

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

**December 6, 2021**

### **Remote Meeting**

**Meeting Attendees:** Ginny Powell, FACT Board; Jeanine Harper, GRSCAN; Ellen White, JDR Judge (retired); Betsy Bell, DCJS; Morgan Nelson, DFS; Shannon Hartung, VDSS; Taylor Davis, FACT; Anya Shaffer, DCJS; Destiny Allen, Office of the Children's Ombudsman; Betty Wade Coyle; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; Quyen Duong, DOE; Jenna Easton, DJJ; Eric Reynolds, Office of the Children's Ombudsman; Jane Liseenden, Office of the Children's Ombudsman; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University; Michelle L'Hommedieu; FACT Counsel; Nicole Poulin, FACT; Amy Strite, Voices for Virginia's Children

### **Meeting called to order by Ginny Powell at 1:31PM**

*Due to the virtual meeting venue, no votes were taken. All items that require a vote will be addressed at the March 9th meeting.*

### **VDSS Updates on issues outlined in the 2021 CAN CAPTA Report, VDSS Family Services Staff**

- Currently prioritizing federal outcome measures and the Virginia 5 year plan and are finding ways to incorporate the recommendations of the committee into their work.
- During April - June 2020, the majority of localities were not meeting the requirements for initiating timely face-to-face contact after reports of child maltreatment (Virginia's goal is 88%). In April-June 2021, the majority of localities are meeting (or close to meeting) the measure including many meeting the federal measure of 95%.
- VDSS COVID-19 Pandemic response:
  - Provided guidance and resources for local departments to continue to provide services, including the HIPAA compliant virtual platform doxy.me.
  - Covid cases are increasing in local agencies within the workforce, VDSS is assisting with navigating and coordinating coverage during staff quarantines.
- CPS Referral Count 2019-2021: Saw an initial decrease during the pandemic (with most reports coming from law enforcement and medical staff) and have seen a rise since September when many schools returned to in-person.
- There was discussion on criteria to make a decision on whether a CPS referral should be virtual or in person - if the family was diagnosed or exposed then it will be virtual. Virtual meetings are not commonly used unless necessary.
- Update on child-on-child sexual abuse cases: due to the pandemic, this work was put on hold. Currently there is not an ability to track this data because these cases are classified as neglect/"lack of supervision". This would require case mining into each instance to find out what kind of neglect occurred and if it was child-on-child sexual abuse. There is hope with new data capabilities in the future.
- Update on systemic racism and equity work:
  - Joined Governor's Northam's ONE Virginia Plan

- Created Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee which provides education materials, trainings, and raises awareness
- Preliminary data on racial representation
  - White youth are overrepresented in total validated referrals
  - Black and multiracial children are overrepresented in R1 response (24 hour response)
  - Black and Hispanic children were overrepresented in R2 response (48 hour response)
  - White youth were overrepresented in R3 response (40 business hour response)
  - Among validated referrals:
    - Black children are overrepresented among validated referrals containing medical neglect and physical abuse.
    - Hispanic children are overrepresented in mental abuse/neglect.
    - White children are overrepresented in physical neglect and substance exposed infant validated referrals.
- In-Home Alignment with Families First Legislation Updates:
  - The measure for all high and very high risk assessments to be open is set at 75%. Currently averaging 40% across Virginia. New in-home practice consultants started at the end of October and will be reviewing cases that are not being opened.
  - Updated Oasis with different living arrangements to better track data
    - Around 21% of opened in-home cases are in alternate living arrangements. Looking into how many are in alternate living arrangements at the time of case closing.
  - Working with VCU to add additional programs from the clearinghouse that are well supported
  - Discussion on whether families with children in alternate living arrangements and if there are court arrangements during these cases - it is not a requirement but some families do have court arrangements. With the cases open to in-home then the relative can have the support that they need to ensure access to schooling and medical needs.
  - Discussion on requirements and incentives for local agencies to implement the policies and guidance that VDSS is providing.
- State hotline updates:
  - Continue to assess wait times and monitor call volume.
  - Soliciting input from hotline staff to improve functionality
  - It has been determined that there are too few staff for the volume of calls.
  - Working to add additional staff, including new shift supervisors, now that the hiring freeze is lifted.
- VaCPS, mandated reporter portal update:
  - Seen an increase in calls made to the portal.
  - Mental health, medical and education continue to be top reporters.

- Want to promote the use of the portal through citizen review panels to prevent people from needing to wait on the hotline to make a report.
- There was discussion of Safe Haven babies numbers and finding a way to track them
- There was discussion of the impact on children with COVID-19 and if that is being captured throughout Virginia.

#### **Update on the Office of the Children's Ombudsman, *Eric Reynolds***

- Administrative updates: working on hiring another person, working on case management system and website
- The office has not opened to the public yet but has received 52 complaints and have officially opened investigations on nine of those. Several are in preliminary review.
  - Many cases include alternative living arrangements (previously known as diversion)
  - Seeing a lack of quality legal representation
  - Seeing a need for more trauma-informed practice training - ACEs of the parents need to be considered when working with the parents as well as the children
  - Seeing generational involvement within the system in many cases
  - Kinship engagement - relatives have been ignored and not provided resources to provide assistance during the CPS process
- There was discussion on what tools are being used to assess kinship placements with the focus on families first - how do we ensure that family is best to support the child?
  - Instead of cases being closed or having minimal contact, in-home services can help to provide more information about potential safety concerns with family members and continue to safety plan as needed
  - There was additional discussion on the role of courts within the alternate living arrangement cases and the additional support it may provide
- Discussion on staffing for the Office of the Ombudsman and what backgrounds the staff have - social workers, lived experience, court/legal experience, potential to hire additional folks across the state where more complaints are coming from
- Continued discussion on implementation across Virginia and inconsistency of practice, differences in resources, and how this impacts the implementation of in-home services at the local level

#### **FACT Updates, *Nicole Poulin, Executive Director***

- Child-on-child project update:
  - Working with Virginia Department of Health to make the project inclusive of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention
  - Going to include more work within community settings around awareness of sexual assault
  - Project will likely run February - August and the workgroup will meet at least once during this time to assist with reviewing any guidance documents

#### **Next Steps, *Ginny Powell***

- Next meeting is March 9th 2022 12:30-2:30pm. This will be an in person meeting at a future determined location in Richmond.

**Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM**