

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

**April 29, 2020**

### **Remote Meeting**

**Meeting attendees:** Ginny Powell, FACT Board; Jeanine Harper, GRSCAN; Nicole Shipp, VDSS; Anya Shafer, DCJS; Ellen White, VA Courts; Ali Faruk, Families Forward; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; Zandra Relaford, Office of Children's Services; Michelle L'Hommedieu, OAG; Betty Wade Coyle, Craig Patterson, VDSS; Heather Board, VDH; Quyen Duong, DOE; Nicole Shipp, VDSS; Shannon Hartang, VDSS; Keisha William, VDSS; Jenna Easton, DJJ; Ben Mauro, VDSS; Nancy Toscano, UMFS; Kat Monusky, SDVAA, Katherine Hunter, DBHDS

Committee Co-chair Ginny Powell called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM and introduced the meeting agenda and minutes. There was one correction made to the minutes. Ellen White moved to approve the minutes with the correction and Betty Wade Coyle seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

#### **CPS Call Data Reviewed:** Ben Mauro

- Data on weekly call volume has been reviewed for the last six months. VDSS has seen a large decline in overall calls since the start of the COVID-19 Crisis. Since March 12<sup>th</sup> there has been a 51% drop in calls. The volume is similar to what might have been seen the last week in December or during a week over the summer. Much of that decrease is attributed to the 92% decrease in calls from school personnel, historically the primary source of referrals this time of year.
- Average wait time for the hotline has gone down, as has the percent of calls screened out.
- Referral tracks for services hasn't changed with approximately 70% being placed in the assessment track and 30% going into the investigation track.
- There have been slight changes in regional call-in patterns. Referrals made in the Western Region have been for more severe cases and the Eastern Region is seeing a slight increase in cases being screened out. VDSS is looking into determining if there is a pattern in sources of calls that are screened in versus screened out.
- There has not been an increase in fatalities.

#### **CPS Policy, Practice, Guidance Updates on COVID-19 Crisis Response:** Shannon Hartung

- The Hotline has added questions to screen specifically related to COVID-19. 17 callers have answered yes to at least one of the questions.
- VDSS is not seeing an increase in removal orders during this time; preliminary data shows a slight decrease from last year.

- Social service agencies are not having problems placing kids in foster care after removal. In fact, there have been no reported problems from foster care parents related to the current crisis.
- Working with VDSS Public Relations Department to develop and implement social media messaging to encourage reporting.
- FAQs continue to be provided for localities on a regular basis.
- Continue to move all training including for new CPS and Foster Care Workers to virtual venues.
- Continuing to support the use of a telehealth app for virtual visits by workers, which has allowed workers to increase their contact with families.
- Coordination and collaboration among local offices continues to help provide assistance and coverage for localities.
- Some localities are distributing flyers to first responders to encourage reporting.
- Questions and concerns were raised by members about the increase in reports from children to the National Sexual Assault Hotline due to increases in abuse directed at them during this time. PTA members have also raised the issue. Is there a mechanism for children to call in reports for abuse against themselves? Shannon will follow-up on information related to this issue and include it on the list of factors to include when developing social media messaging.
- VDSS is also working on ways to support self-care for workers during this time and is seeking feedback from workers on the best way to do so.
- Keisha provided an update on prevention efforts: VDSS is partnering with Families Forward to distribute information to families in various localities and distributing a statewide newsletter on various issues related to permanency.
- The question was raised regarding the ability for localities to fill vacant CPS worker positions during the state hiring freeze. Shannon will follow up on this.

**Update on state and local domestic violence data and practices: Kat Monusky**

- The Action Alliance recently surveyed DV/SV programs. There has been an overall increase of 33% to access services since the COVID-19 crisis began. Most of this increase is due to accessing hotline services through non-telephonic means (texting, chatting and email options). Rates of service access vary by locality; some have seen a decrease while others have seen a significant increase. The reason for this is unknown. There is speculation that it is related to victims lack access to technology in some areas of the state and issues of privacy presented by being physically isolated with abusers. Messaging and communication efforts continue to be underway and expanded in order to provide information about how to access services.
- Staffing and support for programs varies. Programs have seen significant drops in volunteer efforts and in-kind and cash donations; 1/3 still have staff coming into work, 1/3 have staff working remotely, and 1/3 have had to furlough some staff.

- Barriers to services in various localities include: lack of public transportation, programs are no longer allowed to provide advocacy through hospital and court accompaniment, court response varies by locality, access to internet and technology is uneven, and a lack of SANE/ forensic nurses available for exams.
- The Action Alliance continues to have regular calls with local program staff,
- Kat will follow up to determine if there is information available related to how many survivors seeking services have children living at home.

### **Discussion of CAPTA Letter: Ginny Powell**

- A final draft of the letter was reviewed. Minor changes were discussed. A final version will be provided to VDSS as a provisional draft to include in their report to federal funding sources and presented to the FACT Board for formal approval whenever they are able to meet.

### **Committee Members Updates**

- **UMFS Update- Nancy Toscano**
  - Referrals for foster care and adoption services continue to be strong.
  - Switched to virtual platforms to train families for foster care and adoption.
  - Initially placed restrictions on some services but have since been opening up more when they can be done safely; social distancing can be practiced, access to PPE, etc.
  - Reassigning staff in order to meet the new need for telehealth services.
  - Increasing external partner connections to maximize and coordinate resources.
- **Families Forward- Ali Faruk**
  - Home Visitors around the state have been meeting with families through telehealth models –this has increased the amount of contact they are able to normally have.
  - Child Abuse Prevention organizations have transitioned services to virtual venues, this includes parent support programs. Feedback from families has been good.
  - Overall programs are very concerned about losing money. This crisis hit during a time of major fundraising events for many programs and there is concern about the future of state and national economies and how that will affect already financially strapped programs.
- **CASA-Melissa O’Neill**
  - All the CASA programs are meeting weekly to discuss trends, services and provide support to one another.
  - Programs are still meeting with children either virtually or in person when visits can be conducted safely.

- Referrals to programs are down, there is concerns about the safety of children and about a future “wave” of referrals when the crisis is stabilized.
  - Programs are very concerned about funding.
  - DCJS is helping to mitigate some funding problems with more flexible guidance and grant allowances.
- DOE- Quyen Duong
    - The Superintendent sends out weekly guidance and information to all schools.
    - There is on-going collaboration with VDSS on issues related to resources and information on reporting suspected child abuse during this time.
    - Research and information is on-going focused on educating teachers on how to detect possible signs of potential abuse or neglect virtually.
- VDH- Heather Board
    - Positive feedback has been received regarding home visitors using telehealth models for visits.
    - There has been a very significant increase in the number of WIC participants since the crisis began; seen an increase of over 10,000 in one month, the average monthly enrollment number prior was 500-1,000 families.
    - Working with a media company to develop messaging campaign focused on suicide prevention and managing social isolation and depression during this time.
- CSA- Zandra Relaford
    - Sharing information from state offices (DOE and VDSS) with locals.
    - Modifying all trainings to be conducted virtually.
- Greater Richmond SCAN- Nicole Poulin for Jeanine Harper
    - SCAN’s Trauma Informed Community Network (TICN) continues to provide technical assistance and coordination for TICNs from around the state. As part of that effort, the first week in May will be recognized as Resilience Week in Virginia. SCAN and other TICNs will be conducting events focused on messaging the importance of resilience and strategies to develop it. Information on the week’s events will be sent to the Committee.

**Next Steps:** Ginny Powell

- The Committee agreed to meet the week of June 22, 2020. Nicole will send out a calendar poll with possible dates prior to scheduling the meeting.

**Meeting was adjourned at 4:35**