

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

July 22, 2022

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held on July 22, 2022 at the Henrico Police Training Center in Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present - In Person

Kim Barbarji
Katharine Hunter
Jennifer Newman for Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Eric Reynolds
Lora Smith for Shannon Hartung
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Randy Bonds
Allison Gilbreath
Pat Popp

Members Present - Virtual

Jackie Robinson Brock
Shardell Gerald

Judge Jerrauld Jones

Location/Reason

Louisa/Personal – Business
Newport News/Personal – Location
of meeting
Norfolk/Personal – Business

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Melissa O’Neill (DCJS)
Sarah Bradley (Intern – DCJS)

- I. **Call to Order:** Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM. Members introduced themselves. Members participating remotely via Zoom identified the reason and location of participation per the approved policy.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the April 22, 2022 meeting. Eric Reynolds made a motion to approve the minutes. Jennifer Newman provided a second. Shardell Gerald abstained and the motion was approved.
- III. **Meeting Dates for Upcoming Year**
Members discussed the following meeting dates for the upcoming year:

Friday, October 28, 2022 (Three-Year Planning Meeting full day)
Friday, January 27, 2023
Friday, April 28, 2023
Friday, July 28, 2023

Jennifer Newman made a motion to approve the meeting dates as presented. Eric Reynolds provided a second. The motion carried.

- IV. **CASA Program Update** - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. The committee also received a copy of the Virginia CASA State Leadership Team (SLT) Strategic Plan, which was provided for feedback and comment. The Strategic Plan provides information on strategies implemented to accomplish the overall recommendation on the CJA Three-Year plan related to supporting CASA programs. Committee members discussed the Strategic Plan. It was noted that the reference to the “Director of VDSS” should be changed to “Commissioner.”

Jeannine Panzera provided an update on the Statewide Volunteer Recruitment Campaign. DCJS made funding available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for the purpose of developing a statewide volunteer recruitment effort. The grant allowed for the development of CASA commercials and targeted recruitment. The measure of the success of the campaign is through the analytics of the traffic to the VA CASA website. Ms. Panzera shared details of the success of the effort to date. The highlights include an 86% increase of new website visits. The words “Virginia CASA” when searched on Google moved to #17 in statewide searches and to #5 in nationwide searches.

- 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.

Jenna Foster provided an update on the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) training project. A stakeholder group including representatives from DCJS, VDSS, Child Advocacy Centers of Virginia (CACVA), and the Commonwealth Attorney Services Council (CASC) is working on a collaboration project to provide MDT training, support, and technical assistance in regions of the Commonwealth that have nonfunctioning or partially functioning MDTs. These regions include the Eastern Shore, Western region (Craig, Cumberland), Southside (Mecklenburg, Halifax, Brunswick), and the Culpeper area. The group has tapped into existing resources to initially plan for a regional basic MDT training program in late Fall/Winter.

Three-Year Plan Update Discussion

The Committee reviewed goals 5 and 6 on the Three-Year Plan. Goal 5 is focused on the implementation, development and growth of CASA programs. Goal 6 is focused on the support efforts that enhance collaboration among local courts and child welfare stakeholders and consistency of judicial handling of child abuse cases. Members shared various activities currently underway from the disciplines that they represent.

Information provided will aid in the creation of the next three-year strategic plan that will take place during the full day Advisory Committee Planning Meeting on Friday, October 28, 2022 at St. Joseph's Villa in Richmond.

VI. Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel

Lora Smith, Virginia Department of Social Services, provided a brief update indicating the recommendations from the Committee have been received. The Department of Social Services will review and begin to provide a response for future meetings.

VII. New Business/Member Announcements

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

VIII. Adjourn – Giselle Pelaez moved to adjourn the meeting and Ashley Thompson provided the second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:55 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, October 28, 2022 (Three-Year Planning Meeting full day)

Friday, January 27, 2023

Friday, April 28, 2023

Friday, July 28, 2023