
COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN’S JUSTICE ACT
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Discussion Summary

January 27, 2023

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children’s Justice Act programs was held virtually on January 27, 2023. The Committee met virtually pursuant to the approved CASA/CJA Advisory Committee Remote Participation Policy.

Members Present

Kim Barbarji
Eugene Butler
Shamika Byars
Jackie Robinson Brock
Shardell Gerald
Shannon Hartung
Katharine Hunter
Judge Jerrauld Jones
Sandy Karison
Jeannine Panzera
Giselle Pelaez
Pat Popp
Eric Reynolds
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Chair

Members Not Present

Regina Baker
Randy Bonds
Allison Gilbreath
Ashley Thompson

Staff Present

Jenna Foster (DCJS)
Laurel Marks (DCJS)
Tony Nelson (DCJS)
Melissa O’Neill (DCJS)
Terry Willie-Surratt (DCJS)

Guests

Kathleen Hollywood (Virginia Department of Social Services)
Aaran Kelley (Virginia Department of Social Services)

- I. Call to Order**
Judge Thomas Sotelo, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01.
- II. Welcome and Introductions**
Judge Sotelo facilitated the roll call and introductions of members.
- III. Review of October 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes**
The Committee reviewed the minutes. No corrections were needed. The minutes will be approved during the next in-person meeting in April.

IV. General Assembly Session: Presentation of Bills of Interest

DCJS and members of the committee reported on bills of interest introduced during the 2023 General Assembly session regarding the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases.

V. Three-Year Plan Recommendation Review

Committee members reviewed and provided input on the Three-Year Plan recommendations for 2024 - 2027 developed during the planning meeting held in October 2022. Six recommendation themes emerged: MDT support: best practices; policy; CASA support; multi-systems training; and diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and access. Members reviewed the proposed recommendations language together. If members have additional feedback, it can be provided to the CJA Coordinator, Jenna Foster.

VI. CASA Program Update

The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program.

Melissa O’Neill led the committee in a discussion regarding the handling of complaints received by DCJS related to CASA programs. DCJS sought input from the committee in an effort to streamline the process and provide enhanced responses to both complainant and local CASA programs. Committee members provided input and advice for DCJS consideration to improve the complaint process.

VII. CJA Program Update

The committee was previously provided a written update regarding the Children’s Justice Act Program. One highlight of mention is the MDT Stakeholder Group. This group, originally convened by DCJS, is comprised of staff from DCJS, VDSS, CACVA, CASC, and the Southern Region CAC and is tasked with the development and facilitation of training and technical assistance for MDTs at varying levels of engagement (newly established - fully functional). These training sessions will be provided virtually and in-person. The first virtual trainings are tentatively scheduled to begin in March 2023.

VIII. Child Protective Services/Citizen Review Panel

Aaran Kelley, Family First Project Manager with the Virginia Department of Social Services, provided a presentation to the Committee on the status of the implementation of the Family First program. This presentation was in response to the Committee’s Citizen Review Panel recommendation to support prevention efforts and specifically the Family First Prevention Services Act.

IX. Adjournment

Before adjournment, the Chair invited members to share updates, information and news from their respective agencies and disciplines. Judge Sotelo adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM.

Next meeting dates:

Friday, April 28, 2023

Friday, July 28, 2023