

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

**March 9, 2021**

### **Remote Meeting**

**Meeting Attendees:** Ginny Powell, FACT Board; Betty Wade Coyle; Allison Gilbreath; Voices For Virginia's Children Presenter; Amy Strite, Voices for Virginia's Children; Jeanine Harper, GRSCAN; Nicole Shipp, VDSS; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; Shannon Hartung, VDSS; Morgan Nelson, VDSS; Jenna Easton, DJJ; Deanna Lavery, The Haven Shelters and Services; Ali Faruk, Families Forward; Ellen White, VA Courts; Quyen Duong, DOE; Betsy Bell, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety; Nicole Poulin, FACT

Meeting called to order by Ginny Powell at 9:34 and introduced the meeting agenda and minutes. Betty Wade Coyle moved to approve the minutes and Shannon Hartung seconded. Motion passed with all in favor and no abstentions.

#### **Voices for Virginia's Children Presentation:** Allison, Policy and Program Director

- Development Children's Ombudsman Office
  - In 2020, Delegate Chris Hurst sponsored HB 1301 to create an Ombudsman office and include in the budget money for positions within the office to be appointed by the Governor and approved by the general assembly.
  - This office would provide a space for children and families who have had issues with their local DSS, VDSS, child placing agencies, childcare institutions and foster/adoption agencies. As an independent party they would receive complaints, investigate, assess, and attempt to resolve these issues. They would ensure compliance with policies surrounding child protective services and best practices. Annual reports would be provided to the Governor, General Assembly and VDSS.
  - The Governor's office has been contacted to appoint staff and start the office but there has been lack of movement. There are concerns that due to the pandemic it is likely there is an increased need for this office.
- A request was made to the committee to submit a letter to the Governor's administration to highlight the need for the office and request that the establishment of it be prioritized.
- There was discussion of sending a joint letter from FACT, Voices for Virginia's Children, and Families Forward to potentially be more effective.
- Motion by Betty Wade Coyle to send recommendation to FACT board to submit letter with Voices for Virginia's Children and Families Forward. Seconded by Anya Shaffer. Motion passed with one abstention by Ellen White.

#### **VDSS Child Protective Services (CPS) Update:** Shannon Hartung

- While there was a slight increase from December to January, referrals are down overall. Top reporters continue to be law enforcement, "unknown" and counselors/therapists.
- CPS Program will be undergoing a year-long performance audit through the Office of State Inspector General (OSIG) aimed to improve quality and efficiency.

- They provided an initial report including policies, procedures, agency org chart, key agency contacts for community partners, key performance indicators.
- CPS has a practice consultant reviewing monthly performance of agencies in their region. Agencies under the threshold are receiving targeted technical assistance includes individualized data review and analysis, review of compliance with program guidance, and identification of additional strategies to improve performance.
- Two measures being reviewed:
  - RCFS (initial contact and assessment of child safety) has a federal measurement of 95%. The current performance measure is 88% and practice consultants are currently providing technical assistance (TA) to any agency who is under that threshold. Currently as a state we are at 84%.
  - Referral Time Open (not completed in the required time frame of 45-60 days) The current program measure is 85%. Practice consultants are providing TA to any agency under 85%.
- The primary factors seen for agencies who are not meeting these thresholds are untimely documentation, lack of staff, and lack of supervision.
- This audit was randomly chosen and Virginia was not selected due to any specific factor.
- There was a discussion around the fatality team working with the truancy team to identify a protocol for identifying families who need services
- Discussion around cases potentially being more severe due to the high number of referrals from law enforcement. At the height of the pandemic there was an increase in investigations, including sexual abuse investigations, and now family assessments are rising as schools are moving back to in-person.
- Hotline Updates
  - There are still six staff vacancies contributing to longer wait times. Four people have recently been hired but have not started yet
  - The mandated reporter website launched Oct 30th. The website has received over 800 referrals with most coming from medical/hospital staff, counselors/therapists, and school staff. It is currently taking about 25 minute to process referrals, they are hoping to get down to 15 minutes in the future. There has been positive feedback from both those who refer cases and hotline staff. It reduces data entry for the hotline specialist which is decreasing response time. It is too soon to determine if it is decrease wait time for hotline callers
  - Structure Decision Making Tool Validation Project - intake tool was released on August 1st. The rest of the tools to be used by CPS and Prevention as part of implementation of Families First and in-home redesign, will be released in April.
  - Created a webinar called "Decisions, Decisions, Decisions: Supervision Strategies for the SDM Tools" targeted for child welfare supervisors.

**VDSS Prevention Update:** Morgan Nelson, Prevention Program Manager

- Evidence-based practices to be used include Functional Family Therapy (FFT), MultiSystemic Therapy (MST), Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) - DFS is ensuring that training is being provided for these programs to increase the number of providers across Virginia as we switch to families first model.
- Some town halls were conducted and found that current practice has a lack of structure and consistency for in-home and CPS on-going services. There was a lack of understanding of the use of tools and when to close the case. Many cases have been open for over a year, often longer than needed.
- Practice changes are looking at three safety scenarios to give more guidance and policy:
  - Child/youth residing with parents or relative/fictive kin caregiver
  - Child/youth temporarily living with relative/fictive kin caregiver and will return within 6 months
  - Child/youth permanently residing with relative/fictive kin caregiver).
- Case conversions - "CPS On-going Case" will be replaced with "In-Home Services Case" (which amounted to 35% of total cases in January) which are high or very high risk assessment, high risk of entering foster care, and/or kinship placements.
- Replacing Family Strength and Needs Assessment with Child and Adolescent Needs And Strengths (CANS) Assessment.
- The Department of Family Services (DFS) has started to shift towards a more data driven approach to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of these programs. There was discussion on using additional measures, not just timelines, to measure success.
- A copy of the slides will be sent out for reference

**FACT Updates:** Nicole Poulin

- Child-on-child sexual abuse
  - This issue ranges a broad spectrum of cases from problematic sexual behavior (usually preadolescent children with unintentional harm) to date rape in adolescence.
  - Nicole talked to National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) and there is nothing on this topic at a national level. This is an opportunity for Virginia to be a leader in addressing the issue.
  - Recently, Virginia has changed sex registry requirement, juvenile cases are no longer placed on registry. Last year, reporting requirements for schools changed to address the school to prison pipeline that included the abolishment of the requirement for schools to report misdemeanors committed by students to law enforcement. This includes those related sexual harm, it may be appropriate to re-examine this change as it relates to child-on-child offences.
  - There was a discussion of young boys who are victims and how they are frequently forgotten in these conversations. A recent Washington Post article discussed hazing that included acts of sexual abuse.
  - Nicole is proposing a panel/roundtable discussion on child on child sexual abuse including multiple experts. This panel can serve as a jumping off point to look for a partnership with VDH to secure funding to hire a consultant to do an in-depth analysis of this issue and then develop a guidance that would include

recommendations for legislative action around this issue to increase effectiveness of responses.

- Discussion on the complexity and nuance of this issue. Potentially need to set some parameters on the scope of the work but there are some overarching themes that can address all cases broadly.

#### **CAPTA Report: Ginny Powell**

- Propose to send a smaller report to DSS in follow up to the larger report, focused on five key issues:
  - Post-pandemic discussion of services, policies, practices and guidelines for families. What have we learned? What are residual needs?
  - Continue CAN's role on child-on-child assault cases
  - Look at issue of institutional racism, disproportionately and bias in the child welfare system
  - Continue to track diversion cases as they merge into in-home services
  - Track state hotline response in regards to staff and wait time issues
- There was discussion around concerns in the shifts towards families first, particularly towards implementation and how to evaluate the new services.
- Recommendations will be brought to the FACT Board for approval and then the CAPTA letter will be submitted by May 15th.

#### **Community Updates**

- Betty-Wade Coyle - Child fatalities do not appear to be going up
- Discussion around health centers and their role in early prevention. Nurses can help deal with mental and physical health and substance issues. These may also be important places in the discussion of child-on-child sexual abuse.
- Frameworks is hosting webinar on new guidance for language child abuse prevention. Information will be sent out to the committee.

#### **Next Steps: Ginny Powell**

- A scheduling poll will go out for our next meeting in June

**Meeting was adjourned at 11:35**