the Committee should discuss and answer those questions amongst themselves. Katie informed members that she was happy to provide information to assist, but this is an opportunity for the members to determine how the SORS will work. DCF will strive to have a streamlined relationship with this Committee so that they can provide the information that the Committee needs in a digestible way. DCF staff will be available to go in-depth about what child welfare indicators mean and how to know if issues arise.

The Committee discussed the types of data that they would be reviewing and how they would decide what metrics they would initially want to review. Marygrace shared that the Committee will need to determine what data they will examine on a quarterly basis and also what data they will need to look at



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more frequently. Katie shared the Rutgers Data Hub and the Commissioner's Monthly Report and discussed the types of data that are publicly available.

The Committee discussed reviewing the federal monitor's prior reports and inviting Judy Meltzer from the Center for the Social Study of Policy (CSSP) to discuss how she and her staff reviewed data. Regarding benchmarks and indicators, Katie explained that there are national experts who weigh in on indicators, how it makes sense to measure phenomena, and what data should be examined. If the Committee is interested, DCF will work with members to invite an expert to speak about indicators. There are a lot of resources available nationally that discuss sensible ways of measuring things. The Committee also discussed specifics around preparing the annual report. Katie spoke about bringing in an external individual to prepare the report. Depending on who the Committee would like to utilize, there are national organizations that are very conversant in child welfare data. Those organizations will be able to provide advice to the Committee on how to construct a report that will be digestible.

### **Membership Workgroup**

Marygrace spoke about the need to create a membership workgroup to assist in fulfilling and considering at least 15 roles. The statute only defined 11 of the roles, with 4 being open for discussion. There are very specific guidelines around term limits in the statute, so membership should be reviewed regularly. The Committee also discussed developing a criteria for review of applications to be a member of the SORS, so that application reviews are fair and inclusive. Applications should be reviewed for specific skill sets (decided upon by the Committee) and diversity. The Committee discussed providing stipends to members with lived experience once they have been added to the membership.

Marygrace asked for volunteers for the membership workgroup. Mary Hallahan, Lisa Chapland, Amy Fischer, Mary Coogan, and Robyn Veasey volunteered. Nicole stated that Angie Waters may also like to be a part of this workgroup.

The Committee discussed that many of the existing members fulfill many of the roles required by the legislation. As such, the Committee agreed that this meeting fulfilled the legislative requirement to appoint members and hold an initial organizational meeting within 45 days of the effective date of the statute. The Membership Workgroup will meet in the next few days to discuss term limits of members and to discuss open seats.

### **Data Workgroup**

Katie offered for DCF staff to provide a "side by side" for each of the items required by the legislation and what data DCF already produces that relates to each item. This will allow the Committee to determine if there is a large amount of work to be done or if it is more a matter of organizing what is already available. This will also allow the Committee to determine if there are already federal measures



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that are related to items. This may provide a starting point to determine what needs to be done and how often data needs to be evaluated. Regarding meeting frequency, it was suggested that the Committee wait to change the meeting schedule until the data discussion is held as it may not be necessary to change the schedule of meetings. The Committee also discussed having only the Data Workgroup meeting on a monthly basis with the larger group meeting quarterly or bimonthly.

Marygrace asked for volunteers for the Data Workgroup. Mary Hallahan, Angie Waters, Linda Porcaro, and Marygrace were added to the Data Workgroup.

The Committee decided to schedule an additional meeting outside of the posted schedule to continue to organize the membership and determine how they will move forward. The next meeting will be held on February 7, 2023. Marygrace again informed members that if they feel that they are no longer able to commit the time to this Committee or if they no longer want to participate due to the change in scope and focus of the SORS, they can email Marygrace, Mary Coogan, or Dan.

### **Announcements**

Meeting Adjourned – Next meeting February 7, 2023.