



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair
Mary Coogan, J.D., Acting Co-Chair

Minutes
September 23, 2022
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Christian Arnold
Jacqueline Augustine
Marygrace Billek
Gaspar Clacer
Mary Coogan
Cindy Cortez
Hon. Margaret M. Foti
Corinne LeBaron
Nydia Monagas
Sonia Moticha
Assw. Nancy Muñoz
Richard Stagliano
Jennifer Underwood
Lorene Wilkerson

Office of the Attorney General
NJ Administrative Office of the Courts
Mercer County Human Services
NJ Department of Health
Advocates for Children of New Jersey
15th Legislative District
Bergen County Vicinage
embrella
New Jersey Children’s Alliance
NJ Department of Education
21st Legislative District
Center for Family Services
Department of Community Affairs
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Guests:

Patty Mojta
Joseph Pargola
John Esmerado

Prevent Child Abuse NJ
NJ Department of Children and Families
Carella Byrne

Staff

Daniel Yale

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.”

Introduction and Welcome

A brief welcome was provided by Mary Coogan and the public notice information was provided. Mary asked that each member briefly introduce themselves.

NJTFCAN Business

Review and approve minutes from the March 25, 2022 meeting.

The minutes from the March 25, 2022 meeting were approved without edit.



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Rules for Open Public Meeting Participation

Mary reminded members that the Task Force discussed rules for public participants at the previous meeting. The rules included requiring those that would like to join meetings to register prior to the meeting and setting certain rules for virtual meetings. The Task Force discussed the benefits and drawbacks of having a specific set of rules in place. The Task Force decided to review the proposed rules again and vote at the next meeting.

Moving the Prevention Plan Forward

Mary reminded members that a discussion was held at the previous meeting regarding promoting the 2022-2025 NJ Statewide Prevention Plan. During that meeting, members agreed to think of ways to promote the prevention plan by posting it on their website, sharing with colleagues, etc. Marygrace informed the Task Force that she presented the PowerPoint at several community meetings and asked the Human Service Directors to do the same. The PowerPoint was also shared with attendees so that they would have access to it. Sonia shared the plan with other divisions within the Department of Education (DOE), especially within the Early Childhood Division so that they were aware of what is occurring statewide. Sonia also informed members that the DOE is currently migrating their website, but once that has occurred, a link to the Prevention Plan will be included. Jennifer shared it with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Communications Office who placed it on the DCA website as a spotlight and on all their social accounts for Prevention Month. Mary explained that Wendi White will be providing a short presentation at an upcoming meeting as she does a lot of work with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and family engagement. Mary opened the same opportunity to all members to discuss the work they do that might be in line with the Prevention Plan.

Update on Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Response Workgroup

The workgroup, composed of various stakeholders, convened in February to discuss how to create a systemic response that is coordinated, comprehensive, and ensures that all children gain access to evidence-based trauma-informed services. To inform this process, the workgroup has been collecting data, including conducting a survey of the MDTs and CACs in New Jersey to assess their response to child-on-child cases, what barriers exist to working with these children and families, and barriers to accessing services. Another survey was conducted targeting caregivers who have been affected by child-on-child sexual abuse or sexual activity. The survey is asking caregivers to share their experience accessing services and any barriers they faced. There is a subcommittee that is focusing on local and national funding as well as a subcommittee that is looking at where there is expertise on working with these populations and where there are gaps in training across the state. In this year's state budget, \$2.1 million was allocated to hire case managers for every county to provide services to children that are not DCPP involved. At the previous meeting, the workgroup discussed what this system should entail. DCF is currently in the process of creating a unit at SCR to provide additional case management services for Information & Referral (I&R) cases to ensure that other services or investigation is not warranted. The next step is to determine how to make sure that this unit is doing a "warm handover" to ensure that these children gain access to these services. Additionally, the workgroup is discussing how these services will be funded.

Evaluation of New Jersey Child Maltreatment Data Collection Systems

Theodore P. Cross, PhD, Cross Associates – Research and Evaluation Services



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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 23 recommendations for improving utility of data that is being collected

For this project, ten 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/MDT coordinators
- 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
- Child Fatality Review Board
- NJ Department of Education
- NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault

The findings of this project were as follows:

- 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
- Difficult to compare and combine case counts across systems due to different time frames, count data differently
- 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
- Decrease in substantiations due to several factors
 - Change in definition of substantiation
 - Increase in dispositions in addition to substantiations



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- National trends in the incidence of child maltreatment
- Court decisions about what cases could be defined as child maltreatment

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
- Standardized data modules across CACs
- Support state police use of National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

Following the presentation, John Esmerado spoke about the importance of breaking down silos between local, county, and state in data collection and the importance of developing a universal definition of child abuse. The Task Force discussed the possibility of working with the Legislature to discuss changes to the statute that defines child abuse. Nancy Muñoz asked John to contact her office for further discussion.

NJTFCAN Bylaws

Mary informed the members that a workgroup of several members – Seetha, Nydia, Jennifer, Lorene, and Mary as well as Joe Pargola from DCF, met to discuss the NJTFCAN bylaws. Although much of the information included in the bylaws comes directly from statute, there were several areas that were discussed for revision including various rules of the subcommittees, term limits, and membership. The members also discussed the Executive Committee of the Task Force as defined by the bylaws and its purpose. A copy of the bylaws including the proposed changes was sent to each member prior to the meeting. Mary suggested developing a short survey for members to determine term limits for subcommittee chairs/co-chairs. Additionally, an update to the application process for subcommittees was discussed.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Prevention Committee

The Prevention Committee formed a workgroup to discuss recruitment of new members. The workgroup will begin with developing an invitation letter and a flyer. A member of the Committee has also been working on a history of the Task Force to be able to explain the purpose of the Task Force and the Prevention Committee to new members. Patty agreed to share any documents with other subcommittees if they are interested in a similar process.

In order to improve information sharing with the Task Force, the Committee voted to change their meeting schedule and will now meet in the 2nd month of each quarter so that meetings will be held closer to the Task Force meeting. The next meeting will now be held in November and will be held in-person with the option of attending virtually.



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At the September meeting, the members were provided with an overview of the DCF Division of Community Partnerships from Sandy Starr. The Committee is moving in the direction of wanting to operationalize how they evaluate the Prevention Plan and how they can develop guidance and suggestions to the Task Force. The work plan of the Committee is to go through the 6 priorities of the Prevention Plan to hear about initiatives that are happening throughout NJ from member's organizations and then develop next steps. Patty also asked Task Force members to contact her if their organization is doing work that is in line with the Prevention Plan. At the conclusion of the update, Kimberly Pinto's application for membership to the Prevention Committee was reviewed and approved by members that were present.

Protection Committee

Nydia informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee met recently and discussed new ideas and areas of focus for the Committee. The Committee also discussed recruitment efforts recognizing that there may be individuals that would want to become involved but are not aware of the opportunity. Nydia asked Patty to share the Prevention Committee's recruitment information so that they can be a part of the recruitment process as well.

Nydia explained that last year, the Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors workgroup asked the DCF State Central Registry (SCR) and Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) to track cases of child-on-child sexual abuse. The workgroup requested data and has received preliminary results regarding child welfare referrals and information and referrals (I&Rs). DCF will be examining this data more closely to gain further information about location, referral source, demographic data, etc. This data will be tied into the work of the Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse workgroup to determine funding levels for treatment and training.

Sonia provided a brief update on the Digital Realm of Child Abuse workgroup. In June, the online safety materials developed by the workgroup were released. The materials were posted on the NJ Department of Education's (DOE) website and sent to all school districts. Sonia provided a link in the chat of the meeting to the information posted on the DOE website.

The Medical Referral workgroup is looking into providing training to staff at the DCF Children's System of Care (CSOC) and other youth serving organizations about medical evaluations in child sexual abuse cases. They are also working with DCF on updating their child sexual abuse modules to ensure that the medical sections are accurate.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

Marygrace presented the SORS Annual Report to the Task Force for approval. It is a statutorily required report and is sent to the legislature in November of each year. Mary made a motion to approve the SORS Annual Report. Nydia seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve the SORS Annual Report.

Marygrace also discussed that after Mary was appointed the co-chair of the Task Force, Mary stepped down as the co-chair of the SORS. The SORS has asked that Lisa Chapland be appointed as the new co-chair of the SORS. Marygrace asked for a vote to approve this appointment. Mary made a motion to approve the appointment of Lisa Chapland to co-chair of the SORS. Nydia seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve Lisa Chapland as co-chair of the SORS.

Announcements

None at this time.