



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

STAFFING AND OVERSIGHT REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Marygrace Billek, Chairperson
Lisa Chapland, Vice Chairperson

March 14, 2023
10:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

In Attendance:

Marygrace Billek
Tosca Blandford-Bynoe
Lisa Chapland
Amy Fischer
Mary Hallahan
Laura Jamet
Amanda Melillo
Katie Stoehr
Angie Waters

Mercer County DHS
Office of the Attorney General
Kinship Resource Parent
Superior Court of New Jersey – Monmouth Vicinage
Foster and Adoptive Kinship Parent
NJ Department of Children and Families
19th Legislative District
NJ Department of Children and Families
CASA of New Jersey

Guests:

Robyn Acceturo
Devin Baker
Leon Carelli
Elissa Gelber
Scout Hartley
Ali Jawetz
Judith Meltzer
Kareem Lovelace-Krump
Martha Raimon
Garnet Roberts-Batson

Former Foster Parent
NJ Department of Children and Families
Foster Parent
Center for the Study of Social Policy
ICF Incorporated
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Center for the Study of Social Policy
NJ Department of Children and Families
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Fatherhood Engagement Committee

Staff

Angela Phillips
Daniel Yale

NJ Department of Children and Families
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."



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**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.

Review February 7, 2023 Minutes

A motion to approve the February 7, 2023 minutes was made by Mary Hallahan. Angie Waters seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without edit.

Federal Monitor Introduction and Overview

Judith Meltzer provided a brief overview of the work that the the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) has done with New Jersey including being responsible to the federal court and issuing public reports twice per year. In these reports, the CSSP analyzed data produced by DCF, conducted independent data collection, performed qualitative reviews, and provided information about how DCF had been progressing with respect to the commitments contained within the federal court order.

Judith explained that approximately one year ago, New Jersey's child welfare system had improved to the extent that it met the vast majority of the benchmarks and outcomes that were agreed to in the court order. DCF was in a very different place than when the lawsuit began and it did not appear that DCF would need external federal court oversight for much longer. At that point, CSSP engaged in a process with DCF and the plaintiffs in the lawsuit to develop an exit plan. Although there have been several iterations of this plan, they are currently in the final stage. One of the agreements of the exit plan was the creation of SORS as the entity that will be responsible for continuing external assessment of DCF's performance and producing an annual public report for members of the public, the Governor, and the Legislature. As an effort at sustainability and as part of the agreement, legislation was created that put into law several of the foundational elements of the decree that are now legally binding on the State. The functioning of the SORS Committee is the other important effort of sustainability of the work the has been done for so many years.

In thinking about the work of the SORS Committee, there were several important things to consider. The first was language about expanding the membership of SORS to include additional external community partners. The second is that the SORS Committee was to determine the measures and metrics that it would use in its annual report. The aim was that SORS would not automatically continue what was being measured by the CSSP. This was meant to provide flexibility to modify those measures, to think about outcomes in a different way, and to think about what is important to SORS to continue measuring and reporting on. As those outcomes and metrics are developed, the court order requires that



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CSSP be engaged in consultation with the SORS. The last thing to consider was that SORS receives the resources that are needed to fulfill their obligation - including a partner that has the skill to assist in the evaluation of data and provide input for the annual report. Judith explained that the federal court will not be completely removed from oversight until SORS produces their first report.

Q & A for Federal Monitor & Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) Staff

Following the introduction and overview by Judith Meltzer, SORS members and members of the public were provided an opportunity to ask questions. Judith and the Committee discussed the importance of external partners as members to maintain the balance between partnership with DCF and the independence of the Committee.

Data Committee Report

Marygrace explained that the Data Committee met and discussed the Scope of Work to bring in an organization to assist with the report. During this meeting, the committee discussed the eligibility criteria and the Scope of Work. Drafts of these documents were sent to members for review prior to this meeting. Marygrace stressed that the organization that is chosen must be able to begin work immediately and has the capacity, knowledge, and experience with child welfare data. Marygrace asked members to contact her if they are aware of any organizations that may be able to provide these services. Members discussed the timeline for release to potential bidders. Once these documents are released and proposals are received, a review committee will be created to evaluate the proposals and choose an organization.

Membership Update

Marygrace provided an update of the status of the required members of the Committee. There is one required seat that is still available and the Committee will need to recruit for the role. There are several applications that have been received for required seats that will be forwarded to the Task Force for review and possible approval. The Committee also discussed the possibility of having two fathers with lived experience on the Committee so that in the event that one father cannot make a meeting, the other will participate and provide meeting information.

Marygrace requested that potential members of the SORS remain in the meeting once the official meeting ends to discuss availability for future meetings.

Annual Report Planning

The planning of the annual report will be discussed in more detail once an organization has been selected to assist with the process.



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Announcements

Judith Meltzer informed members that the Federal Court has scheduled a Fairness Hearing – a legal step required to vacate the court order – on April 25, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. Judith will provide further information to Marygrace when available.

Meeting Adjourned – Next meeting May 9, 2023.