



**Advisory Committee to the  
Court Appointed Special Advocate  
and Children's Justice Act Programs**

**AGENDA**

**Virtual Informational Meeting**

**January 28, 2022**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89376523573>

Meeting ID: 893 7652 3573

Passcode: casacja22!

One tap mobile

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York) +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 893 7652 3573

Passcode: 8266599699

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89376523573>

- 1. Welcome and Introductions**
- 2. Presentation on revisions to by-laws**
- 3. General Assembly Session: Presentations of Bills of Interest**
- 4. Advisory Committee Member Presentations on Three Year Plan Recommendations  
1 & 2**
- 5. Citizen Review Panel: Update on 2021 Recommendations – Shannon Hartung- Virginia  
Department of Social Services**
- 6. Adjournment**

## Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act Programs

### THREE-YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS 1 & 2

**Purpose:** The CASA/CJA Advisory Committee focuses on the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases in Virginia. Every three years, the Advisory Committee crafts new recommendations that guide the work of the Children’s Justice Act (CJA) and the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs. Members are invited to provide feedback on Recommendations 1 & 2 of the current Three-Year Strategic Plan. Your feedback will support the development of recommendations for the next three-year plan. Ideally, we would like this chart to be completed and emailed to the CJA Coordinator ([jenna.foster@dcjs.virginia.gov](mailto:jenna.foster@dcjs.virginia.gov)) in advance of the January 28, 2022 meeting.

Thinking of the discipline you represent on this advisory committee, please answer the following questions:

<b>Proposed Three-Year Recommendations</b>	Identify and disseminate additional resources that are available to support evidence-based and best practices in the Commonwealth.	Track and analyze policies, procedures, and legislation that may have an impact on the criminal justice and child protective systems.
<i>Who is currently addressing this recommendation?</i>		
<i>What are they doing?</i>		
<i>What additional resources should we bring to the strategic planning meeting this fall to address the gaps (data, reports, information, presentations)?</i>		
<i>What gaps exist in policy, training, and services that we may want to address in the next three-year plan?</i>		

# Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee

January 28, 2022 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

## *Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs*

Prepared by: Melissa O’Neill, CASA Coordinator - DCJS

### I. CASA Network State Leadership Team Updates

The State Leadership Team (SLT) met in November to continue to further goals of the Strategic Plan. The SLT focused this year on development and implementation of a CASA Network survey to assist in updating the strategic plan. The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT efforts during this reporting period.

#### A. Data Committee

The Data Committee workgroup completed the development of the CASA Manager User Guide for Virginia CASA Programs. The final product was completed by the end of the calendar year and was distributed to the CASA Network in early January.

The CASA Survey was developed in partnership with DCJS and the SLT. The DCJS Research Center assisted in the development and analysis of the survey. The survey was distributed to CASA programs on October 18, 2021. The results included 100% participation from local programs. The survey assessed statewide CASA Program needs and will assist DCJS and the SLT in prioritizing those needs during the next strategic planning process.

#### 2021 CASA Survey Highlights

- One-third of CASA programs reported they were unable to serve all the children referred due to lack of available volunteers.
- One-quarter of all CASA programs experienced a change in program director leadership.
- One-third of all CASA programs experienced turnover in volunteer coordinator positions.
- The top two volunteer recruitment methods were “word of mouth” and social media.
- One-quarter of CASA programs had a new judge appointed last year.
- One-third of CASA programs do not meet regularly with judges.
- The majority of programs reported that they have participated in virtual trainings (Director Series, Program Staff, and Volunteers) since the start of

the CASA College. Other highly attended (over 75%) events include CASA Conversations (Director Series, Program Staff) and Advo-chats (Volunteers).

- Virtual trainings also ranked highest among the training formats most likely to be attended.
- Based on their ratings, programs benefited most from the Training strategies, followed by Data Management strategies, and least from the Marketing/Volunteer Recruitment strategies.
- Nearly all programs find the Network Support meetings helpful and have accessed the Virginia CASA State Google Drive.
- 20 CASA Programs have at least nine months of operating costs in reserves; Six programs have two to five months; One was unsure.

## B. Training Committee

DCJS continued to facilitate meetings for the Training Committee to update the Pre-Service Training to adapt the Virginia Case Studies Curriculum so that it complies with NCASA/GAL requirements. Committee members are currently reviewing the draft document for consistency and additional revisions. The work is expected to continue throughout 2022. DCJS spoke with NCASA/GAL regarding the status of approval for the VA Case Studies Curriculum as an alternate to the 2017 version. NCASA/GAL has not established a process for granting approvals. Local programs will be completing NCASA/GAL Self Assessments beginning in January 2022. DCJS negotiated with NCASA/GAL that those using the VA Case Studies will not be required to upload the curriculum since DCJS has already submitted for approval. Currently there are 15 programs using the VA Case Studies version.

The CASA College continued during this reporting period. DCJS held a two-part session on Board Governance during this reporting period. The training was facilitated by Katherine Whitney and included CASA Program Directors, Board Chairs and Board members. The sessions were held December 3 and 10, 2021. Topics covered during the training included understanding the roles and responsibilities of board members; the role of the executive director; strategic planning; fundraising; developing a great board; and diversity, equity and inclusion.

## II. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grants

DCJS made available funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to CASA programs for the FY22 grant year. The funding was distributed on a formula basis. A total of \$1,040,000 was distributed to 25 programs who completed applications for the funds. In addition to the formula-based distribution, the funding includes \$80,000 to Colonial CASA for a statewide volunteer recruitment initiative on behalf of the state

network. The State Leadership Team (SLT) Marketing Committee is overseeing the volunteer recruitment project.

### III. Network Support Meetings

DCJS facilitated three CASA Network Support meetings using virtual technology during this past quarter. These meetings assist local programs with navigating program operations and management concerns and continue to be useful to the field.



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

November 15, 2021

*Sent Electronically*

Melissa O'Neill

CASA/CJA Citizen Review Panel Coordinator

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Ms. O'Neill:

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) commends the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program and Children's Justice Act Committee for their work as an active Citizen Review Panel (CRP) as part of Virginia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Plan. The feedback for our Child Protective Service Program by our Citizen Review Panels is crucial to the improvement of our program for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Child Protective Services (CPS) in Virginia is a continuum of specialized services designed to assist families who are unable to safely care for their children. CPS is child-centered, family-focused, and based on the belief that the primary responsibility for the care of children rests within their families. CPS encompasses the identification, assessment, investigation, and treatment of abused or neglected children. Virginia's specialized services are designed to:

- Protect children and their siblings;
- Prevent future abuse or neglect;
- Enhance parental capacity to provide adequate care; and
- Provide substitute care when the family of origin cannot remedy the safety concerns.

CPS will respond to valid child abuse or neglect reports by conducting a family assessment response or an investigation response, also known as Differential response. The goals of both responses are to: assess child safety, strengthen and support families, and to prevent future child maltreatment. The track decisions are guided by state statute and local policy. In SFY 2020, there were 52,554 children reported as possible victims of child abuse or neglect in 33,880 completed reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. Of those children, 5,792 were involved in founded investigations, 7,777 were involved in unfounded investigations, and 38,985 in family assessments (differential response). In SFY 2020, family assessments accounted for nearly 72% of all CPS reports accepted by local departments of social services, and 34 children died as a

result of abuse or neglect. There were 23 children involved in 19 Human Trafficking Assessments which are required when a report alleges a child is a victim of human trafficking, sex or labor, and does not meet the validity criteria for an investigation or family assessment.

Over the last year, VDSS continues to prioritize working towards meeting our federal outcomes related to child protection including responding to reports of abuse with a timely consistent response, providing ongoing services to for children who are at high or very high risk (In-Home services) and ensuring timely case closure. Additionally, VDSS is prioritizing family engagement through the use of Family Partnership Meetings, and Child and Family Team Meetings.

We have reviewed your recommendations for our CPS program and thank you for your input. VDSS offers the following responses to your recommendations:

### **Prevention/FFPSA**

VDSS provides prevention based services to citizens of the Commonwealth through the provision of In-Home Services for children who are at high or very high risk of recurrent child maltreatment and out home placements. In-Home services is a tertiary prevention services program. In April 2021, the Prevention Services Program within VDSS launched an aligned In-Home Services program which targets resources and services that prevent foster care placements and help children remain safely in their homes. Specifically, programmatic efforts have focused on the following: developing the In-Home services workflow including In-Home services planning, case management process, and practice guidance and training; improving ease of access to evidence based prevention services; and ensuring quality of programs and services through implementation of the VDSS Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. This approach aligns with the concept that Prevention Services are an integral part of the continuum of all child welfare services. The Prevention Services Program will continue to leverage collaboration with the Protection and Prevention Advisory Committee and internal Family Services programs to develop a repertoire of prevention strategies and best practice guidelines that can be used by LDSS in their delivery of prevention services.

VDSS required all In-Home Services Family Services Specialists (FSS) to complete a six-part training series for the In-Home Services practice changes and trained an average of 300 FSS each month. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will align the six-part training series with the existing “New Worker Training” as a mandated training course for all new staff who provide In-Home Services.

Family First is a key priority for Virginia and in conjunction with Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) reviews and Virginia’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP), serves as a driver of Virginia’s focus on child maltreatment prevention activities. This key influencer is found throughout VDSS’ strategic planning. VDSS has focused on developing a comprehensive In-Home Services program guided by the Family First legislation and as described in Recommendation 1. Virginia implemented Family First in July 2021 which allows the drawdown of title IV-E prevention services funding. In this first phase of Family First implementation, VDSS included three evidence based prevention programs identified on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT).

VDSS is partnering with the Center for Evidence Based Partnerships in Virginia (CEBP) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to monitor the fidelity of these three evidence based programs. CEBP/VCU will monitor the fidelity to which each of these programs is delivered by

service providers across the Commonwealth. CEBP/VCU will also provide analysis of the outcomes for children and their families. CEBP/VCU will begin to analyze and share the data in 2022.

VDSS is working towards implementing additional services that are approved for title IV-E funding on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse with the identified needs in Virginia. VDSS is exploring all well-supported programs on the Title IV-E Clearinghouse for inclusion in the next phase of Family First implementation. VDSS is focusing on well-supported programs at this time as they only have a federal requirement of fidelity monitoring reporting versus an evaluation requirement for promising and supported programs. VDSS is working with CEBP/VCU to offer capacity building for providers in calendar year 2022 to adopt and provide evidence based models from the Title IV-E Clearinghouse.

The VDSS CQI process takes form in actionable ways at first the state level, then the regional level, and finally the local level which facilitates analysis and examination of individual-level performance when helpful. The child welfare data review process is broken down across levels within the system. Regular data review meetings occur at the state level on a biweekly basis, wrapping in home office teams including program, policy, data and leadership representation; and, regional teams, including Regional Directors and Practice Consultants. These meetings review overall state and regional trends, and have been occurring since early 2020 and set the stage for an organizational culture which understands and embraces data-driven decision making and practice informed data analyses. In January 2022, VDSS will launch a monthly CQI Review process with the “Core Team” from every LDSS. VDSS is also launching monthly Communities of Practice on specific topics and overall progress towards goals where there will be a more in depth discussion among LDSS about the strengths and areas for improvement of our child welfare practice. The recent alignment of the In-Home Services model will be a focus of the CQI meetings and Communities of Practice over the next year. VDSS will monitor the outcomes of children, and their families, who are receiving In-Home Services whether or not they are receiving an evidence based prevention service funded through title IV-E prevention services funding. VDSS will regularly monitor outcomes such as recurrence of maltreatment, placement with relatives, and entry into foster care. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to share information about the In-Home practice, EBS, and overall child welfare outcomes to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee CRP.

VDSS also supports several community based primary and secondary prevention services efforts through pass thru funding. VDSS provides pass thru funding of approximately \$9 million dollars (excluding temporary Covid relief and American Recovery Plan Act funding) of Family Violence Prevention and Services Act funding to over 65 sub grantees to provide local and statewide domestic violence services. The majority of the funds are geared towards secondary prevention activities, 11 of the programs provide primary prevention services, and 6 programs received funds to work specifically with underserved populations. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to administer all available funding, including additional Covid relief and/or ARPA funding, to prevent domestic violence and/or the recurrence of domestic violence.

VDSS supports the Healthy Families America home visiting model in the Commonwealth. VDSS provides pass thru funding of approximately \$13 million dollars in state appropriated funds for 30 local Healthy Families sites as well as supporting the state lead agencies for Healthy Families, Families Forward. VDSS submitted budget proposals for consideration in the upcoming General Assembly Session to expand the Healthy Family Program as well as a budget proposal to fund a universal home visiting program acknowledging the impacts of early intervention through home visiting. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to provide funding for the existing Healthy Families Program, with available funding; will administer any



new funding and/or programs as directed by the Virginia General Assembly to support home visiting efforts; continue to partner with Families Forward and the Virginia Health Department to promote existing home visiting models; and work with LDSS to promote referrals for community based home visiting programs.

VDSS administers approximately \$6 million in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), state appropriations and Victims of Crimes Act (VOCA) funding to 19 Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) across the Commonwealth and for the state CAC program. CACs provide community education related to child abuse prevention and approximately one third of the CACs have comprehensive child abuse prevention programs utilizing evidence-based curricula such as *Speak Up Be Safe* and *Darkness Into Light*. Inherent in the CAC model is to ensure that the child is in a safe environment and is not subjected to further abuse by the perpetrator. CACs provide services to the abused child and to non-offending family members to reduce the risk of further abuse and to mitigate trauma. In addition, therapeutic interventions from CAC therapists or referrals may be short- or long-term as needed by the child or family to address ongoing effects of abuse. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to administer funding for CAC programs as it is available.

VDSS also administers the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) federal funding which is provided, through a competitive grant process, to communities to deliver primary prevention services to prevent child maltreatment. VDSS provides funding to 19 local programs who provide services at no cost to families that can include transportation, counseling, mentorship, home visiting, and evidence based services. CBCAP funding also supports learning curricula that focuses on training child care providers in prevention and protective factors to provide information and knowledge to parents in order to decrease rates of child abuse and support strong families. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to administer CBCAP funding to communities as it is available.

VDSS has also been administering pass thru funding for 6 regionally based Kinship Navigator Programs which is a secondary prevention service aimed at supporting relative caregivers. VDSS submitted a budget proposal for state funding to support the 6 existing programs once federal funding end on September 30, 2022. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to administer all available funding for the kinship navigator programs, support the alignment of the existing models with evidence based models, and will administer any new funding and/or programs as directed by the General Assembly through the budget process.

## **System Improvement**

### *Family Engagement*

VDSS prioritizes family engagement and a kin-first culture in Virginia and as the foundation in the child welfare continuum. VDSS continually monitors outcomes related to engagement to identify needs for local agencies and staff. VDSS has developed and delivered a number of new engagement-related courses, in addition to the mandatory FSS training.

New Engagement Training Courses:

In addition to the required CPS training, CWS4020 Engaging Families and Building Trust-Based Relationships course, we developed several new training focused on improving workers engagement skills with parents, relatives, and foster families. A new online game, GAME4000: Engagement In Action is a popular training course which provides case scenarios to test your family engagement skills and shift your practice to the next level in this interactive online game. During the twenty minute game, Family Services Specialists are guided through eight scenarios with a family and have the opportunity to apply your

engagement skills, hear the results of your actions, and receive feedback from a supportive coach on the selections you made.

FSWEB1044: Practice Foundations Guidance and Engagement was developed as a 75 minute recorded webinar to introduce the Practice Foundations Guidance. The Practice Foundations Guidance is a chapter that presents an overview of practice principles that are integrated and underlie all of the work done on the children welfare continuum. The webinar is intended to reignite best practices around family engagement, and re-introduce the Practice Profiles for the purpose of improving the outcomes for the children and families we serve. An engagement e-toolkit and other resources were shared with participants and can be found on Fusion. The webinar was created and co-presented by local department representatives from across the state with the Regional Practice Consultants, representing all of the program areas. It is also recommended workers take the VDSS – GAME4000: Engagement in Action before or soon after this webinar. This interactive online game will test family engagement skills and shift practice to the next level.

CWSE4060: Family Search and Engagement – This online course that refers to a collection of strategies that help locate and engage family members and fictive kin for children. These strategies aim to find relatives and other important adults who can provide permanent homes for children and youth, or caring, lifelong support networks that can provide relational permanence if relatives are unable to care for children in their homes. This online course is a pre-requisite for CWS4080.

CWS4080: Kinship Care in Virginia – This two-day classroom training (now virtual) to provide workers and supervisors with the family-centered and culturally responsive knowledge and skills necessary for making assessments and decisions regarding the appropriateness of relatives as placement and permanency planning resources for children requiring out-of-home care.

MICRO105: Using the Genogram to Support Family Finding – focus is on the adaptive skills in engaging and conducting a genogram with a family. This training is in support of the new COMPASS Genogram Tool.

### *Jurisdiction*

VDSS continues to encourage improved communication and collaboration across jurisdictions when investigating reports of child maltreatment. VDSS made a number of guidance enhancements to [Section 3 Complaints and Reports](#) of the Child Protective Services Manual to promote multi-jurisdictional coordination. VDSS also continues to provide guidance and encourage improved communication and collaboration across jurisdictions when serving families in In-Home Services cases. VDSS has coordinated with the Office of Children’s Services to align policy-related decisions that supports cross-jurisdictional work. In calendar year 2022, VDSS will continue to work with LDSS through the Policy Advisory Committee, Regional CQI events, and other ad hoc opportunities to discuss challenges and develop solutions to serving families across jurisdictional lines.

### *Data Analysis*

The Division of Family Services will consult with the Office of Research and Planning about the feasibility of your request to study if the reduction in the number of child maltreatment reports received during the pandemic equated to a reduction in harm to children.

### *Pandemic Response*

The Governor declared a state of emergency on March 12, 2020 and issued a Stay at Home order on March 30, 2020 in response to the COVID – 19 pandemic. VDSS and local departments moved quickly to ensure continuation of services. During the initial COVID-19 crisis phase, it was critical to effectively prioritize and streamline efforts and energy in order to address emergency tasks. VDSS worked to alleviate the burden falling on LDSS that provide critical services in local communities. VDSS prioritized efforts to provide critical guidance, resources and supports to the field and utilize collaborative efforts and partnerships to address the unique risks and challenges of the time. VDSS produced tools on how to conduct home visits during a pandemic; procured and provided a HIPAA compliant virtual visit platform [doxy.me](https://doxy.me); and created resources to guide the field on conducting virtual visits. Waivers for several administrative regulatory requirements were granted to alleviate LDSS burden and ensure staff were primarily focused on responding to the safety needs of children. VDSS created resources on supporting children, families and workers in navigating crisis and worked with partners to ensure prevention messaging was disseminated and made available to community members and professionals.

VDSS focused on process-oriented priority responses, including: recalibrating staffing to address fluctuating flow and needs of the state hotline to ensure abuse and neglect referrals are received and responded to appropriately; addressing protocol regarding exposure and potential exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace; and, moving to 100% teleworking for home office and regional staff, while support teleworking efforts of LDSS. VDSS built workforce capacity through creating and offering web-based trainings for staff on how to conduct virtual meetings and webinars. VDSS strengthened existing partnerships in targeted and intentional ways during this crisis, including leveraging relationships and collaborative opportunities with multiple other state agencies, advocate partner organizations, LDSS stakeholders, and non-profit providers and partners. In this way, resources, guidance and tools for the field were able to be directly responsive to the rapidly changing needs of the workforce and communities during the crisis. All of VDSS' efforts during the current pandemic will aid VDSS in preparation for the next pandemic.

One of the strengths of the VDSS during the pandemic was the access to Compass Mobile which allowed family services specialists to have access to portions of the child welfare information system outside of the physical office space. An ongoing challenge will be to continue to ensure that Compass Mobile is functional to fully perform child welfare tasks or to prioritize the replacement of the current child welfare information system, OASIS, with a modern and up-to-date technology solution that can be accessed outside of physical office walls.

VDSS quickly transitioned mandatory training for all family services specialists to a virtual format which ensured that training was still available. VDSS learned that many local agency staff members preferred virtual training as it reduced time away from the office, reduced the cost of travel, and was more accessible for family services specialists. Not all reactions to virtual training has been positive, but VDSS will continue to holistically assess the training needs, particularly of CPS workers to ensure that mandatory training is available and can occur virtually.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Child Welfare**

“When we lead with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in our day-to-day work, we cultivate a culture of engagement, thinking outside of silos, questioning the status quo, and challenging our own assumptions. DEI helps direct our energy towards access, collaboration, opportunities for

improvement, and building relationships with each other and with those we serve. This is ultimately how we accelerate the pace at which we successfully achieve our goals and objectives.” Duke Storen, Commissioner, VDSS

VDSS and DFS have begun working towards a culture of DEI as part of the larger [“ONE Virginia Plan”](#) put forth by Governor Ralph Northam, the Governor’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Department of Human Resource Management. The ONE Virginia Plan builds a statewide strategy to advance DEI through changes in services, systems, and operations. The intent behind the ONE Virginia Plan is to use the Inclusive Excellence framework to disrupt long standing injustice and inequity, and create sustainable change, innovation, and productivity across state government and other sectors of the state.

In order to prioritize this work within VDSS, DEI has become one of the agency’s top priorities within our VDSS strategic framework as work moves forward to Cultivate an Increasingly Diverse, Engaged, and High-Performing Workforce (Goal 4) and establish a cross-functional DEI Council to develop frameworks, promote activation, and monitor progress of employee and customer-driven DEI initiatives. The Council will help develop and implement DEI strategies across the social services system that will ultimately improve outcomes for employees, stakeholders, partners, and the communities served (Strategy 4.1.2).

The Division of Family Services (DFS) has begun to examine ways to recognize and address areas of disparity and disproportionality in child welfare. After the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Amaud Aubrey occurred, DFS leadership took the time to assess staff emotions, reflections, and reactions and committed to challenge racial injustices. DFS recognizes the importance of bringing attention to this disparity, discussing it, and developing strategies to make meaningful change. At all levels of DFS, staff are engaged in activities and conversations to work toward creating a more equitable workplace and community. A sampling of the activities and conversations conducted during 2020 are discussed in greater detail below.

The Division of Family Services (DFS) is committed to fostering a workplace that is diverse, inclusive, and prioritizes equity in all matters - both internal and external. The division has created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee that has been charged with developing initiatives that bolster diversity of thought and perspective within the agency, including, but not limited to, providing educational materials, raising awareness, resolving issues posed, and leading DEI in all facets of the division's work. The DEI Committee broadly defines diversity to include the internal, external and organizational dimensions as illustrated. This Committee will align strategies with the VDSS DEI Council. The Protection Program Manager and Hotline Operations Supervisor are members of this committee.

During a DFS semi-annual state team meeting, Dr. Robert Vinson, professor in the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies at the University of Virginia, was invited to share his research around Virginia’s history and how that history effects life today; highlighting the effects of discrimination based on race, gender, age, and sexual orientation and identity. Dr. Vinson brought a unique perspective to staff at a critical and pivotal time. His conversation was both honest and uplifting, sharing a truly eye-opening lesson on race and the origins of disparity. Staff was asked to consider questions like “From a reparative justice standpoint, what is one action that we as an agency could perform to move towards justice and trustworthiness?” and “What are the disadvantages and advantages of Racial Tracking?”

A list of racial equity resources have been compiled and shared with staff in an effort for individuals to begin the process of self-reflection and understanding of internal bias, prejudice, and to encourage conversations. CQI staff provided an introduction to disparity and

disproportionality during an all DFS staff meeting. A concerted effort has been made to include data in each meeting, both internally and with LDSS, around racial inequalities.

DFS hosts monthly Lunch & Learn events that focus on a variety of topics, including for example Child Abuse Prevention Month, Foster Care Awareness Month, and Black History Month, just to name a few. During each of these events, a team of subject matter experts present to their colleagues, always including topic relevant disparity and disproportionality data. There are frequent opportunities during these monthly events to engage in discussion about the data and discuss areas for growth.

Through the Title IV-E Child Welfare Stipend Program (CWSP), a workforce development program of DFS, Bachelors and Masters of Social Work students have the opportunity to receive specialized training, coursework, and field placements that prepare them for a career in public child welfare. As future public child welfare workers, these exceptional students engage in many specialized events, including events focused on DEI. Virginia Commonwealth University hosted a racial justice webinar titled “Systemic Racism, Disproportionality and Equity in Child Welfare: Our History and Where to Focus Our Change Efforts”. The webinar featured staff from DFS, local departments, and community partners and was moderated by two CWSP students. DFS is participating in a two year-long project, the Underserved Population Learning Collaborative (UPLC), in partnership with the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance. The UPLC is designed to build agency capacity to apply a social justice framework to intervention and prevention services and programs for survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence. Some of the common barriers to services identified in a statewide needs assessment from 2014-2015 included personal or historical experience of racism, ageism, anti-immigration policies/attitudes, sexism, and/or homophobia on the part of service providers and systems, and the lack of culturally representative service providers.

DFS developed a Parent Advisory Council in partnership with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance (CTFA) and Casey Family Programs. Development of the Parent Council is part of the effort to ensure equity in policies and guidance through input from parents with lived experience.

DFS collaborated with the Virginia Department of Health, the Family and Children’s Trust Fund (FACT), and Families Forward (Virginia’s Prevent Child Abuse chapter) to submit a proposal for federal technical assistance to test comprehensive prevention model based on strategic partnerships and shared responsibility to achieve greater equity in families’ access to prevention services to enhance well-being. Virginia was selected as one of 12 jurisdictions to participate in this Round Two of the Thriving Families, Safer Children opportunity hosted by the Children’s Bureau, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Prevent Child Abuse America. The technical assistance received through this opportunity will further work towards greater equity in access and service provision to all families, utilizing the voices of lived experience, collaborating with partners who can be most responsive to the unique needs within distinct communities, and address disparities in service access.

The Protection program has reviewed preliminary data of racial group representation at different decision points in the Protection process. DFS is committed to continuing conversations and examining legislation, regulation, guidance, and practice to determine ways to improve the work we do and attempt to remove discriminatory practices and attitudes. Activities have been added to the strategic plan to examine data related to prevention, protection, permanency, and the workforce and determine action steps for addressing critical issues.

In-Home services provide an opportunity to partner with families to assess strengths, needs, protective factors, and what services may be needed to ensure the safety of the child and prevent out of home placement. New In-Home services practice guidance ensures consistent and meaningful engagement with families and identified supports in decision-making, to include Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) to be held every 90 days and Family Partnership Meetings (FPM) to be held at all critical decision points.

We look forward to continuing our work together. Please let us know if you have any additional questions. Again, we thank you for serving as one of our Citizen Review Panels.

Sincerely,

*Shannon Hartung/uls*

Shannon Hartung  
CPS Program Manager

Cc: Kimberly Huhn Murphy, Children's Bureau

# **Report to the CASA/CJA Advisory Committee**

**January 28, 2022 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

## ***Children’s Justice Act (CJA)***

**Prepared by: Jenna L. Foster, Children’s Justice Act Coordinator - DCJS**

### **I. Minor Human Trafficking Victims Collaboration**

The CJA Coordinator is collaborating with the State Human Trafficking Coordinator, Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA), and Child Advocacy Center Directors to collect specific data on the prevalence of minors involved in human trafficking. Data will be collected via Qlarion using the Virginia Analytics Systems for Trafficking (VAST) data collection platform.

### **II. MDT Statewide Support from CJA**

In past years, CJA has offered Multidisciplinary Teams across Virginia training and technical assistance in order to meet the expectations of each mandated team (written in Virginia Code). Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA) has developed a four-series cohort for MDT members including law enforcement, advocates, CAC staff, and legal personnel has been planned for March-June 2022. CJA is exploring the opportunity to partner to fill gaps.

### **III. Cross-Systems Collaboration Summit**

A Cross-Systems Collaboration Summit is being developed with CJA and other child-serving agencies to promote communication, collaboration, and cooperation with child abuse investigations across disciplines. This summit is likely to be held virtually.

### **IV. Needs of Children’s Services in Domestic/Sexual Violence Shelter Programs**

In Summer 2021, domestic and sexual violence shelters in Virginia were surveyed to access their service availability for child/youth victims. Based on initial results, training on vicarious trauma and substance use with minor victims were provided to child-serving professionals. Discussions continue with DV/SV program grant monitors to identify programmatic gaps and challenges that may be supported by CJA.

### **Other Child Related Grant Monitoring:**

- V.** Eighteen Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) opted to receive one-time ARPA funding from DCJS. Programs used funding to support additional staff, essential materials, staff training, and therapeutic support services for victims and staff.

# **Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act Programs By-Laws**

## **ARTICLE I**

### **Name**

The name of this Committee shall be the Advisory Committee to Court-Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act Programs (Advisory Committee).

## **ARTICLE II**

### **Purpose**

#### **Section 1.**

The purpose of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program shall be to advise the Criminal Justice Services Board on all matters relating to the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program and the needs of the clients served by the program; to make recommendations as it may deem necessary and proper, and to carry out such responsibilities assigned to it under Chapter 1 of Title 9 of the Code of Virginia (Sections 9.1-151 through 9.1-157).

#### **Section 2.**

The Advisory Committee shall oversee the Children’s Justice Act Program, and in this capacity serve as the advisory body for the purposes of Virginia’s participation in this federal program for improving the investigation and judicial handling of child abuse pursuant to: Section 107 (c) (d) and (e) of Title I of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) [U.S.C.42, 5106c] as amended by Public Law (P.L) 111-320 “The CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010”, which provides for a Task Force on Children’s Justice.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Members**

#### **Section 1.**

Membership of the Advisory Committee to the Court-Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act Programs is established by Section 9.1-151 of the Code of Virginia and Section 107 (c) of Title 1 of CAPTA.

#### **Section 2.**

The Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB) shall appoint members to the Advisory Committee to the Court-Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act Programs. However, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Commissioner of the



Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), ~~and~~ the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and the Director of the Office of the Children's Ombudsman or their designee may serve as ex officio members without appointment by the CJSB. Further, an individual experienced in working with homeless children and youth as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act required by the Children's Justice Act may serve as an ex officio member without appointment by the CJSB.

### Section 3.

Members of the Advisory Committee shall refrain from voting on any grant or contract which would have a direct financial impact upon the agency or organization which they serve, or the office they hold by virtue of employment, appointment, or election, or which would have a direct financial impact upon the political subdivision in which they serve by virtue of employment, appointment, or election.

### Section 4.

If any member's lack of attendance causes concern, DCJS staff may inform the Chairperson, who shall then call the absences to the attention of the member and may recommend to the committee whatever action he or she deems appropriate in the circumstances.

### Section 5.

Members of the Advisory Committee may appoint a substitute if they will be unavoidably absent from a meeting. Such appointments should be made in writing to DCJS via e-mail, and received at least 24 hours in advance of each meeting which the members will be unable to attend when practicable. Substitutes attending meetings of the Advisory Committee and its subcommittees may participate in discussion; however, they shall not have voting privileges.

## ARTICLE IV

### Terms of Office

#### Section 1.

The Criminal Justice Services Board shall appoint Advisory Committee members for four-year terms of office.

#### Section 2.

Appointed members shall be limited to serving a maximum of two consecutive terms of office. However, the members representing the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the McKinney-Vento Act representative, may serve without term limits.

## ARTICLE V

### Officers

#### Section 1.

The Advisory Committee shall elect a Chairperson from its membership biennially.

#### Section 2.

The Advisory Committee shall elect a Vice Chairperson from its membership biennially.

#### Section 3.

In even-numbered years, the Advisory Committee shall biennially elect officers at the last meeting of the year prior to July 1. Those elected shall take office effective July 1.

#### Section 4.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall preside at meetings. In the event of the absence of both the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, the Chairperson shall appoint a Chairperson Pro Tempore and, if he does not, the quorum of members present at any meeting shall elect a Chairperson Pro Tempore to preside for the meeting.

#### Section 5.

In the event that the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson does not serve their full term, the Advisory Committee shall elect a new Chairperson or Vice Chairperson from its membership to fill the unexpired term.

## ARTICLE VI

### Meetings

#### Section 1.

The Advisory Committee shall schedule four regular meetings a year. The Chairperson shall fix the times and places of the meetings, either on his own motion or upon written request of any five members of the Committee. The annual schedule of meetings shall be set at the last meeting prior to September 1.

#### Section 2.

Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson or may be called at the request of any three members.

#### Section 3.

A majority of the Advisory Committee shall constitute a quorum to do business. Decisions may be made by the majority of those present and voting.

Section 4.

Whenever possible and practical, Advisory Committee meetings and such meetings of subcommittees of the Committee as may be necessary shall be scheduled for the same day, or on adjacent days, to save travel and lodging costs.

Section 5.

The Department of Criminal Justice Services staff shall be responsible for the recording and maintenance of minutes and records of the Advisory Committee and its subcommittees and perform such additional duties as shall be assigned by the Committee or its Chairperson. The Department of Criminal Justice Services shall provide staff support to the Advisory Committee.

Section 6.

Any materials or supporting documents associated with the upcoming meeting shall be provided in advance of the meeting when practicable.

## ARTICLE VII

### Committees

Section 1.

The Chairperson shall appoint such subcommittees as needed to carry out the work of the Advisory Committee.

Section 2.

Subcommittees shall make their reports to the Advisory Committee. Whenever possible and feasible, the written report shall be distributed to the Advisory Committee members prior to the meeting.

## ARTICLE VIII

### Parliamentary Authority

The Rules contained in the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Advisory Committee and its subcommittees in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special order the Advisory Committee may adopt.

## ARTICLE IX

### Amendments of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Advisory Committee by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided that the amendment has been submitted in

writing at the previous regular meeting and provided that the amendment is not in conflict with any applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

| Revised: ~~July 31, 2020~~

---

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT  
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Discussion Summary

October 29, 2021

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held virtually on January 28, 2022. The Committee met virtually pursuant to the current budget language which allows for meeting by electronic communications means without a quorum of the public body physically assembled at one location if the meeting is being held solely to receive presentations, updates or other forms of information gathering. The Advisory Committee shall not take any votes or make any formal recommendations.

Members Present

Regina Baker  
Randy Bonds  
Jackie Robinson Brock  
Kim Barbarji  
Robin Foster  
Shardell Gerald  
Allison Gilbreath  
Shannon Hartung  
Katharine Hunter  
Judge Jerrauld Jones  
Jennifer Newman for Sandy Karison  
Jeannine Panzera  
Pat Popp  
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair  
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Giselle Pelaez

Staff Present

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

Guests

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

- I. **Welcome and Introductions:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, invited members to introduce themselves.
- II. **Presentation on by-laws revision:** Members received a copy of the proposed revised by-laws in advance of the meeting. The change includes the addition of the Director of the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman to the membership of the advisory committee. Members will vote on the change at the April meeting.
- III. **General Assembly Session: Presentation of Bills of Interest** – DCJS and members of the committee reported on bills of interest introduced during the 2022 General Assembly session regarding the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.
- IV. **Advisory Committee Member Presentations on Three Year Plan Recommendations 1 & 2**

Members reviewed the Three Year Plan Recommendations 1 and 2 and presented feedback based upon the specific discipline they represent on the committee. In addition to the input provided in the presentation of legislation above, members provided information on activities, trainings, strategies, gaps in services and policies relative to the plan recommendations Members were asked to share with DCJS what additional information they feel would be helpful for the next Three Year planning process in the fall.

V. **Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel**

The Committee received a written report from the Virginia Department of Social Services providing an update on the progress made on the 2021 Citizen Review Panel recommendations. Shannon Hartung provided additional information and updates from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

The Committee will make 2022 Citizen Review Panel Recommendations at the April meeting.

VI. **Adjournment**

Before adjournment, the Chair invited members to share updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, April 22, 2022

Friday, July 22, 2022