

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

April 30, 2021

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on April 30, 2021. As a result of the state of emergency declared by Governor Northam due to COVID-19, the Advisory Committee conducted this meeting by electronic communication means without a quorum of the Committee physically assembled at one location. However, a quorum was present virtually.

Members Present

Regina Baker
Kim Barbarji
Molly Dellinger-Wray
Robin Foster
Shardell Gerald
Shannon Hartung
Katharine Hunter
Judge Jerrauld Jones
Sandy Karison
Jennifer Newman
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Randy Bonds
Allison Gilbreath

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Melissa O'Neill (DCJS)
McKenna Whitmore (Intern, DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)

Guests

Sally Erny, NCASA/GAL Association
Lora Smith, Virginia DSS

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. A verbal roll call was taken.

- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the January 29, 2021 meeting. Ashley Thompson made a motion to approve the minutes. Jerrauld Jones provided a second. Giselle Pelaez, Molly Dellinger-Wray and Jeannine Panzera abstained. The motion was approved.
- III. **Introduction of Guests and New Members:** Judge Sotelo welcomed new members, Jeannine Panzera, Henrico CASA Executive Director who will be serving as the local CASA program representative, and Katharine Hunter who will be serving as the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities representative. He then welcomed special guest, Sally Erny, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Network Operations Officer from the National CASA/GAL Association. Ms. Erny is observing the committee meeting as part of the NCASA/GAL Highly Effective Standards Review Process.
- IV. **Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Filings:** Committee members were reminded of the annual financial disclosure filings and biennial Conflict of Interest Act training requirements. The Ethics Council emailed committee members directly with instructions for completing the filing of forms. Members should have completed financial disclosure forms in February, 2021. Those members required to complete the Conflict of Interest Act training were notified last week by email.
- V. **Legislative Update:** Committee members were provided in advance of the meeting with an overview of bills passed during the 2021 General Assembly Session. Bills were highlighted that are of interest to the committee related to the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.
- VI. **CASA Program Update** - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. Melissa O’Neill highlighted the inclusion of the FY20 CASA Annual Statistics Report and Salary Survey. The committee was provided with an updated State Leadership Team Strategic Plan in advance of the meeting for review. A brief discussion was held regarding these documents with opportunity for questions and feedback.

Terry Willie-Surratt provided an overview of the development of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) committee for the CASA programs. The State Leadership Team (SLT) identified the need to add a DE&I committee to the SLT in 2021. The Advisory Committee was briefed on the work of the committee to date.

Melissa O’Neill provided an overview of the recently revised NCASA/GAL Local Program Standards with specific emphasis on impacts for Virginia’s CASA programs.

The committee held a discussion on the development of guidance for local programs on the implementation of the changes in the *Code of Virginia* allowing CASA volunteers to attend and participate in certain collaborative stakeholder meetings in between hearings. DCJS staff will continue to seek additional input and feedback from stakeholders and will develop a draft policy for the committee to consider at the July meeting.

- VII. **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.

Three Year Assessment: Six recommendations were adopted by the Advisory Committee last year. Our work regarding training, collaboration, and technical assistance using a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion continues in all deliverables. In Fall 2020, professionals involved with children's programming at local domestic and sexual violence centers were surveyed to assess training needs and gaps that may be filled by CJA. Training and technical assistance around trauma, self-care, community-building and collaboration were most needed.

CJA Annual Grantees Meeting: The 2021 Annual Meeting will be held virtually on May 5-6, 2021. Judge Sotelo and Jenna Foster, CJA Coordinator, will be participating. As a reminder, all states are required to participate in this meeting.

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

Development of 2021 Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Recommendations: Members were provided a draft set of recommendations developed during the January 29, 2021 meeting in advance for review. Judge Sotelo led the committee in a discussion of the recommendations as presented. Amendments were made to the draft document during the discussion. A motion was made by Jerrauld Jones to accept the amended 2021 CRP Recommendations, a second was made by Jennifer Newman. Jeannine Panzera abstained. The motion carried. The 2021 CRP Recommendations will be forwarded to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

IX. **New Business**

Pat Popp shared the state of Virginia Department of Education will be receiving 13 million dollars to serve the educational needs of homeless students in the next year.

- X. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Next meeting dates:

July 30, 2021