



Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Co-Chair
Martin A. Finkel, DO, FACOP, FAAP, Co-Chair

Minutes

September 25, 2020

Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Christian Arnold	NJ Office of the Attorney General
Jacqueline Augustine	Administrative Office of the Courts
Christine Beyer	NJ Department of Children and Families
Marygrace Billek	Mercer County Human Services
Mary Coogan	Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Esther East	Jewish Family Services
Martin A. Finkel	CARES Institute
Margaret M. Foti	New Jersey Superior Court
Marilyn Gorney-Daley	NJ Department of Health
Seetha Holmes	NJ Office of the Public Defender
Natasha Johnson	NJ Department of Human Services
Christina Lazzaruolo	Attorney
Sonia Moticha	NJ Department of Education
Kaitlin Mulcahy	Montclair State University
Assw. Nancy Muñoz	Legislative District 21
Richard Stagliano	Center for Family Services
Jennifer Underwood	Department of Community Affairs
Wendi White	NJ Department of Corrections
Lorene Wilkerson	NJ Child Placement Advisory Council

Guests:

Patty Mojta	PCA NJ
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Staff

Daniel Yale	NJ Department of Children and Families
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“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 Dr. Finkel and the public notice information was provided. Each member provided a brief introduction.

NJTFCAN Business

Review and approve minutes from the meetings on March 27, 2020 and June 26, 2020.

The minutes from the March 27, 2020 and June 26, 2020 meeting were approved without edit.



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Updates from Commissioner Beyer

Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that, in March, DCF moved their approximately 6,600 employees to working remotely very quickly. While there are a few staff members, they are mostly working in Central Office and Area Offices. The goal was initially to keep staff safe while continuing to work with families and continuing to investigate child abuse and neglect. There were also concerns about foster families, providers, etc. The biggest change was DCPD work which includes child abuse and neglect investigations, in-home visits, children who are in foster care being able to visit with their families, working with parents towards reunification and/or permanency for the children. DCF created a COVID response team that included 250 staff to complete investigations. When the decision was made for DCPD staff to continue to work with families, they needed to be protected with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The PPE included masks, gloves, shields, and gowns. Protocols and guidance were developed for out-of-home treatment providers and foster parents. There were less children coming into the foster care system and DCF did not have an issue with foster parents accepting placements with possible COVID-19 exposed children. Regarding the Children's System of Care (CSOC), admissions were halted and DCF contracted with two providers in case there was an overflow of children that needed treatment or if there was an outbreak. This created 40 beds with two providers along with a full staff with nursing, clinicians, etc. so if children needed placement, we would be able. Regarding childcare, DHS and DCF worked together when closing childcare facilities, developing processes for emergency childcare, opening childcare on April 1st, and subsidies for emergency workers. For DCF, the concern was really around the health and safety guidelines, having inspectors go out and having people onsite to ensure people were following the entry protocols and health protocols.

Commissioner Beyer stated that there is at least on DCPD office open per county and all staff are still working remotely. This includes completing home visits, going to offices to pick up vehicles, get PPE or records. DCF has enhanced cleaning services in all of the offices and porters that are cleaning cars in between uses. All screening protocols and cleaning protocols have been enhanced. As a department, DCF will continue to be very cautious for our staff and the families that we serve.

Dr. Finkel stated that there has been an expectation of a surge in child abuse cases similar to what has occurred with domestic violence cases. Dr. Finkel asked for an update regarding referral rates and screening.

Commissioner Beyer stated that DCF did see a significant decline in referrals to the hotline, close to 60% in April and May. There was a direct correlation in the decline of cases due to schools being closed. DCF also looked at the types of cases referred to the hotline by schools and found that there were typically two types of cases. Historically, the first type of case was parental incapacity or inability to care for a child and the second type of case was parental substance use. The percentage of substantiations for these cases were very low and were more likely to result in providing services for families. So, the decline in cases was not in those of severe abuse and neglect cases. That does not mean that there was not a concern about children being abused or isolated at home. DCF saw increases in referrals from the medical community and law enforcement community. DCF put together a campaign stating that social distancing does not mean social isolation. It was a call for members of the community to be the eyes and ears to help keep kids safe. Now that kids are learning remotely or back in school, DCF is anticipating that the call volume will increase. Even though childcare centers have been open since the summer, DCF has not seen an increase in calls or spikes in serious abuse and neglect. Commissioner Beyer felt that provider communities reaching out to families that were already on their



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caseloads, home visiting connecting with families providing supplies and materials for learning, and family success centers providing support were some of the reasons why DCF did not receive a large influx of cases as occurred in other states. DCF saw an increase in the number of new enrollees at family success centers and families calling family success centers for support. Calls to CSOC and PerformCare decreased as well, but the number of calls to community providers increased.

Mary Coogan asked if there has been any thought about using differential response again or some other way of getting people services without having people call the hotline. Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that DCF is discussing creating a helpline or alternate system so that families do not have to call the DCF hotline to get help. This helpline would assist in referring to community organizations. However, the helpline is in the very early stages of development.

Richard Stagliano asked about whether any of the budget cuts may be restored. Commissioner Beyer informed the Task Force that DCF was asked to cut 15% of their budget. Commissioner Beyer stated that there were reductions across almost every one of the Divisions. DCF received \$45 million in increases for CSOC for rate rebalancing and stabilization. If this funding had not been received, there would have been a serious crisis. Every cut is a cut to children and families, so they are all difficult. Nancy Muñoz informed the Task Force that the school-based services were restored.

2020 Skill Building Conference

Daniel informed the Task Force that the 2020 Skill Building Conference will be a virtual series entitled, "Conversations on Race and Racism in Child Welfare". The first event will include Dr. Patricia Reid-Merritt from Stockton University to discuss the history of race and racism in New Jersey and the effects on children and families. The second event will include Dr. Jessica Pryce from Florida University to discuss implicit bias in child welfare. The third event will include Dr. Carol Spigner to discuss racial disparity in New Jersey which will include an update on the work that is being done by DCF to address these issues.

NJTFCAN Annual Report

The Task Force decided to discuss the recommendations and approval of the annual report at the December meeting.

SORS Annual Report

Marygrace thanked the SORS Committee for their help in preparing the report. Marygrace presented the report to the Task Force including DCF accomplishments, presentations that were provided throughout the year, and an update on the Office of Training and Professional Development. Marygrace also discussed that the SORS is very interested in the development of the DCF Office of Staff Health and Wellness.

Mary Coogan made a motion to approve the SORS Annual Report. Richard Stagliano seconded the motion. The Task Force voted to approve the SORS Annual Report.

Review new subcommittee applications

- Protection Committee – Tammy Workley
- Prevention Committee – Mariam Gerges & Nicole Epps

The Task Force voted to approve all subcommittee applications.



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Subcommittee/Committee Updates

Communication Committee

Daniel informed the Task Force that the previous chair of the Communication Committee, Cheryl Mojta has retired and will no longer be on the Communication Committee. Daniel explained that the Committee is in the process of naming a new co-chair, but that the Committee did not hold their previously scheduled meeting. The next meeting will be held in October.

Prevention Committee

Patty Mojta explained that the Prevention Committee postponed their September 3, 3030 meeting due to scheduling conflicts. The meeting will be held on September 29, 2020. The Committee will be working towards the development of the Statewide Prevention Plan. The Committee will also be hearing from Sandy Starr, Deputy Director of DCF Family and Community Partnerships, about the status of the current budget regarding the landscape of available prevention programs in New Jersey. There will also be a networking activity at the next meeting regarding race equity to discuss what each member is doing in their organizations, networks, or communities.

Protection Committee

Richard Stagliano informed the Task Force that the Protection Committee met two days prior to the Task Force meeting. The Digital Realm of Child Abuse workgroup has developed a set of recommendations that they would like to share with the Department of Education. Lorene Wilkerson explained that a survey went out in January 2018 to 693 recipients in public school districts and charter schools. The survey received a 37% response rate, with all 21 counties represented. The survey covered what types of programming they had in their schools, by grade, for internet safety. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

- Develop a publication for parents. Parents need to be included in the programming.
- Increase programming and education for early elementary grades.
- Increase and awareness about these programs among parents and children.
- Provide funding information and resources to assist school districts to utilize this programming.
- Address the variances in programming across grade bands and strive for consistency across the state.
- Increase the number of hours and dedicate 1-3 hours of online and internet safety.
- Provide or identify training opportunities for directors, supervisors or curriculum, school counselors, student assistance counselors, social workers and other related staff.

Sonia Moticha informed the Task Force that recently, the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for 2020 were passed and with schools planning for changes, this could be a good opportunity to present these recommendations.

A motion to approve the submission of these recommendations to the NJ Department of Education was passed by the Task Force.

Richard stated that the Juveniles with Sexually Inappropriate Behaviors workgroup has changed focus and will be discussing non-adjudicated child on child sexual behaviors. Nydia Monagas, Executive Director of the New



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Jersey Children’s Alliance (NJCA), is spearheading this workgroup. NJCA has been providing training to clinicians for this type of case, but they have not been receiving many referrals. The workgroup is discussing assisting DCF to gather data to ensure that these children are receiving proper intervention and treatment.

Next Meeting – December 18, 2020 in Trenton.