



NEW JERSEY TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

7TH ANNUAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 2016 - JUNE 2017



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

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INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect (NJTFCAN) is a statutorily established, multidisciplinary citizen review panel to New Jersey's child welfare system. The NJTFCAN also serves as New Jersey's Children's Justice Act (CJA) designated entity that entitles it to receive and administer CJA funds.

The purpose of the NJTFCAN, in accordance with the statute, is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services provided or supported by State government. This includes a review of the practices and policies used by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P), and the Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in order to:

- Optimize coordination of child abuse related services and investigations;
- Promote the safety of children at risk of abuse or neglect;
- Ensure a timely determination with regard to reports of alleged child abuse;
- Educate the public about the problems of, and coordinate activities relating to, child abuse and neglect;
- Develop a statewide plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and mechanisms to facilitate child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in coordination with the FCP;
- Mobilize citizens and community agencies in a proactive effort to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect;
- Foster cooperative working relationships between state and local agencies responsible for providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect and their families; and
- Serve as one of DCF's federally mandated Citizen Review Panels.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

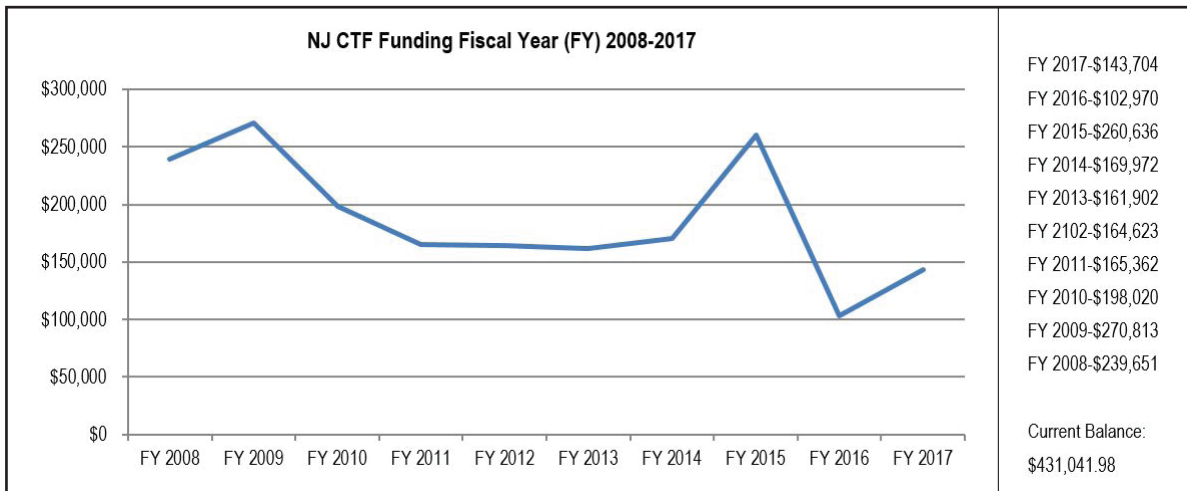
The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides CJA grants that are used to develop programs to reform state systems and improve New Jersey's response to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect fatalities.

CJA funds are also used to establish and support programs to improve New Jersey's child protection system in a manner that limits additional trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect. In accordance with the NJTFCAN's Three-Year Assessment, model programs and innovative approaches were implemented to improve the identification, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect, as well as enhance the effectiveness of the judicial process.

New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund

The New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund (NJ CTF) is a private/public partnership created by law in 1985 to fund child abuse and neglect prevention programs in New Jersey communities. NJ CTF receives funds primarily from donations made by residents via a check box on New Jersey income tax forms. Private donors also make contributions. Any portion of the money actually appropriated which are remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall lapse to the Children’s Trust Fund. These reappropriated funds, along with the actual collections for the fiscal year, comprise the funding that supports the contracts being funded with the NJ CTF collections.

The NJ CTF supports local child abuse and neglect prevention programs that implement evidence-based and evidence-informed programs. Below are NJ CTF’s collections from 2008 - 2017:



NJTFCAN established that the programs and initiatives funded by the fiscal year 2016 - 2017 NJ CTF funding cycle:

- Supported the strategic goals and objectives of the Statewide Prevention Plan, “Supporting Strong Families and Communities: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2014 - 2017”
- Reflected the Standards of Prevention: Strengthening Families through Family Support.

In fiscal year 2016 - 2017, NJ CTF supported the following two projects:

- New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund Marketing Campaign - In April 2016, the Communications Committee of the NJTFCAN began the development of a marketing campaign to promote the NJ CTF. A proposal for a three-year CTF marketing campaign was developed and approved by the NJTFCAN in September 2016. The Communications Committee continues to implement aspects of the CTF marketing campaign in FY 2017 and FY 2018. The CTF marketing campaign aims to increase involvement in NJ CTF from the public and private sectors, to revise New Jersey’s strategy for increasing donations to NJ CTF, and to promote primary prevention awareness throughout the state.

- New Jersey Children's Trust Fund Marketing Campaign - In April 2016, the Communications Committee of the NJTFCAN began the development of a marketing campaign to promote the NJ CTF. A proposal for a three-year CTF marketing campaign was developed and approved by the NJTFCAN in September 2016. The Communications Committee continues to implement aspects of the CTF marketing campaign in FY 2017 and FY 2018. The CTF marketing campaign aims to increase involvement in NJ CTF from the public and private sectors, to revise New Jersey's strategy for increasing donations to NJ CTF, and to promote primary prevention awareness throughout the state.

Improving Outcomes for Families of Infants and Young Children (Early Childhood Outcomes - ECO)

NJ CTF provided funding for a full-time Early Childhood Liaison (ECL) to ensure that families are effectively linked to needed early childhood and family support services.

The ECO initiative is intended to develop early linkages for families, and implement strategies that increase protective factors and decrease risk factors for young children and their families. The ECL serves in a core role to ensure the success of this project. The ECL is based in Newark and is easily accessible to all three of the local offices in Newark. Overall, the ECL has become recognized as a valuable member of the team in Newark providing early childhood consultation and hands-on support. As of July 1, 2016, the ECL is now accessible to all six DCF local offices in Essex County.

This project was assessed as having a strong start for the inaugural year of this ECO collaboration between DCF's FCP and CP&P divisions. Additionally, this project has helped to identify other important family needs, such as quality child care and stronger links to ongoing supports, such as Parents Anonymous and Family Success Centers. Housing, employment (labor), and other social services have been identified as additional barriers. DCF leaders continue to work to explore local and state level relationships to find longer-term solutions for addressing these serious issues for families and workers.

Standards for Prevention Training with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Since September 1, 2015, NJ CTF has funded Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey's Institute for Families (IFF) to offer a face-to-face training to professionals and families throughout the State for the Standards for Prevention. This training was developed to build on the webinars established by PCANJ for the Standards for Prevention in early 2015. IFF began developing the Standards for Prevention curriculum by encouraging programs within DCF's Division on Family and Community Partnerships (FCP) such as Home Visiting, School Based Youth Services, Family Success Centers, Kinship Navigator Programs, and County Councils for Young Children to complete the Standards for Prevention's self-assessment. The self-assessment provides insight to how community-based programs are currently integrating the Standards for Prevention into their daily practices. The 274 self-assessment responses, received from November 2015 through May 2016 informed the content of the training curriculum, which was tailored to meet the needs of each program type. In addition to the curriculum content, a Parent Handbook was developed by IFF and Partnering for Prevention, LLC to meet the deliverable of parent participation and a Participant Guide for the training.

In addition to the face-to-face training and parent workshops, IFF will conduct four webinars for the Standards for Prevention. Through the completion of the Standards for Prevention self-assessment, programs identified areas of improvement. These four webinars will be developed and presented by various trainers and professionals to offer a variety of perspectives and resources. Webinar topics include parent specific webinars in English and Spanish, Continuous Quality Improvement in agencies as it relates to the Standards for Prevention, and Engaging Parent Leaders in your Organization. Webinars will be recorded and made available for continued viewing.

In the upcoming year, criteria for funded programs within DCF's FCP will require programs to provide proof that activities and services align with the Standards for Prevention in addition to aligning services with New Jersey's Statewide Prevention Plan, and DCF's Strategic Plan. As the Standards for Prevention continues to roll out, it will be reinforced through contract monitoring, technical assistance, and continuous quality improvement activities. Additional training opportunities for grantees will be offered as requested in FY 2017.

NJTFCAN PROCEEDINGS

Bimonthly meetings provide NJTFCAN with the opportunity to discuss and assess items associated with its statutorily mandated work. Three committees support NJTFCAN's work: Protection, Prevention and Communication. One subcommittee, Staffing Oversight and Review Subcommittee (SORS), and meets bimonthly and reports the results of its activities to NJTFCAN. There are approximately 80 individuals that contribute to this important work. To view a copy of meeting minutes, visit <http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/boards/njtfcan/>.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Each year, NJTFCAN sponsors multidisciplinary training programs to improve the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. All NJTFCAN-sponsored professional training programs are child-focused and designed to promote skills that prevent additional trauma to children and their families.

CJA funds were used to support the following professional development projects to enhance the knowledge of persons involved in the investigation, prosecution, assessment, and treatment of child abuse and neglect:

- I Finding Words – New Jersey: Forensic Interviewing & Preparing Children for Court*** – This project trains frontline professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse to conduct effective and legally defensible interviews of alleged child sexual abuse victims of various ages and to prepare children for court. The child-focused forensic interviewing project continues to reform the investigation and prosecution process and improve civil and criminal court proceedings.

II Conferences

- **Implementing Evidence Supported Services for Children and Families**

NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, and with the logistical assistance of Rutgers University, Office of Continuing Professional Education, hosted a statewide conference for up to 600 professionals in the field of child welfare on Friday, September 8, 2017 at the centrally located Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village in Princeton, NJ entitled, "Implementing Evidence



Supported Services for Children and Families."

This interdisciplinary conference provides professionals and advocates working with children and families an opportunity to learn from experts in child welfare/protection issues and disciplines serving children and families. The speakers for this event include national and local experts in evidence supported practice and implementation: Allison Metz, Ph.D., Kimberly DuMont, and Esther Deblinger, Ph.D.

- **Digital Realm of Child Abuse**

NJTFCAN, in collaboration with DCF, hosted a statewide multidisciplinary skill building conference on Friday, September 9, 2016 for approximately 350 child protection professionals. This day-long skill building event examined what constitutes sexually exploitative child abuse materials, the trauma inflicted to the victims and their families, and the role of law enforcement and the child welfare system in responding to this abuse. Sextortion, sexting, cyber bullying and revenge pornography was also a part of the discussion.

III Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Training – CJA funds are also provided to the MDT Coordinators' Association for training to improve case management of the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases referred to the prosecutor's office. The 2016 - 2017 MDT training event was as follows:

- **Child Abuse: Identifying it, Photographing it, and Helping the Family with the Aftermaths** - More than 110 professionals attended this day-long skill building event that provided information regarding child victims of physical abuse, including key identifying factors of abuse in comparison to accidental injuries. This event also offered suggestions for photographing possible incident locations and advice on working with non-offending caregivers. Featured speakers included Lori Frasier, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Chief of the Division of Child Abuse Pediatrics at Penn State Hershey School of Medicine in Pennsylvania and Esther Deblinger, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry at Rowan Medicine and Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Child Abuse Research Education and Service (CARES) Institute.

WORK OF THE NJTFCAN COMMITTEES

Prevention Committee

The Prevention Committee, with expertise in and a commitment to family support and the prevention of all forms of child maltreatment, coordinates the efforts of stakeholders. It is the Prevention Committee's responsibility to ensure the development and implementation of a meaningful and effective Statewide Prevention Plan. The Committee held six in-person meetings between June 2016 and July 2017. The following work of the Prevention Committee and its workgroups include:

Prevention Plan Development

The Prevention Committee is currently developing and facilitating a planning process to align stakeholders across the state of New Jersey around a Statewide Prevention Plan for 2018 - 2021. The Statewide Prevention Plan will build on work outlined in the Statewide Prevention Plan for 2014 – 2017 with goal of producing an actionable plan that addresses the current opportunities and challenges within New Jersey inclusive of processes and tools for successful implementation.

Prevention Standards Workgroup

As previously mentioned, in 2015 the DCF's Family and Community Partnerships (FCP) engaged Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey to create two webinars on the New Jersey Standards for Prevention Programs. The Prevention Standards Workgroup continues to monitor and advise regarding training for the Standards for Prevention: Building Success through Family Support. Subsequently, NJ CTF dollars paid for Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey's Institute for Families (IFF) to provide face-to-face training to professionals and families.

The Prevention Committee discussed making the Prevention Standards Training available for related programs in other departments. This would encourage programs that support and strengthen families to incorporate the principles of prevention and use the Standards for Prevention to assess their strengths and weaknesses and make improvements. The Committee is particularly pleased with the development of a Self-Assessment Tool for Programs and a Curriculum Handbook for Parents. The Committee commends DCF's FCP for contract monitoring, technical assistance and continuous quality improvement activities to ensure optimal use of the Standards for Prevention for programs with which it contracts.

Prevention Plan Workgroup

Prevention Plan Workgroup members interviewed representatives of the divisions of other state agencies, including the New Jersey Departments of Health, Children and Families, Human Services, Education, and Labor and Workforce Development. Interviewers provided interviewees with information about the Prevention Plan before the interview and used a consistent set of questions to solicit information about how they could help implement the Prevention Plan and use the Standards for Prevention. The responses identified the following:

- Potential opportunity for the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families to discuss with fellow commissioners the importance of the Plan, its components and the value of integrating prevention approaches and activities within other agencies' work;
- Need to provide access to training for the staff and grantees/contractors of other agencies on the Prevention Plan and Standards for Prevention to ensure the staff and grantees of other agencies and other divisions within DCF are familiar with the Plan and Standards;
- Sharing the Prevention Plan and Standards for Prevention through targeted training and technical assistance with agencies/divisions/organizations/programs where child abuse and neglect prevention and family support is a secondary mission; and
- Developing resources about the Prevention Plan and Standards for Prevention and distributing these resources among state agency staff and programs. This would increase the likelihood that state agencies would share this information with their grantees/contractors and that their grantees/contractors would share it with families and communities.

Curriculum Guide Workgroup

The Curriculum Guide Workgroup was convened in 2016 and charged with creating a curriculum guide for Higher Education on preventing child abuse and neglect. This guide, although still a work in progress, is intended to promote the primary and secondary prevention across academic disciplines at the university level. These disciplines will include, but not be limited to, social work, child welfare, child development, education, sociology, divinity, law enforcement, nursing, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, law and public policy. This curriculum guide will contain a list of recommended articles, suggested concept topics and an annotated bibliography on preventing child maltreatment. Topics for inclusion have been selected.

Improving Outcomes for Families with Infants and Young Children

The Prevention Committee recommended approving NJ CTF funds for this pilot project in Essex County. NJTFCAN subsequently approved the allocation. ECL regularly attends Prevention Committee meetings to provide updates on this program's progress. Detailed information is in NJ CTF section of this report.

New Jersey Children's Trust Fund Campaign Workgroup

The Prevention Committee and the Communication Committee partnered in 2016 – 2017 on developing a marketing and public relations campaign to increase financial support for the NJ CTF income tax return check off. In addition, this partnership is working to brainstorm additional ways to promote private funding to NJ CTF.

Protection Committee

The Protection Committee is comprised of members of NJTFCAN and allied members in the child maltreatment field. The members analyze state laws, policy, and case practice, within and outside New Jersey. The goal of the committee is to coordinate the efforts of stakeholders as well as advance new methods to address child maltreatment.

During the course of the past year, the Committee focused on rebuilding its membership and gathering information so it can consider potential new projects. Areas of focus include the issue of exploitive child images and sexting, and racial disproportionality. The following represents the work of the Protection Committee and its workgroups:

Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup

The Digital Realm of Child Abuse Workgroup was created to discuss ways to address internet-based child sexual exploitation. The initial discussion was based on educating parents and children about the importance of internet safety. The workgroup determined that it was necessary to first understand what level of education is being provided by school systems to children. Currently, the workgroup is in the process of creating a survey to determine what schools across the state are teaching students about internet and cellular telephone safety. Once the survey is completed, it will be sent to the Department of Education for approval and then sent to the superintendent for each of the school districts. The survey results will inform the workgroup of where efforts to increase education are necessary.

Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup

The Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors Workgroup was created to discuss and improve the procedures for handling the adjudication process regarding juveniles with sexually based offenses. The workgroup has discussed the role of the Juvenile Justice Committee and how to get clinicians to work with this population of children; the unintended consequences of Megan's Law; partnering with survivors to develop a protocol; the assessment process regarding how juveniles are approved for diversionary programs and the lack of county resources and programs to deal with juveniles with minor offenses.

Striving to stay current and ensure integration of protection work across systems, the Protection Committee heard the following presentation:

- **Alternative Dispositions for Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors**
Dr. Martin Krupnick presented to the Protection Committee on allowing juveniles to undergo a diversionary program rather than being put through the juvenile justice system. A sexually based offense on a juvenile's record may hinder their ability to be successful. The traditional school of thought was that juveniles had to be removed from the community for safety, juvenile sex offenders become adult sex offenders, deviant patterns were fixed in youth and treatment is a waste of resources. Modern research believes that juveniles who engage in inappropriate behaviors are unlikely to continue the behavior into adulthood and that most youth can be treated safely in their community and treatment can be helpful in modification of offensive behaviors.

Communication Committee

The mission of the Communication Committee is to increase awareness among the public and professionals, and promote social change related to child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention. It is also to promote awareness of the NJTF-CAN's activities and issues.

During the 2016 - 2017, the Committee continued to develop the following initiatives:

- The Committee's membership increased by seventy-five percent, including new members that possess child welfare expertise or skills and experience in marketing, public relations, social media, or fields that may aid in the furthering of the mission of the Communication Committee;
- Promoted visibility of NJTFCAN initiatives through NJTFCAN logo branding on its reports and conferences;
- Collaborated with designated Prevention Committee members to create a NJ CTF Campaign Workgroup and draft a three phase NJ CTF Marketing Proposal. The proposal was presented to the NJTFCAN in the Spring of 2017;
- Succeeded in completing the first phase NJ CTF Marketing Proposal which included the design of a logo to represent the NJ CTF;
- Partnered with DCF to develop a procedure to post NJTFCAN's activities, trainings, and other statewide child-welfare events; and
- Partnered with DCF to update the NJTFCAN website to include an option to donate to the CTF using credit cards.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

The charge of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) is outlined in the NJTFCAN statute and includes the following:

- Reviewing staffing levels of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P)
- Developing recommendations regarding staffing levels;
- Developing recommendations around the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff within the division;
- Reviewing the Division's performance in the achievement of management and client outcomes; and
- Reporting annually the Subcommittee's findings to the Governor and the Legislature.

SORS attended to this charge by the following actions in 2016 – 17. The committee received comprehensive presentations and/or updates from DCF executive staff around the scope, work and strategic priorities from the following:

- Training and Professional Development: DCF Director for Office of Training and Professional Development

- Child Welfare Training Partnership: Institute for Families School of Social Work Rutgers University Director of Child Welfare Workforce Advancement

Priorities of the SORS

- Analysis of staff survey results
- Update from DCF's Office of Professional Training and Development
- Outcomes of training
- Feedback to staff and supervisors on training
- Cultural competence
- Presentation on DCF's safety initiatives

NJTFCAN TASK FORCE COMMITTEES/SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Prevention Committee

Acting Chair

Natasha Johnson, MSW
Director
New Jersey Department
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Division of Family Development

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Family Life Education Center (FLEC)
Supervising Psychologist
Metro Regional Diagnostic
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Office of Child Welfare Initiatives

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Robins Nest, Inc.

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Charmaine Thomas, MSW
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Children and Families
Family and Community
Partnerships/Division on Women

Prevention Committee continued

Wendi White
Program Specialist
Department of Corrections

*Resigned
**Former Member

Christian Arnold, Esq.*
Assistant Attorney General
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Note: All members listed, status of membership, job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2016.

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Director
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Maura Somers Dughi, Esq.*
Child and Family Advocacy

Protection Committee

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Division of Family Health
Public Health Services Branch
New Jersey Department of Health

Honorable E. Marie Hayes
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Cape May County

Seetha Holmes, DPD
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Social Work Researcher & Clinician
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Martin Krupnick, Psy.D.
President and CEO
IEP Youth Services, Inc.

Communication Committee

Chair

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Office of Public Defender

Jason Dickinson, PhD
Director
McCormick Center for Child Advocacy
& Policy
Montclair State University

Ernest Landante, Jr.
Director
Office of Communications and Public
Affairs
Department of Children and Families

Vice-Chair

Cheryl Mojta
Director of Operations
NJ Child Assault Prevention

Cory Cassar, Esq.
Office of Public Defender

Matthew Schwartz
Youth Representative

Suzanne Conrad, MA, RN, LPC
Consultant

Diane Dellanno
Policy Analyst
Advocates for Children of New Jersey

*Resigned

Note: All members listed, status of membership, Job titles, and organization affiliations are as of June 30, 2017.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

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Human Services Director
Mercer County Department of
Human Services

*Mary Jane Awrachow
Chief Executive Director
Foster and Adoptive Family Services

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New Jersey
Mary Hallahan, M.Ed. L.
Foster Parent

Corinne LeBaron
Chief Executive Officer
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Lori V. Morris, PhD
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Vice – Chair

Mary Coogan, Esq.
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Supervising Social Worker
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