

Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

April 21, 2023
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

In Attendance:

Christine Beyer
John Esmerado
Gladibel Medina
Nydia Monagas
Debbie Riveros
Maria Savattiere
Javier Toro

NJ Department of Children and Families
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 February 2, 2023 meeting. Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve the minutes. John Esmerado seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes without edit.

III. New Business

Update on Data Report

Nydia informed members that a PowerPoint presentation has been developed by Javier and Pete and a date to hold the presentation is being discussed. Once a date is agreed upon, Javier will reach out to the Prosecutor’s Association to assist in encouraging members of prosecutor’s offices across the state to attend the training.

Annual Progress Reviews

Nydia began the Annual Progress Reviews by reminding members that it is difficult to compare CACs to each other as there are discrepancies between how each CAC collects data, how they define different terms, etc. Nydia explained that it is because of these discrepancies that it is so important for each county to attend the training that is being planned so that all counties are collecting and reporting data consistently.

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Camden County

Maria stated that Camden County has made progress from the previous year. Pete explained that they recently assigned a victim witness advocate as their new CAC coordinator but is unsure if it is a permanent change. Maria spoke about Camden County's high number of medical referrals. Pete explained that they have an automatic process wherein DCP, the Prosecutor's Office, and CARES work together to ensure that all are involved.

Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve Camden County. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Camden County to be eligible for funding.

Cape May County

Nydia informed the Board that the prosecutor in Cape May County has been very supportive of their CAC. The Board discussed that Cape May's data may be on the lower side due to the smaller population in the county.

Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve Cape May County. Gladibel Medina seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Camden County to be eligible for funding.

Cumberland County

Maria asked why Cumberland County had a decrease in the number of children served in 2022. John explained that Cumberland County has a small population as well. Christine felt that the numbers don't accurately represent the amount of sexual abuse occurring in the county. Dr. Medina informed the Board that the RDT reports a higher number of children receiving services. The numbers aren't being captured by the CAC likely due to their mechanisms of tracking cases. Nydia explained that they are only tracking cases where there are criminal charges which may result in children not receiving necessary services. Debbie explained that the MDT coordinators have had a conversation in the past few weeks to rethink what is being included on an MDT agenda. They are aware that there are counties that include cases that are not being charged. They are currently trying to determine what will work best for their counties and their policies. They are reviewing, as a state, the procedures of each county and trying to implement changes consistently across the state. Nydia felt that the data presentation/training will address why the data is important, how the data is tied to funding, and what the expectations are of the CACs.

The Board discussed ways to educate counties on the definition of a case and data collection. The Board also discussed informing counties of the statutory definition of a case and unless they provide the correct information and services, they may be ineligible for funding. John volunteered to prepare a warning letter from the Board to send to counties in which there is an issue. Nydia also discussed this board to enforce the actual collection of data as well as if the board doesn't have the data, the funding formula cannot be determined and the RFA will be delayed. If counties do not submit data by a certain date, they will only be eligible for the base funding, not the additional funding determined through the formula. The Board discussed developing a webinar that counties must attend to be eligible for funding. This webinar would include education on the collection of data, appropriate uses of funding, etc.

Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve Cumberland County with a proviso that John sends a warning letter regarding referral numbers. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Cumberland County to be eligible for funding.

Essex County

Maria asked about the large increase in the number of cases reviewed by their MDT. Pete explained that Essex County is considering their intake review as being an MDT review. The number of cases that are actually reviewed by their MDT teams is more similar to the previous year - but those numbers were not

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submitted. The Board discussed that these numbers are not accurate as they are counting cases that are not actual MDT responses. Pete agreed to request the number of actual cases that were reviewed by the MDT from Essex County.

John Esmerado made a motion to adjourn voting on Essex County until the Board receives additional data. Gladibel Medina seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve adjourning the vote until further data is received.

Gloucester County

Maria asked about the decrease in numbers for Gloucester County. Pete explained that Gloucester County previously reported any cases that were reported to them, rather than reporting cases for which there was an MDT response. Pete also explained that there were staffing issues that caused data inconsistencies. The Board discussed other possible issues with the way in which Gloucester is reporting data related to the number of children served.

John Esmerado made a motion to approve Gloucester County. Maria Savattiere seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Gloucester County to be eligible for funding.

Hudson County

Maria asked about the number of child-on-child sexual abuse cases that were reported. Pete explained that there were staffing issues causing issues with the way data is collected and reported. Javier explained that many of the numbers reported are not accurate.

John Esmerado made a motion to adjourn voting on Hudson County until the Board receives more accurate data. Maria Savattiere seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve adjourning the vote until more accurate data is received. Javier Toro abstained from the vote.

Hunterdon County

Maria asked about Hunterdon County's data regarding medical and mental health referrals. Pete explained that, similar to other counties, Hunterdon lacks follow-up to obtain information after the initial contact. Regarding the decrease in children served, the response from the CAC was that it may be a reporting issue. Dr. Medina felt that this was another case in which the vote should be adjourned to determine why they are not referring for medical and mental health services. Pete agreed to reach out to the CAC Coordinator to obtain further information. John also agreed to send a letter to Hunterdon County regarding their lack of medical referrals.

Debbie Riveros made a motion to adjourn voting on Hunterdon County until the Board receives more accurate data. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve adjourning the vote until more accurate data is received.

Middlesex County

Nydia asked if there were any questions or discussion regarding Middlesex County. Hearing none, Nydia asked for a motion to approve Middlesex County for future funding. John Esmerado made a motion to approve Middlesex County. Debbie Riveros seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Middlesex County to be eligible for funding.

Monmouth County

The Board discussed the large increase in children receiving mental health services. Debbie explained that there were more referrals at the CAC, referrals to additional agencies, and one agency hired additional clinicians.

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John Esmerado made a motion to approve Monmouth County. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Monmouth County to be eligible for funding. Debbie Riveros abstained from the vote.

Morris County

Nydia asked if there were any questions or discussion regarding Morris County. Hearing none, Nydia asked for a motion to approve Morris County for future funding. John Esmerado made a motion to approve. Gladibel Medina seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Morris County to be eligible for funding.

Ocean County

The Board discussed the criteria Ocean County uses to review cases. Pete explained that they have a robust, successful MDT that is more inclusive when making the decision on whether to review a case. Maria Savattiere made a motion to approve Ocean County. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Ocean County for future funding.

Updates

Use of Remaining FY23 Funding

The Board discussed the amount of FY23 funds remaining and how to best utilize the money prior to the end of the fiscal year. Due to time constraints, the Board decided to schedule an emergency meeting on a future date to determine how this funding will be utilized.

FY24 Funding Requirements and Allocations

The Board will schedule an emergency meeting to discuss.

IV. Announcements

No announcements at this time.

V. Adjourn

Next meeting Friday, June 2, 2023.