

# Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair  
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

**February 3, 2023**  
**1:30 p.m. – 3:30 P.M.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

## Minutes

### **In Attendance:**

Christine Beyer  
Jillian Carpenter  
Mary Coogan  
Jacquelynn Duron  
John Esmerado  
Gladibel Medina  
Nydia Monagas  
Debbie Riveros  
Maria Savattiere  
Javier Toro

NJ Department of Children and Families  
Office of the Attorney General  
Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Rutgers University School of Social Work  
Carella Byrne  
Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection Center  
New Jersey Children's Alliance (NJCA)  
Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office  
Deirdre's House  
Hudson County Prosecutor's Office

### **Guests:**

Peter Boser  
Joseph Pargola

New Jersey Children's Alliance  
NJ Department of Children and Families

### **Staff:**

Daniel Yale

NJ Department of Children and Families

### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order and the Open Public Meetings notice was read.

### **II. Approval of Minutes**

The Board reviewed the minutes from the October 7, 2022 meeting. Mary Coogan made a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Medina seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes without edit.

### **III. New Business**

#### **Annual Progress Reviews**

Nydia informed the Board that NJCA changed how the information in the Annual Progress Reviews is shared so that the members can compare year to year in terms of data and progress towards goal that were set.

#### **Somerset County**

Maria stated that Somerset County appeared to have doubled the number of cases that were reviewed. Nydia shared that improvements to their facility and hiring a CAC coordinator has contributed to the improvement. Maria questioned why there were less forensic interviews conducted although they have a higher number of total cases reviewed. Pete explained that this was because they have broadened their

# **Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board**

Nydia Monagas, Chair  
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

definition of a response and/or case review – no longer just counting cases if there was a response from the Prosecutor’s Office. Maria also spoke about the increase in cases involving problematic sexualized behavior. Nydia stated that this is likely due to increase in awareness and willingness by the counties to accept these cases. The Board also discussed Somerset’s plan to include children of domestic violence situations in their reviews to ensure that any issues are addressed appropriately. Members spoke about several other counties that include child witnesses to domestic violence in their MDT reviews. Maria made a motion to approve Somerset County. John seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Somerset County to be eligible for funding.

## **Salem County**

Mary stated that Salem County made huge improvements compared with last year. Pete explained that they opened and implemented their CAC. Pete felt that there is a better team response because their facility offers a place to focus on forensic interviews. Nydia informed members that NJCA had not yet received the medical report from the RDTC.

Dr. Medina made a motion to approve Salem County. Debbie seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Salem County to be eligible for funding.

## **Updates**

### **Discuss draft presentation for law enforcement about importance of data**

During the previous meeting, members discussed recommendations made in the data report. This included the need for common definitions for certain data points and for the collection of data in a uniformed, systematic way. Javier suggested preparing a presentation for key law enforcement officials who are able to issue directives on how data is collected. Nydia informed the Board that Pete and Javier have developed the content for the presentation and asked for feedback and/or questions from members. Javier spoke about the importance of the supervising Assistant Prosecutors and/or investigative staff that oversee the CACs attending the training so that they can influence others to comply with data collection. The Board also spoke about Infoshare software and the possibility of gaining outputs on CAC data. Nydia explained that the next step is to format the presentation and to determine how to begin scheduling the presentation for those that will be able to make the best use of the information.

### **Discuss recommendations for allocating CAC funds for next year**

Nydia spoke about ways in which funding was allocated in previous years and changes that were made this past year. Board members discussed several issues with the current process and adjustments that can be made to further improve the process in the next funding cycle. Nydia also mentioned the possibility of changing how the funding is used in the next fiscal year. Concerns were raised regarding changes to the way in which funding is allocated disproportionately affecting non-profit CACs. Nydia discussed reaching out to the CACs for suggestions for the best way to allocate funding as they know what the barriers are and what they need. Commissioner Beyer also discussed the “Children’s Services Trust” that will be used for evaluations for children not involved with DCP, as well as using funding from the Children’s Trust Fund for training clinicians to provide treatment to youth with problematic sexual behaviors. The conversation about how the CAC funding will be allocated should include these additional funding sources as well to inform how the CAC funds should be used. Nydia invited members to discuss this topic in more detail at the next meeting.

### **Discuss recommendations for Board appointments**

# Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair  
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

Nydia informed the Board that there are currently 5 open seats on the Board due to retirements, individuals leaving their positions within an agency, or because a seat was never filled. Nydia asked Board members to send her an email with recommendations to fill any of the open seats.

## **NCA Standards Presentation**

*Tony DeVincenzo, Program Specialist, Northeast Regional CAC*

Tony explained that he worked in law enforcement for 16 years, mostly in child abuse investigation, worked for Morris County CAC as a program director/MDT coordinator, and is currently working for Northeast Regional CAC, a program of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The purpose of accreditation is to ensure quality assurance by allowing CACs to reflect on the work that is being done, that their work is being done following best practices, and to help with program improvement.

Some of the benefits of being an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance (NCA) are:

- Program development
- Ability to collaborate with CACs and MDTs across the nation
- Training
- Data collection and feedback from clients
- Federal & State legislative advocacy
- Grant funding

Tony provided a brief description of the application process for a CAC to become accredited and then explained several of the standards for accreditation that CACs must adhere to if they want to be accredited.

- Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Standard Must identify an individual to be a coordinator of the team
- Coordinator must have foundational training in team coordination/facilitation
- Must have an annual signed interagency agreement
- Must have written policies/procedures/protocols – updated annually and signed every 3 years
- Ensure information sharing is part of the policy
- CAC is making training available to team members
- Mandatory that every CAC develop an orientation program for new MDT members
- Forensic Interview Standard – Ensure that the forensic interview process is coordinated to avoid multiple interviews
  - Specially trained interviewers with continued ongoing training
  - CACs must address in their protocols the criteria for a child to undergo a forensic interview
  - Protocols must address virtual interviews
  - All MDT partners should have access/be able to observe forensic interviews in real time
  - 75% of cases received by a county that meet the county's criteria to be eligible for a forensic interview, must be seen for a forensic interview
- Medical Evaluation Standard
  - Every case that is deemed abnormal or diagnostic must be reviewed by an advanced medical consultant
  - All MDTs must be trained on the purpose and nature of medical evaluations
  - CAC/MDT written protocols and guidelines include the circumstances under which a medical evaluation for child sexual abuse is recommended, provided, and accessed
- Mental Health Standard

# **Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board**

Nydia Monagas, Chair  
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

- Every child that is seen at a CAC should have access to evidence-based, trauma-focused mental health treatment

The Board discussed how to increase the number of medical evaluations that are conducted and how to obtain an objective number/percentage to determine at what point the practice of a CAC needs to be examined.

## **IV. Announcements**

No announcements at this time.

## **V. Adjourn**

Next meeting Friday, June 2, 2023.