

**Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate
and Children’s Justice Act Programs
Strategic Planning Meeting
October 28, 2022
St. Joseph’s Villa ~ 8000 Brook Rd, Richmond, VA 23227**

AGENDA

- 9:00am Welcome & Introductions
- Introductions
 - Purpose & Goals of Today’s Meeting
- Approval of 7/22/22 Meeting Minutes
- Overview of CJA Three-Year Plan Requirements
- 9:30am State of the Commonwealth: Current Initiatives
- Human Trafficking: Angella Alvernaz, State Trafficking Coordinator, DCJS
 - Highlight from VDSS, Shannon Hartung/Kathleen Hollywood
 - Family First
 - CRP
 - Eric Reynolds, Office of Children’s Ombudsman
 - State of the Office
 - Safe and Sound Task Force
 - Allison Gilbreath, Legislative Update
- 10:45am BREAK
- 11:00am Committee Member Presentations
- Jackie Brock
 - Randy Bonds
- 12:00pm Working Lunch
- 12:45pm Overview of Three-Year Plan Recommendations
- Purpose & Goals of Three-Year Plan
 - Identification Process of 2024-2027 Three-Year Plan Recommendations
- 1:00pm 2024-2027 Three-Year Plan Recommendations Group Activity*
- Incorporation of feedback from the field
- 1:45pm BREAK
- 2:00pm Sharing of the Proposed of 2024-2027 Three-Year Plan Recommendations*
- Do goals match CJA purpose and guidance?
 - Do goals align with other state initiatives?
 - Are there natural collaborations we are missing?
- 3:00pm Sharing of Recommendation Language*
- 3:30pm 2024-2027 Three-Year Plan Recommendations and Priorities
- 4:00pm Adjourn

* denotes group activity

DRAFT

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

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 Present - Virtual

Jackie Robinson Brock
Shardell Gerald

Judge Jerrauld Jones

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Randy Bonds
Allison Gilbreath
Pat Popp

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

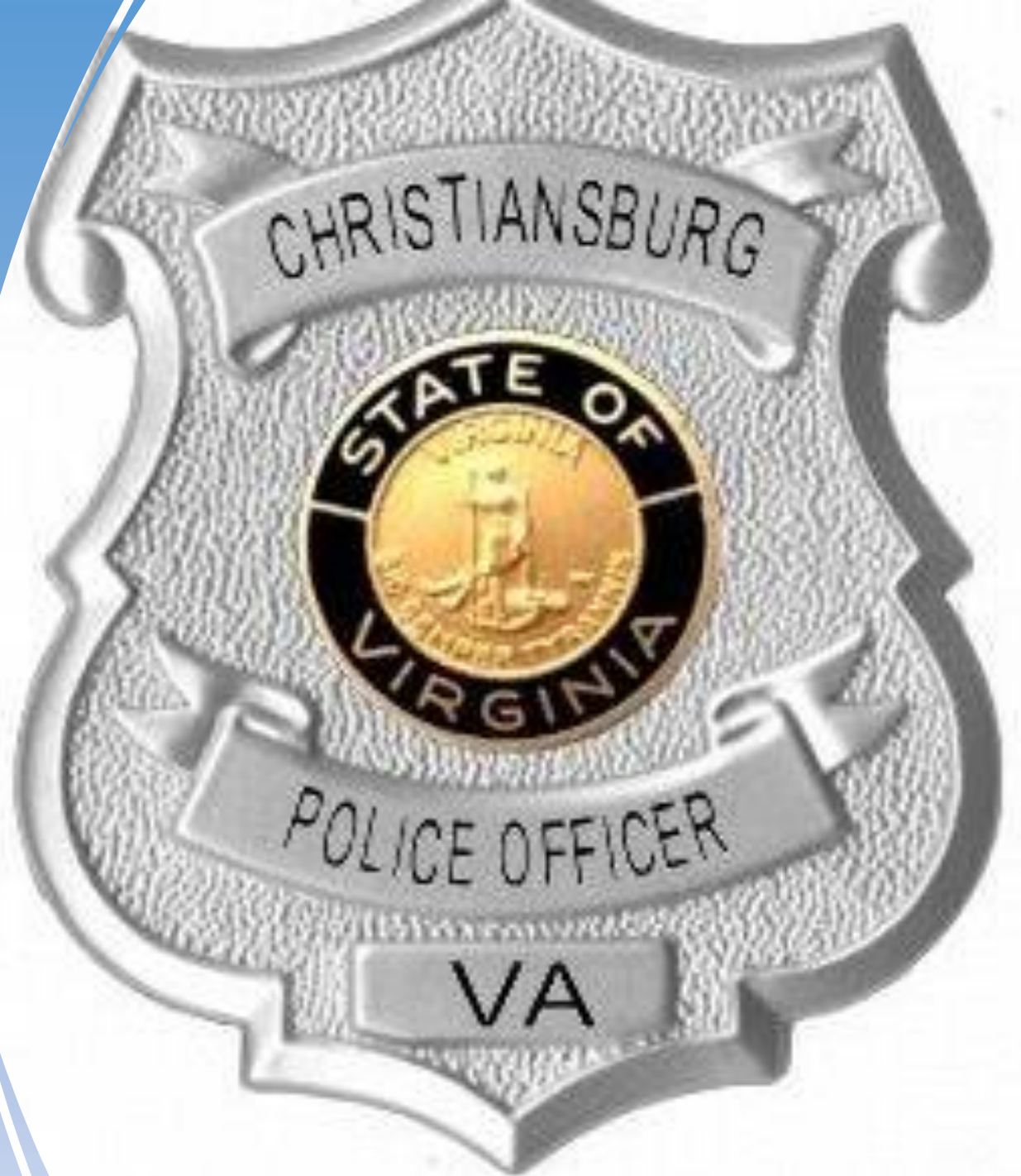
Friday, April 28, 2023

Friday, July 28, 2023

* denotes group activity

Child Abuse Investigation Challenges

From a Law Enforcement
Perspective



LE Challenges During Investigation of Child Abuse Cases

- The following slides are challenges that I am either seeing personally or been told about in my area/region of Virginia in relation to LE investigation of child abuse (physical/sexual/exploitation).
- The final slides are what I have seen that is really working well at my agency and what I believe is evidence that this model works.

Getting a Medical Opinion

- Medical Field seems hesitant to give a definite OR at least a probable “This is sexual or physical abuse”. Instead, we seem to be getting “It could be abuse or it could be.....”
- This doesn't seem to be problematic with our FNE's, but when talking with Dr's they don't seem to want to give their medical opinion.

Polygraph: Getting the Right Questions

- It is necessary to know exactly what crime has been committed so that polygraph questions can be tailored for that specific crime. Questions need to be relevant, or a guilty party may pass when they indeed did something wrong.
- This can be difficult since our victims are often too young to be able to accurately describe what took place or happened.
- Polygraph is a tool, not a **magical** tool which some investigators want to use it as.

Sextortion: Who and When are They Victim's?

- When investigating CP, especially with kids sending nudes of themselves to others....are they victims? Are they suspects?
- Taking the picture and distributing it are both felonies. How is LE treating this when speaking with the parents, many of whom have brought their child to the PD to file reports. When and how does LE inform them they have committed a crime(s)?
- Consent to search electronic devices VS. search warrant.....

CAC's: Does LE Taint the Interview?

- Some defense lawyers have argued that the CAC is not a non-biased interview. LE is present during the interview therefore the CAC is an extension of the LE process.
- Some agencies/CA Offices now want LE to not be at the CAC interview.
- This creates a problem. This is not the MDT model. If after watching the CAC interview LE needs more clarification that they could have gotten from the original interview, LE will now have to interview the child again, which defeats the purpose of having FI's done.

Evidence: Lab Times

- Lab times can be slow, especially for DNA results. This is even more true if there is no suspect to compare to or no charges have been placed in the case.
- Lab times for DNA can take 8 months to a year.

What is Going Right?

- Several years ago, the CPD made a dedicated position to just work DSS cases, primarily CPS cases. Before that one of the officers in ICAC worked a lot of the CPS cases but they also got distributed out into general investigations as well.
- Once that officer retired it was decided to make a dedicated DSS Family Services Investigator.
- That promotional process had stakeholder input. Representatives from DSS, Women's Resource Center, and CAC to name a few interviewed potential candidates. I also asked each rep to produce their own interview question(s).

What is Going Right?

- The relationship with DSS has flourished. They have a consistent contact at the PD.
- Training. I have sent this Investigator to child and special victims related trainings only. This person is being trained in this field only. They don't have to worry about working check fraud one case and child abuse the next.
- The results.....The last 3 years of the ICAC Sgt show he worked 113 child abuse cases. 16 misdemeanor guilty convictions, 6 felony convictions. His cases were open from assignment date to case disposition date (closed, warrant, exceptional clearance) 25 days. The last 3 years of the new FSI position.....140 cases worked, 15 misdemeanor convictions and 41 felony convictions. His cases were open from assignment to disposition date an average of 44 days. The ICAC Sgt had many more duties and cases. Only working DSS cases has allowed more time to be spent on cases and the felony convictions are what I believe to be a byproduct of that.

Christiansburg PD 6 Year Stats

	PREVIOUS ICAC INV	CURRENT FSI
CASES WORKED (3 YR SPAN)	113	140
MISDEMEANOR CONVICTIONS	16	15
FELONY CONVICTIONS	6	41
CASE OPEN TO DISPOSITION TIME (DAYS)	25	44

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in Virginia



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VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

School of Education | Partnership for
People with Disabilities



What is IECMH?



The optimal social, emotional, and cognitive well-being of children ages 0 to 6, developed by secure and stable relationships with nurturing caregivers.

Children's Mental Health In the United States

Mental, behavioral, and developmental disorders begin in early childhood

- 1 in 6 U.S. children aged 2–8 years (17.4%) had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.



What does IECMH look like in Virginia?

The most common mental health conditions for children are ADHD, behavior problems, anxiety, and depression.



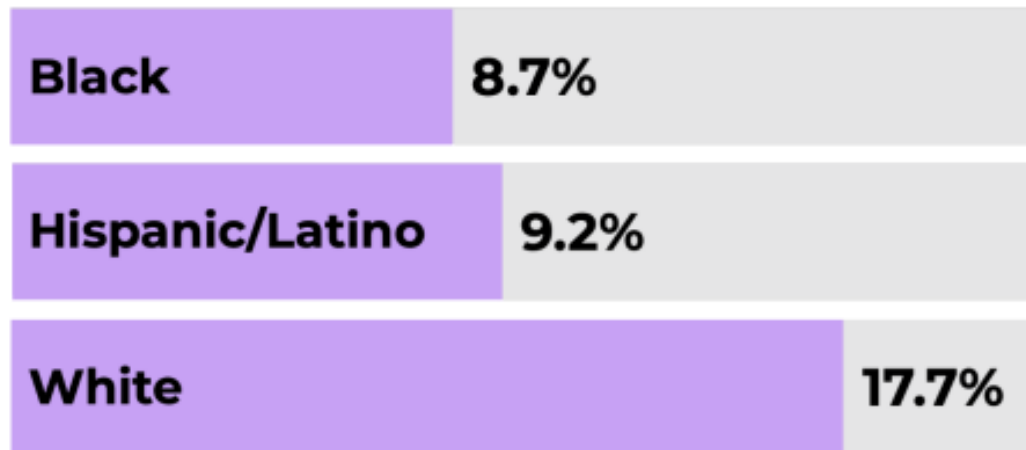
1 in 5

**children in Virginia
have mental health
conditions**

What does IECMH look like in Virginia?

Nationally, children of color are less likely to receive mental health care than white children.

Mental Health Treatment in the Past 12 Months



What does IECMH look like in Virginia?

Parents and children experienced a decline in their mental health during the pandemic.

PERCENT MENTAL HEALTH WORSENE

32%

of parents felt
anxious during
the pandemic

30%

of parents report their
children's mental
health has worsened
during the pandemic

Red Flags

- Self regulation challenges
- Difficulty participating in activities that are normal for your child's age
- Over or under stimulated
- Poor or dysregulated attachment between an infant and their parents or other caregivers
- Ongoing behavior problems at daycare, school, home or in the community



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

The foundation of all future development

Everyone who touches the life of a child can promote social and emotional well-being

Social and emotional development, or **infant and early childhood mental health**, is the developing capacity of a child from birth to 5 years old to...



Form close and secure
**adult and peer
relationships...**



Experience, manage
and express a **full
range of emotions...**



**Explore the
environment
and learn...**

...all in the context of family, community, and culture.



What are we doing?



The Virginia IMH Endorsement®



An individualized
“Professional Development Plan”
focused on
the **COMPETENCIES**
needed to fully support children’s
healthy relationships & attachment

<https://www.vaimh.org/>

Infant Mental Health and Attachment Course



<https://ocpe.vcu.edu/imh/>



VaLEND

Collaboration | Teamwork | Leadership

<https://virginialend.partnership.vcu.edu/>
valend@vcu.edu



Virginia Department of Social Services

people helping people

CASA/CJA Planning Meeting

October 28, 2022

Division of Family Services

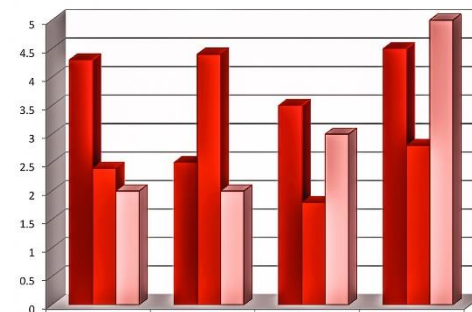
Child Protection System



Child Protection Data

State Fiscal Year (SFY) 21

- 30,223 valid reports of child abuse or neglect
 - 52,263 children were alleged to be victims in those valid reports
 - 73% children received a family assessment
 - 27% children received an investigation



- 1,320 reports of substance-exposed infants
 - 25 of those infants were the subsequent victim in a child fatality
- 15 human trafficking assessments were completed on 23 children
- 171 child death investigations conducted by local departments.
 - 35% founded for abuse/neglect
 - 63% unfounded
 - 2% still pending

Child Protection Trends



- Since COVID-19, law enforcement has been the largest reporter of child abuse and neglect complaints.
- Increased reporting and investigation of child maltreatment deaths.
- Under reporting of child trafficking.
- Continue to conduct more Family Assessments than Investigations.
- Top 3 types of abuse/neglect on valid reports:
 - ✓ 60% involved allegations of physical neglect
 - ✓ 22% involved allegations of physical abuse
 - ✓ 9% involved allegations of mental abuse

Area of Improvement



Goal: Build and/or Enhance relationships with local multi-disciplinary partners.

- ❖ DCJS, Regulatory Authorities, & VDSS leadership establish a state-wide vision for joint investigations.
- ❖ Develop training curriculum for multi-disciplinary partners on joint investigations.

Contact Information

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES



Division of
Family Services