

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

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