



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

Topic: CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Meeting
Time: Jan 29, 2021 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83740975400>

Meeting ID: 837 4097 5400

Passcode: casacja21!

One tap mobile

Meeting ID: 837 4097 5400

Passcode: 5905893678

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83740975400>

AGENDA

January 29, 2021

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
2. **Approval of Past Minutes**
3. **Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Filings**
4. **CASA Program Update**
5. **CJA Program Update**
6. **Citizen Review Panel – Shannon Hartung- Virginia Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services Program Manager**
 - a. **Recommendations for 2021**
 - b. **Foster care update – Lora Smith, Virginia Department of Social Services, Foster Care Program Manager**
 - c. **In-home implementation – Elizabeth Lee, Assistant Division Director of Protection and Prevention Programs**
7. **Legislative Review**
8. **New Business**
9. **Adjournment**

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Meeting

January 29, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

REPORT: *Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs*

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

I. CASA Operations During COVID Pandemic

During the COVID crisis, DCJS continues to provide leadership and support to the CASA program network to assist in navigating this unprecedented time. DCJS facilitated four COVID Network Support meetings using virtual technology during this past quarter. Meeting agendas include topics to assist programs with navigating program operations and management. Meetings are held every three weeks.

II. State Leadership Team Updates

The State Leadership Team (SLT) met in November to continue to further goals of the Strategic Plan. The SLT will be adding two new committees in 2021. These include Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Legislative. The following is a highlight of accomplishments of the SLT efforts during this reporting period.

1. Data Committee

DCJS continued to facilitate a CASA Manager Workgroup to develop a Virginia CASA Manager Practice Guide. This work is anticipated to continue throughout 2021.

2. Training Committee

DCJS continued to facilitate meetings for the Training Committee to update the Pre-Service Training to adapt to the Virginia Case Studies Curriculum.

The CASA College successfully launched for volunteers in the fall. Volunteers were welcomed as “CASA College” participants and invited to future training events. The first training event was the inaugural “Advo-chat” held on November 17, 2020. The training was facilitated by the Honorable Thomas Sotelo and focused on Judicial Perspectives on CASA Reports. Over 350 CASA volunteers attended the session. The second Advo-chat is scheduled for January 19, 2021 and will focus on Special Education Advocacy.

DCJS facilitated a training in partnership with the Training Committee for CASA program directors on the topic of Legal Requirements and Best Practices during COVID19. The training was provided by the Richmond area law firm, Sands Anderson, on November 16, 2020.

III. FY22 CASA Grants

DCJS is working to facilitate the transition to a new grants management system. The new system, Online Grants Management System (OGMS), will be launched February 1, 2021. CASA programs will be required to submit FY22 grant applications using OGMS. DCJS staff are learning the new system and are working to create training and technical support for CASA programs.

IV. Regulatory Revision

The National CASA/GAL Standards for Local Programs were finalized and released on December 23, 2020. The release of the Standards will enable DCJS to begin the process of revising the Regulations for CASA programs.

V. Highly Effective Standards Review Process

DCJS was notified by NCASA/GAL of the pending Highly Effective Standards Review Process (HESRP) in December. DCJS provided several dates in April and June for the two-day review and is waiting for confirmation.

CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Meeting

January 29, 2021, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

REPORT: *Children's Justice Act (CJA)*

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

I. CHILD DEATH INVESTIGATION PROTOCOL TRAINING

Due to COVID-19, the seven live trainings scheduled for Summer/Fall 2020 were cancelled. A virtual option is now being created. DCJS is working with Justice 3D to host one virtual live training via Zoom then convert all content to slides and accompanying documents that can be accessed via a Learning Management System.

II. CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS OF VIRGINIA (CACVA)

CJA has always worked closely with CACVA and local CAC centers to provide programmatic support and technical assistance. CJA will soon be working with CACs to provide formula grant funding, grant monitoring, and increased technical assistance to meet goals outlined in grant submissions.

III. MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMMING

CJA has partnered with the Center for Campus Safety at DCJS to promote mental health trainings for child welfare workers. Several trainings beginning in April are scheduled to provide mental health training to professionals that work directly with child victims under the age of 21.

IV. ADDITIONAL TRAINING NEEDS

Over the last six months, additional training to understand substance use and how parent/guardian usage affects children, and building equity and inclusion within children's services in domestic and sexual violence centers has been requested. CJA is working with external partners to identify current training offerings and/or host training specifically for child welfare professionals that addresses these issues.

Pursuant to § 2.2-3707.1 of the Code of Virginia this DRAFT of the minutes of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Advisory Committee is available to the public. The public is cautioned that the information is provided in DRAFT form and is subject to change by the Advisory Committee prior to becoming final. Once the minutes have been finalized, they will be marked “FINAL” and made available to the public.

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

October 30, 2020

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held on October 30, 2020. 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

Robin Foster
Shardell Gerald
Shannon Hartung
Eric Reynolds for Sandy Karison
Jennifer Newman
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp, Outgoing Chair
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Incoming Chair
Ashley Thompson

Members Not Present

Molly Dellinger-Wray
Allison Gilbreath
Judge Jerrauld Jones
Malcolm King
Ashley Thompson

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Melissa O’Neill (DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)
McKenna Whitmore (VCU MSW Student
Intern)

Guests:

Lora Smith – Virginia Department of Social
Services Foster Care Program Manager

- I. **Call to Order:** Pat Popp, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:07 AM. A verbal roll call was taken.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** The committee received and reviewed the draft minutes of the July 31, 2020 meeting. Judge Thomas Sotelo made a motion to approve the July 31, 2020 minutes. Shannon Hartung provided a second. Motion was approved by verbal roll call vote.
- III. **Election of Officers:** The committee was presented with a slate of officers for consideration to include Judge Thomas Sotelo as Chair and Pat Popp as Vice-Chair. There was no discussion and a verbal vote was taken. The slate was unanimously approved. Judge Sotelo assumed duties of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.
- IV. **CASA Program Update** - The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program. Melissa O'Neill informed the committee of the intention of the Department to revise the CASA regulations in the coming year. Committee members were provided with a presentation on the National CASA/GAL Association Highly Effective Standards Review Process (HESRP). The HESRP is the quality assurance process to assess state organizations adherence to NCASA/GAL state standards. Terry Willie-Surratt, CASA program Grant Monitor and Quality Assurance Coordinator, provided an update on the status of grant monitoring activities.
- 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 the following areas of interest.

The Advisory Committee engaged in a discussion on the Three Year Plan recommendations to provide input on progress.

- VI. **Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel** – Shannon Hartung, Child Protective Services Program Manager, Virginia Department of Social Services, provided an overview of the Department of Social Services continued response during the pandemic. Members were updated on the Department's successful response to "overdue referrals" resulting in timely closures of cases. The Department collaborated with the Department of Education and Families Forward to develop a training for mandated reporters in a virtual environment ([Preventing Child Maltreatment in a Virtual Learning Environment](#)).

Members were briefed on the newly developed Mandated Reporter website (on-line reporting system). The site is nearly complete and will serve as an additional tool to report non-emergent child abuse and neglect concerns.

Members were provided with an update on the Department's response to child victims of sex trafficking.

Ms. Lora Smith, Foster Care Program Manager, Virginia Department of Social Services has agreed to attend future Advisory Committee meetings since many of the Citizen Review Panel recommendations address concerns in the foster care area.

VII. **New Business** – No new business.

VIII. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 12:09 PM.

Next meeting dates:

January 29, 2021

April 30, 2021

July 30, 2021



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

December 15, 2020

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 evaluation of our Child Protective Service Program by our Citizen Review Panels is critical to the improvement of our program for the children of the Commonwealth.

We have reviewed your recommendations and thank you for your input. We offer the following responses to your recommendations:

Child Trafficking

VDSS developed program guidance on the child welfare system's new response to all complaints involving the human trafficking of a child in order to comply with legislation passed during the 2019 Session of the General Assembly. VDSS provided five virtual training sessions on the new legislation and program guidance in June of 2019 to approximately 500 participants. Training was provided to ensure local departments of social services (LDSS) were prepared for implementation on July 1, 2019. Additionally, VDSS made regulatory changes to 22VAC40-705 to comply with the new legislation passed regarding the child welfare system's response to the trafficking of children in the Commonwealth. VDSS also made a number of system enhancements to their child welfare information system, OASIS, in order to improve the system's ability to capture data on the prevalence of child trafficking.

During State Fiscal Year 2020, local departments of social services (LDSS) completed 25 human trafficking assessments, conducted 17 investigations involving allegations of sex trafficking, and 32 additional victims of sex trafficking were identified on existing child welfare cases.

To enhance our partnership with existing community resources and expand the capacity of services available to serve this population, VDSS' human trafficking workgroup became a sub-committee of the legislative sanctioned Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinating Committee led by

the Department of Criminal Justice Services. As a result, the sub-committee is now co-led by VDSS and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Additionally, VDSS collaborated with the Virginia State Crime Commission on legislation passed during the 2020 session of the Virginia General Assembly, which changed the name of the sex trafficking assessment to the “human trafficking assessment”. “Human trafficking” encompasses both sex and labor trafficking which more adequately reflects the requirement in the code to respond to complaints involving allegations of both sex and labor trafficking. This legislation also allowed LDSS conducting human trafficking assessments to interview the alleged child victim or their siblings without the consent of and outside the presence of the parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person standing in loco parentis, or school personnel.

Lastly, in order to continue to enhance our response to child victims of trafficking, VDSS has requested support from the Capacity Building Center for States to learn about other states and their response and services for child victims of trafficking.

State Hotline

Over the course of the last two years, VDSS, in conjunction with Hotline Leadership, has worked to address a number of challenges affecting the functionality and the wait times of the State Hotline.

VDSS developed and a new training course, CWS6000 State Hotline Specialist New Worker Training, designed to teach new workers the details of the daily operations of the State Hotline, the importance of providing professional and timely customer service to all callers, and the responsibilities of Hotline Specialists throughout their shift. The course is expected to be available in 2021.

In order to address the functionality of the hotline, VDSS reviews data consistently to assess peak call hours and wait times. Based on a review of the data, VDSS has made changes to existing hotline specialists and supervisors schedules in order to meet the call volumes during peak hours. VDSS has reiterated the requirement for hotline specialists and supervisors to work weekdays and weekends to ensure appropriate coverage during peak hours. VDSS continues to assess and update internal operational policies and protocols to enhance the efficiency of hotline specialists.

VDSS developed and implemented a new Mandated Reporter Portal, [VaCPS](#), which allows mandated reporters an option to submit reports of child maltreatment electronically. VaCPS went live on November 2, 2020 and 103 reports were submitted electronically through the portal in November. At this time, medical/hospital staff, counselor/therapist, and school staff have been identified as the top three mandated reporters using the portal. The average time for the State Hotline to retrieve and process a report from the portal and notify the LDSS has been less than one hour. Additionally, through a capacity building approach, VDSS provided a Community Awareness Kit for Local Departments of Social Services on the Mandated Reporter Portal to promote tailored outreach from the LDSS to all relevant community partners and providers. LDSS know their providers and partners best, through existing relationships with these organizations and individuals which will promote more rapid uptake of new processes and tools.

Family First Prevention Services Act

VDSS is enhancing our prevention program through multiple strategies. For many years, VDSS has provided critical funding to community programs with federal and state funds for primary and secondary prevention efforts (CBCAP funding, TANF funding for Health Families). We

continue to provide funding for these efforts and align the existing community-level programs with other state prevention initiatives. There are two other components of our prevention program: the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) and the Statewide Strategic Plan for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention.

VDSS launched efforts to align our In-Home practice with Family First, our Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) results and our Program Improvement Plan (PIP) in October 2020. In-Home practice is designed to serve children early and to provide support for families to support children remaining in their communities. In-Home practice will help families identify what they need, jointly identifying safety and risk concerns, and having regular engagement with their workers and have access to easily accessible, equitable, individualized services to reduce the reoccurrence of child maltreatment and increase protective factors. VDSS will provide support to LDSS to align In-Home practice through uniform guidance, practice support webinars, new and revised training curriculum through spring of 2021.

The passing of Family First represents the first federal funding stream dedicated to tertiary and some secondary prevention efforts. Families served through In-Home services are eligible to receive Family First funded services as outlined through federal requirements. All services funded through Family First funds must be evidenced-based mental health, substance use disorder, or in-home skill-based parenting services and included in the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. VDSS continues to assess the services that are approved for title IV-E funding on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and the identified needs in Virginia (e.g. home visiting and substance use disorder services). VDSS continues to work collaboratively with the Office of Children Services, Department of Medical Assistance Services and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services in aligning services and practice with the Behavioral Health Enhancement to ensure that all families in Virginia have access to high quality evidence based and trauma informed services despite the funding source for these services. Family First funding may be available as early as July 2021 if the state matching funds are made available through the General Assembly.

Through state general funds (SFY 20), VDSS provided training, at no cost to providers, for three evidence based programs identified on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and eligible to receive title IV-E funding upon implementing the prevention services program in Virginia (and contingent upon matching state funds). Five Multisystemic Therapy (MST) teams, five Functional Family Therapy (FFT) teams and 18 Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) clinicians were trained through this training opportunity. These new teams and clinicians are able to begin serving families immediately through the use of Children's Services Act (CSA) funding. As additional state funds are identified and available, VDSS will continue to provide training opportunities to enhance access to prevention services to strengthen families and reduce the need for unnecessary placements in foster care.

Child Fatality Investigations

VDSS continues to prioritize improving the standardization and uniformity in the response by our LDSS to child maltreatment fatalities and near-fatalities. VDSS has begun the development of a decision tree tool to be used by the LDSS when determining the validity of reports of child maltreatment fatalities or near-fatalities. The new decision tree tool will be trained and implemented in 2021. Additionally, VDSS has revised program guidance on child death investigations to enhance the standardization and uniformity in the response provided by our LDSS. VDSS anticipates publishing and training this new guidance in 2022.

VDSS provided subject matter expertise on the development of a Child Death Investigation Protocol for Law Enforcement produced by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). VDSS fully supports the implementation of this newly developed Child Death Investigation Protocol, which provides uniform guidance to CPS investigators and law enforcement.

The Child Fatality Specialist and CPS Regional Consultants provide technical assistance as needed to the LDSS to aid with validity determination, investigative process, and disposition. Additionally, each child welfare fatality or near-fatality reported to Virginia's child welfare system continues to be reviewed by the Child Fatality Specialist at VDSS and the CPS Regional Consultant who oversee validity determinations and monitor the investigations.

VDSS produces two annual statistical reports: the *Preliminary Report on Child Death Investigations* and the *Child Fatality Review Teams Annual Report*. Both reports will be published again in 2021. The [Preliminary Report on Child Death Investigations](#) is available on the agency's public website. VDSS also publishes annual child maltreatment data in the [Virginia Child Protection and Accountability System](#), a repository of child maltreatment data in the Commonwealth from the Department of Social Services, Virginia State Police, Circuit and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts, and Criminal Sentencing Commission, pursuant to § 63.2-1530 of the Code of Virginia.

Substance-Exposed Infants

VDSS continues cross-system collaboration to improve the response to substance-exposed infants across the Commonwealth by partnering with key and community stakeholders, including Department of Medical Assistance Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services, Department of Health, community hospitals, substance use treatment providers, and LDSS. VDSS remains an active participant in the Pathways to Coordinated Care workgroup led by the Virginia Department of Health and created in response to House Bill 1157 (2018) and whose purpose is the development, coordination and implementation of a plan of services for substance-exposed infants across the Commonwealth. Through this workgroup, five re-occurring themes related to services were identified: screening; data; coordination; education and communication. Each theme was assigned to a sub-workgroup that spent six months creating a work plan for each theme. The sub-workgroups identified theme goals as well as short, moderate and long-term objectives to achieve these goals. There was a significant staffing change at VDH in May, so the workgroup has been on hold until VDH can hire a new staff member.

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