

## **Child Abuse and Neglect Committee Meeting Minutes**

**September 30, 2020**

### **Remote Meeting**

**Meeting attendees:** Ginny Powell, FACT Board; Jeanine Harper, GRSCAN; Nicole Shipp, VDSS; Anya Shafer, DCJS; Ellen White, VA Courts; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; McKenna Whitmor, Intern w/ DCJS; Michelle L'Hommedieu, OAG; Betty Wade Coyle, Craig Patterson, VDSS; Quyen Duong, DOE; Shannon Hartung, VDSS; Jenna Easton, DJJ; Kat Monusky, SDVAA, Katherine Hunter, DBHDS; Amy Strite, Family Lifeline; Angela Alvernaz, DCJS; Betsy Bell; DCJS; Zandra Relaford, CSA

Committee Co-Chair Ginny Powell called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and introduced the meeting agenda and minutes. There were no corrections made to the minutes. Ellen White moved to approve the minutes and Anya Shafer seconded. The motion passed with all in favor and no abstentions.

**FACT Update:** Nicole Poulin, FACT Executive Director

- FACT has begun supporting 10 Trauma Informed Community Networks (TICNs) through its community grants project. These community coalitions are focused on building effective prevention strategies and treatment responses to trauma on individual and community levels. These grants have been awarded for a two-year period, beginning August 1, 2020.
- FACT is also developing a FACT Emergency Fund Project to help families in need during this challenging time. This project will be designed and administered through existing TICNs.

**VDSS CPS Update:** Shannon Hartung, CPS Manager

- There has been a slight increase in CPS referrals since school started, this increase began in August.
- CPS staff continue to meet with consultants to review data and monitor referrals.
- Local departments are making significant progress in closing out overdue referrals as they prioritize closing out referrals in a more timely way.
- Staff has successfully worked with Families Forward and Department of Education (DOE) to access and post the on-line training for school personnel about preventing child maltreatment during virtual learning.
- Child fatality review meetings have resumed virtually after being paused for the last few months.

- The state CPS hotline has seen an increase in calls with the start of school, but wait times remain low. There are 4 vacancies that are currently not able to be filled while the state is in a hiring freeze.
- Staff within the department continue to advocate to fill two vacant CPS hotline contractor positions.
- CPS staff has begun having conversations with the Prevention staff within the Family Services Division regarding responses to child on child sexual assault.
- Work continues on addressing child trafficking.
- Elizabeth Lee is the new Assistant Director for Family Services.
- The state CPS hotline is now only covering local department hotlines for emergencies in localities that have the overall capacity to handle hotline calls. The response from localities to this change has been favorable.
- Specific data on details about CPS reports (who reports are originating with and what types of reports are being made) isn't available yet but this information will be shared when it is.

**Prevention:** Craig Patterson, Prevention Consultant Specialist

- The Prevention Program is in transition with changes in staffing.
- The VA General Assembly included a charge to establish and develop a five-year strategic plan on the prevention of child abuse and neglect to include multiple stakeholders and partners. The plan will be geared toward primary prevention and take a public health approach.

**Overview of Virginia's Response to Child Sex Trafficking:** Angella Alvernaz, State Trafficking Response Coordinator, DCJS & Nicole Shipp, CPS Policy Specialist

Angella Alvernaz:

- The Trafficking Response Coordinator was hired in 2019. The program is coordinating with staff from DJJ and DSS on issues specific to children.
- A website has been developed but is on hold due to technical difficulties.
- Trainings have moved to a virtual format, targeted to case managers. There are waiting lists for all the sessions.
- Work continues with the State Police to develop a training specific for law enforcement.
- DCJS has awarded a "Services for Minor Victims of Sex Trafficking" grant to support increasing coordination, legal assistance and housing services for victims and training for staff and the development of better screening tools. There will be a position hired through this grant to assist with implementation.
- The statewide Hope Bag Collection Project will start in November. Donations (clothing and toiletry items) will be collected to help victims who are fleeing trafficking situations.

Nicole Shipp:

- Changes were made to the state code to allow CPS to have jurisdiction over child sex trafficking cases.
- A response protocol and assessment were developed and disseminated to local agencies to provide guidance on these cases.
- A workgroup was established to engage and coordinate stakeholders.
- During the first year, 25 cases were referred and assessed. 17 investigations were made, 24% resulted in founded cases, 24% were unfounded and the remaining cases are pending.
- Work will continue with the Children's Bureau for technical assistance, as will work on increasing training and assistance for local department staff and make any updates to assessment tools needed.

### **Committee Members Updates**

- Betty Wade:
  - The American Professional Society on Child Abuse (APSAC) offers an excellent free on-line training on equity and inclusion for those who are interested.
- CSA- Zandra Relaford
  - The Annual Statewide CSA Conference will be conducted virtually 10/29 and 10/30. A number of topics will be addressed; including diversity and racial equity. This conference is free and we encourage everyone who can to attend.

**Next Steps:** Ginny Powell

- Nicole will send out a meeting poll to our next meeting in December.

**Meeting was adjourned at 10:35 AM**