

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

October 29, 2021

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on October 29, 2021 at the Tuckahoe Library in Richmond Virginia.

Members Present

Regina Baker
Randy Bonds
Jackie Robinson Brock
Kim Barbarji
Allison Gilbreath
Katharine Hunter
Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Robin Foster
Shardell Gerald
Shannon Hartung
Judge Jerrauld Jones
Jennifer Newman

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Melissa O'Neill (DCJS)
Shernae Valentine (Intern – DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt

Guest

Eric Reynolds (Director, Office of the Children's Ombudsman)
Jane Lissenden – (Office of the Children's Ombudsman)
Destiny Allen – (Office of the Children's Ombudsman)
Lora Smith – (Virginia Department of Social Services)

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM. A verbal roll call was taken.

II. Approval of Minutes: The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the July 30, 2021 meeting. Ashley Thompson made a motion to approve the minutes. Randy Bonds provided a second. Sandy Karison, Kim Barbarji, and Regina Baker abstained and the motion was approved.

III. Roundtable Discussion on 2022 Child Welfare Legislative Session – Allison Gilbreath, Policy and Programs Director, Voices for Virginia’s Children provided the committee with a child welfare policy update for the upcoming 2022 general assembly session. Committee members were invited to share information on potential legislation of interest.

IV. CASA Program Update - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program.

The committee was provided with an update on the NCASA/GAL Highly Effective Standards Review Process (HESRP) report. DCJS received an initial report highlighting 15 areas requiring corrective action. A meeting was held with NCASA/GAL staff and DCJS to discuss the findings. A revised report was provided with only 4 corrective action requirements. NCASA/GAL staff recognized that publicly administered state organizations do not fit into the evaluation continuum established by the HESRP. DCJS was the first publicly administered state to be reviewed and NCASA/GAL realized the process simply does not fit our model. It remains unclear how NCASA/GAL will resolve the inequity between nonprofit and publicly administered state organizations with regard to the evaluative process. The original intent was for those state organizations that achieve a highly effective status to be eligible for funding and other incentives.

V. Children’s Justice Act Program Update - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Children’s Justice Act Program. Jenna Foster highlighted areas of interest.

Grant Funded Child Welfare Programs: The CJA Coordinator shared with the committee that she is responsible for the monitoring of grants administered by DCJS that serve child victims, including: a grant to the Virginia Department of Social Services which provides funding to Children’s Advocacy Centers (CAC) across Virginia (this is pass-through funding); thirteen Victim Services Grant Program (VSGP) child victim grants; eighteen (18) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants to CACs; and five ARPA grants to existing VSGP grantees.

Three Year Planning Process: In anticipation of the upcoming Three Year Plan revision in the fall of 2022, for each of the next three meetings, the committee will be reviewing two of the current recommendations. Members will consider specific questions and content from the discipline represented on the Advisory Committee. Guidance for these discussions will be sent with the agendas for the next three meetings.

VI. Remote Meeting Policy Review

Members were provided with a Remote Meeting Policy in advance of the meeting for review and approval. After discussion of the policy, Allison Gilbreath made a motion to approve the policy as written and Pat Popp seconded. The motion was approved.

VII. Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel

Lora Smith provided an update for Shannon Hartung from the Department of Social Services. A response regarding the Citizen Review Panel recommendations will be forthcoming and is expected in November. She summarized the work of both the Child Protective Services and the Protection and Prevention Program

The Child Protective Services Program at the Virginia Department of Services continues to undergo the performance audit by the Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG). The yearlong audit aims to improve the efficiency of CPS program and quality of services provided to the public.

The Protection and Prevention program completed several initiatives in preparation for the enactment of SB 1406 and HB 2312 legalizing recreational marijuana in the Commonwealth. Guidance has not changed and CPS will handle referrals related to this similar to alcohol use or prescription drug use in regards to lack of supervision or poisoning.

The department continues work to standardize and provide uniformity regarding work around child maltreatment fatalities and near-fatalities. Fatalities are reviewed that meet a mandatory criteria with the goal of identifying practice issues that point to the need for training or technical assistance, or highlight programmatic strengths, identifying the need for modification or enhancement of program guidance and identifying themes in which the state would do targeted prevention work around.

Members received information on the Mandated Reported website that launched last year as well as information on hotline reports received. There has been an increase in referrals since schools started.

VIII. New Business

Members provided updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.

IX. Adjourn – Ashley Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting and Pat Popp provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:57 AM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, January 28, 2022

Friday, April 22, 2022

Friday, July 22, 2022