

Child Advocacy Center – Multidisciplinary Team Advisory Board

Nydia Monagas, Chair
John Esmerado, Vice-Chair

June 3, 2022
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

In Attendance:

Christie Bevacqua
Christine Beyer
Jillian Carpenter
Mary Coogan
Jacquelynn Duron
John Esmerado
Nydia Monagas
Debbie Riveros
Maria Savattiere
Javier Toro
Elahna Strom Weinflash

Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office
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, Cecchi, Brody, Agnello, P.C.
New Jersey Children's Alliance
Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
Deirdre's House
Hudson County Prosecutor's Office
Office of the Law Guardian

Guests:

Pete 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 April 1, 2022 meeting. John Esmerado made a motion to approve the minutes. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the minutes without edit.

III. New Business

Annual Progress Reviews

Camden County

Nydia asked for comments or discussion regarding Camden County. John Esmerado noted that Camden County had one of the highest outputs this Board has seen based on total cases received in both mental health and medical exams and is a very high functioning program. Hearing no further comments, Nydia asked for a motion to approve Camden County.

Christine Beyer made a motion to approve Camden County. Debbie Riveros seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Camden County to be eligible for FY23 funding.

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Ocean County

Nydia asked for comments or discussion regarding Ocean County. The Board discussed that the Ocean County CAC is located in a building separate from the prosecutor's office in a rented single-family home. The CAC has outgrown their space but there are limits to how much they can expand. If they want to expand their center, they will have to move into a new building.

Debbie Riveros made a motion to approve Ocean County. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Ocean County for FY23 funding.

Warren County

Nydia asked for comment or discussion regarding Warren County. Christine raised a question regarding whether Warren County does medical evaluations onsite due to accessibility issues. Maria stated that they do not do medical evaluations on site. Nydia stated that many CACs have the capacity, as they have medical suites, but none do evaluations onsite with the exception of Essex and Morris Counties. John explained that having a medical suite is the first step, but actually providing treatment is complicated due to the regulations around prescribing and keeping medicine at the site and cases in which transportation to emergency rooms is necessary.

Debbie Riveros made a motion to approve Warren County. Christine Beyer seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve Warren County for FY23 funding.

Presentation: Evaluation of New Jersey Child Maltreatment Data Collection Systems

Ted Cross, Cross Associates

Ted Cross explained that this project was designed to assess data sources on child abuse in New Jersey across stakeholder systems. The following is a highlight of the information presented.

Areas of focus during the project included:

- Comparability of data across systems
- Determine if different systems were counting child victims in different ways
- Determine whether some children were overcounted or overlooked
- Examined trends in data over time
- Development of recommendations for improving utility of data

For this project, nine different data sources were examined with different degrees of depth:

- DCF Division of Child Protection and Permanency
- Interviews of Directors of RDTCs
- Interviews of CAC Directors
- Data from NJCA and the NCA
- Discussions with representatives from the NJ State Police
- Prosecutor's Office data through Open Public Records Acts requests (20 out of 21 counties)
- Publicly offered data through the Administrative Office of the Courts
- NJ Department of Education
- NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault

The findings of this project were as follows:

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- Systems varied considerably in data availability
- Substantial variation in defining and reporting child abuse across systems
- Child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault are included in the same category
- Some cases are undercounted/overlooked
 - Youth with sexual behavior problems
 - Adolescent sexual assault victims
- Outcomes that are not currently being tracked but are recommended
 - Mental health services
 - Offender accountability
 - Suicidal behavior

Trends:

- Decrease in cases during COVID-19 (2020 – 2021)
- Decrease in substantiations after transition to 4 determination categories

Recommendations:

- Increasing availability and accessibility of data
- Standardizing methods when appropriate
- Reporting data by type of maltreatment – type of referral and type of disposition
- Linkages across systems to include undercounted and overlooked cases
- Separating child abuse data from adult data
- Tracking outcomes across systems
- Increased collaboration on data across systems

At the conclusion of the presentation, Board members briefly discussed ways, based on the recommendations, to begin improving data collection across systems.

Updates

Medical Evaluation Referral Workgroup

The co-chairs of this workgroup, Dr. Medina and Dr. Silliman Cohen, have been identified as subject matter experts on the child sexual abuse module for DCF and are working with the DCF Office of Training and Professional Development. The RDTCs as a group are working on consolidating their training to develop one training that is comprehensive and consistent across the state.

Child on Child Sexual Abuse Response Workgroup

Christine informed the Board that there have been several larger meetings of this workgroup as well as several smaller workgroup meetings to develop initial tools for a survey that would occur at MDT meetings in each county during the month of June. Each of the MDT Coordinators from the various counties will conduct the survey in alternate county MDT meetings. The survey is to collect information about who makes referrals for medical and psychological evaluations within each county, what are some of the barriers, payment structures, etc. They are trying to obtain information about how referrals are made and received in each of the counties to determine where there are gaps in the system, where we need to make improvements, what kinds of things we would want to add as we are building out this system structure. The workgroup has also created four subcommittees:

- The MDT survey workgroup

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- Caregiver survey workgroup – developing a survey to obtain information from caregivers who have been involved in cases of child-on-child sexual abuse to find out what their experience has been accessing services, what the DCPD experience has been like (if involved), and their experience with being referred to resources.
- Training and Treatment – looking at both what resources are available in NJ across the state and what are other states doing with respect to treatment and resources for this population.
- Funding subcommittee – looking at state and federal funding opportunities, foundations, public grants and looking at what is being done nationally to provide financial support for these services across the country.

IV. Announcements

No announcements at this time.

V. Adjourn

Next meeting Friday, August 5, 2022.