



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

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

Minutes
December 16, 2022
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Christian Arnold
Jacqueline Augustine
Christine Beyer
Marygrace Billek
Mary Coogan
Cindy Cortez
Martin Finkel
Hon. Margaret M. Foti
Seetha Holmes
Natasha Johnson
Corinne LeBaron
Nydia Monagas
Sonia Moticha
Kaitlin Mulcahy
Assw. Nancy Muñoz
Mark Doherty
Jason Sarnoski
Richard Stagliano
Jennifer Underwood
Wendi White
Lorene Wilkerson

NJ Office of the Attorney General
NJ Administrative Office of the Courts
NJ Department of Children and Families
Mercer County Human Services
Advocates for Children of New Jersey
15th Legislative District
Professor Emeritus, Rowan University
Bergen County Vicinage
NJ Office of the Public Defender
NJ Department of Human Services
embrella
New Jersey Children’s Alliance
NJ Department of Education
Montclair State University
21st Legislative District
21st Legislative District
Warren County Commissioner
Center for Family Services
NJ Department of Community Affairs
NJ Department of Corrections
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Guests:

Patty Mojta
Jason Butkowski
Debbie Riveros
Robyn Acceturo
Leon Carelli
Jessica Sauer
Prevent Child Abuse NJ
NJ Department of Children and Families
New Jersey Children’s Alliance
Former Kinship Foster Parent
Foster Parent
Miriam’s Heart, Child Advocacy Association of NJ (CAANJ)

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



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

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 September 23, 2022 meeting.

The minutes from the September 23, 2022 meeting were approved without edit. (Nydia Monagas, Seetha Holmes)

NJTFCAN Bylaws

Mary reviewed the changes to the bylaws that were discussed at the previous Task Force meeting and included in the amended version. Cindy Cortex made a motion to approve the amended bylaws. Nydia seconded the motion. The Task Force voted unanimously to approve the amendments to the bylaws.

Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Response (COCSA) Workgroup

The 20-25 member COCSA workgroup has been meeting since February 2022. The workgroup has been working through the joint committee as well as individual subcommittees to put forward a statewide plan and protocols for how all partners will work to support child victims and actors in child-on-child sexual abuse cases. In October 2022, the workgroup put forth a draft plan that was sent to all members to review and comment to ensure that all discussions and ideas had been captured. The members were also asked to bring the draft to their constituencies and/or others in their organizations.

The plan itself is structured to examine how referrals that are not identified as acceptable for a child protective investigation or child welfare assessment are handled. The population of cases are those that DCPD would not investigate or assess as the facts of the case do not indicate that the incident was caused by a parent or guardian (in a caregiving capacity) or that the situation involved a parent/caregiver/guardian allowing, even if not directly participating, harm to children. Historically, these cases would be deemed an Information & Referral case (I&R). When the data from March 2021 to March 2022 was reviewed, approximately 2.5% of the referrals received by the SCR were deemed as I&R cases that may require treatment or further medical or psychological assessment. DCF created a specific unit that will specialize in this population and will refer to law enforcement or clinical case managers. Commissioner Beyer informed members that the Governor and Legislature approved \$2.1 million for clinical case manager positions. The workgroup is currently discussing where the clinical case managers will be housed, training for these positions, and creating a subcommittee to develop definitions and job descriptions.

Additionally, as treatment is lacking for this population, the workgroup created a subcommittee that has been working on the identifying training and looking into several evidence-based protocols that can be brought to the state or expanded if they already exist in NJ. The next step is to identify individuals across the state that are interested in receiving this training.

Commissioner Beyer spoke about funding for the COCSA training as well as funding for the children and families that need treatment and are not covered by insurance. DCF will be creating a fund, currently being referred to as "Children's Treatment Fund", specifically for this population of victims and actors. In January 2023, the fund will be initiated and DCF will be requesting additional funding to add sustainability going forward.



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

Commissioner Beyer explained that the fund will not be maintained at DCF, but will be adding these funds to the New Jersey Children’s Alliance (NJCA) contract as they already support the development and sustainability of the child advocacy centers (CACs) and CAC-MDT model. All funding requests for treatment would go through NJCA. This is important because it allows the opportunity to begin to collect data on the types of treatment that are occurring, ages of children that are seeking treatment, ages of children for which particular treatments are more successful, as well as the number of medical and psychological evaluations, etc. This data will also allow DCF to determine whether funding levels are adequate.

COCSA Training

Commissioner Beyer spoke about utilizing a portion of the funds that are currently in the Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) to provide training to clinicians to provide treatment for problematic sexual behaviors in children. As this training reduces recidivism, is a form of tertiary prevention, and has been a mission of the Task Force and its Protection Committee, it would be an appropriate use of CTF funding. CTF funding could be used to start the training and additional funding may be sought for future use. The costs included in the proposals that have been received for this training were very reasonable and would allow a good number of individuals to be trained without utilizing large amounts of funding. Commissioner Beyer asked for the members opinions regarding using CTF funding for this purpose. Several members voiced their opinion in favor of using CTF funding for this training as there is a severe shortage of clinicians that treat this population. Commissioner Beyer informed the members that the COCSA workgroup will determine the costs associated with the different trainings and report back to the Task Force on the amount of CTF funds that is being requested. Mary Coogan made a motion to commit to considering use of CTF funding for this training and public education around preventing and treating child-on-child sexual abuse. Seetha Holmes seconded the motion. The Task Force members voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) update

Commissioner Beyer provided an update regarding the change in legislation for the SORS Committee. The legislation was introduced in March 2022 by the Senate President and the Assembly Speaker. It is an element in the negotiated exit plan that, together with the monitor and plaintiff, was brought to and accepted by the judge. The legislation includes language that states that DCF would make available the information to the SORS that was previously provided to the federal monitor. Additional seats will be added to the SORS as well as additional responsibilities and an expansion of their current mandate. The legislation will be in front of the full Senate the following Monday for a vote. Once the legislation is passed and signed by Governor Murphy, there are additional steps that will need to be taken, including a Fairness Hearing in which the judge will decide whether court oversight will continue. Additionally, there will be a 4 to 6-month period during which the monitor’s staff will continue to be involved with the SORS to assist with the transition.

Moving the Prevention Plan Forward

Wendi White, NJ Department of Corrections

Wendi provided a presentation on a program that she oversees at the Department of Corrections entitled, “Engaging the Family” during which staff provides incarcerated individuals and their families with continued support both pre- and post-release as a support mechanism for re-entry back into the community. During incarceration, a treatment plan is developed with the inmate and staff assists with contacting family and establishing visits. Weekly case management sessions are conducted on a weekly basis to begin planning for



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

release. Planning during incarceration assists in making reintegration more a manageable transition and helps to increase success. Family participation in this process is valuable as it provides an opportunity for the family to learn together, communicate about important topics, develop a co-parenting plan, and express needs and expectations before they return home. As the inmate is nearing their release date, a discharge plan is developed based on their biopsychosocial needs and referrals are made to agencies such as substance abuse, mental health, family counseling, housing, vocational training, parent support groups, etc. Once the inmate is released, contact is maintained for at least 6 months and support and referrals are continually provided.

By supporting incarcerated parents and bolstering their parental identity while incarcerated, their sense of being connected to the family is increased. Incarcerated parents will have a better reentry success and better outcomes for their children. Family is a corrections issues and a very pressing social issue that needs to be addressed. By reestablishing connections with family and addressing certain issues – family relationships, domestic violence, parenting, financial literacy, and addictions – while still under custody supervision, returning citizens will have a better chance of success or reintegration as well as preventing relapse. This, in turn, will greatly benefit the entire family unit and yield positive societal benefits in the form of reduced recidivism, less intergenerational criminal justice involvement, and promotion of healthy child development.

NJTFCAN Annual Report and Recommendations

Mary explained that the recommendations to DCF section of the NJTFCAN Annual Report are on page 5 of the draft that was sent to members prior to the meeting. The recommendations included in the draft were those that were discussed and included in the previous year's report. The members discussed several recommendations to be included and agreed to include those recommendations that were included in the previous report. Mary requested that any further recommendations that members would like to include should be emailed to Daniel Yale by December 31, 2022.

Children's Justice Act (CJA) 3-Year Assessment

Daniel reminded members of the process that the Task Force used in 2021 to decide on recommendations that they would make to utilize CJA funds. The members spoke at length about the issue of mandated reporting. The Task Force determined that they would revisit this discussion and the CJA 3-year assessment at the next meeting.

NJTFCAN Subcommittee Recruitment

Patty Mojta explained that a workgroup was formed that included members of each of the subcommittees to discuss recruiting new members to the subcommittees. The result of the first meeting included developing a letter that explained the role of the Task Force and the subcommittees. Additionally, the workgroup updated the application, began developing an informational flyer, social media content, and discussed developing a webinar. Patty explained that the Prevention Committee has lost a number of members recently and are looking for additional members, but they are also looking to increase diversity and representation from different sectors. Commissioner Beyer also suggested looking into bringing members of the community and those with lived experience onto the subcommittees to add community voice to the discussion.

Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Prevention Committee



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

Patty informed the Task Force that the Prevention Committee discussed the first strategic priority of the Prevention Plan, Racial Equity and Racial Justice, at their last meeting. This included panel presentations from several members and a guided discussion that was designed to culminate in recommendations and/or next steps. The Prevention Committee provided two recommendations to the Task Force as a result of their discussions. The first recommendation was to discuss how the Task Force can get involved in moving the idea of Mandated Supporter Initiative forward. The second recommendation was to use the race equity tool that was discussed at the Prevention Committee meeting when making decisions around programming, funding, and policies. Patty provided a brief overview of the Mandated Supporter training. The Task Force had a lengthy discussion about data regarding unnecessary child abuse/neglect referrals, hotline referrals and subsequent substantiation rates, and the need for community supports and services to reduce unnecessary involvement of the child welfare system where child abuse/neglect is not present.

Protection Committee

Richard gave a brief update regarding the Protection Committee. The Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors workgroup is currently developing a fact sheet to inform legislators about this issue. Lorene informed the Task Force that the Digital Realm of Child Abuse workgroup plans to reconvene at the beginning of 2023 to determine how and to whom the Online Safety Guidelines can be distributed, as the information was only sent to schools. The workgroup would like the documents to be distributed to all agencies that work with children and families. Richard also discussed that the Medical Evaluation and Referral workgroup has been working with the DCF Office of Training and Professional Development regarding enhancements to DCF's sexual abuse training for DCPD caseworkers. Additionally, there have been discussions regarding developing a training on the services that are provided at Regional Diagnostic Treatment Centers.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

Marygrace spoke briefly about the changes that are expected to take place with the SORS in the upcoming weeks.

Announcements

The proposed 2023 calendar of meetings was announced to members.

Mary announced that DCF and ACNJ presented a webinar the previous day regarding the Family First Prevention Services Act. The concept paper will be posted on the DCF website for comments and the video of the webinar will be available on Tuesday, December 20, 2022. Comments on the concept paper are due January 9, 2023.