

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN’S JUSTICE ACT
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

October 27, 2023

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held on October 27, 2023, at the Libbie Mill Library in Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present

Randy Bonds
Judge Eugene Butler – Virtual
Shamika Byars
Davy Fearon
Katharine Hunter
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp, Vice-chair
Lora Smith for Shannon Hartung
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Jackie Robinson Brock
Sandy Karison
Eric Reynolds

Guests

Kathleen Hollywood (VDSS) - Virtual
Laura Robinson (Henrico CASA Law Intern)
Aaran Kelley (VDSS) - Virtual

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Carolyn Halbert (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Melissa O’Neill (DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. Members introduced themselves. The Committee recognized and congratulated member Randy Bonds for his recent promotion to “Captain”.
- II. **Remote Participation of Members:** Committee Chair, Judge Thomas Sotelo received and approved a request from Judge Eugene Butler to remotely participate in the meeting. Judge Eugene Butler’s virtual participation is for personal reasons due to a scheduled

hearing today. He attended the meeting from the 24th Judicial District Juvenile Court in Amherst.

Judge Thomas Sotelo confirmed Committee members can adequately hear Judge Eugene Butler in the meeting room and requested approval from the Advisory Committee to allow his remote participation in accordance with the remote participation policy. The Advisory Committee unanimously approved.

III. Approval of Minutes: The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the April 28, 2023, meeting. Randy Bond made a motion to approve the minutes. Pat Popp provided a second. The motion was approved.

IV. Review of Meeting Dates for 2024:

Friday, January 26, 2024

Friday, April 26, 2024

Friday, July 26, 2024

V. Appointment of Nominations Committee for Chair and Vice-Chair

Jeannine Panzera and Eric Reynolds agreed to serve as the Nominations Committee during the April 28, 2023, meeting. Jeannine Panzera presented a slate of officers for the next two years to include Judge Thomas Sotelo as Chair and Pat Popp as Vice Chair. Judge Sotelo asked if there was a motion to approve the nominations as presented. Ashley Thompson made the motion and Jeannine Panzera provided the second. Judge Sotelo asked if there were any nominations from the floor and hearing none, the motion was carried unanimously.

VI. Approval of Updated Remote and Virtual Meeting Policies

Committee members received copies of Remote and Virtual Meeting policies for approval prior to the meeting. These policies incorporate changes to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act requirements for public meetings. Members reviewed the policies and discussed the updates. Ashley Thompson moved to approve the policies as written and Shamika Byars seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. CJA Program Update

The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was provided with a written report detailing significant activities of the CJA program this quarter.

Jenna Foster provided the Advisory Committee with an update on the Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) reductions from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) federal funds.

After much discussion, Judge Sotelo made a motion that the Advisory Committee draft a resolution in support of Virginia's Child Advocacy Centers and the value they bring across all multi-jurisdictional systems that support child victims. Davy Fearon seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. DCJS staff (Foster) will draft a resolution based on input from members of the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee received an update regarding the implementation of the Child Death Investigation Protocol.

A virtual training series for Child Abuse Awareness is scheduled for the third week in April 2024 during Virginia Crime Victims Rights Week. DCJS plans to focus on minor victims of crime in April 2024.

In addition to the training series, the current “Kids to Court” coloring book that provides an overview of the court process to children in a child-friendly manner is being updated and will be disseminated to DCJS constituents that provide services to child victims.

VIII. CASA Program Update

The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee was provided with a written report detailing significant activities of the CASA program this quarter.

The Advisory Committee was provided with an update on the current CASA program expansion projects.

The Criminal Justice Services Board approved the Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) to begin the process of revising the CASA Regulations. The Advisory Committee will participate in the regulatory review process.

Melissa O’Neill provided the Advisory Committee with an update on a current situation with the National CASA/GAL Association (NCASAA) concerning federal funding and impacts on two local Virginia CASA programs.

IX. Citizen Review Panel

Aaran Kelly, Virginia Department of Social Services, provided the Advisory Committee with an update on the status of the implementation of Family First Prevention Services Act.

Kathleen Hollywood, Virginia Department of Social Services, shared information with the Advisory Committee on work being done related to Kinship Care.

X. New Business - Members provided updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.

XI. Adjourn – Ashley Thompson made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Pat Popp provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, January 26, 2024

Friday, April 26, 2024

Friday, July 26, 2024