

Child Abuse and Neglect Committee Meeting Minutes

December 5, 2022

Remote Meeting

Meeting Attendees: Ginny Powell, FACT Board; Jeanine Harper, GRSCAN; Ellen White, JDR Judge (retired); Ali Faruk, Families Forward; Brandi Peterson, Child Fatality Coordinator; Kathleen Hollywood, Citizen Review Panel Coordinator; Maria Altonen, VDH; Taylor Hohle, FACT; Michelle L'Hommedieu, FACT Counsel; Carley Lansden, Child Fatality Specialist; Katharine Hunter, DBHDS; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; Carol Wilson, Office of Children's Services; Daniela Sanzetenea, OCO; Jane Lissenden, OCO; Jenna Easton, DJJ; Stephanie Howard, Norfolk State University; Nicole Poulin, FACT Executive Director; Kristen Pritchard, VSDVAA

Meeting called to order by Ginny Powell at 1:02 PM

Due to the virtual meeting venue, no votes were taken. All items that require a vote will be addressed at the next in-person meeting.

Update on the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO), Daniela Sanzetenea

- [First annual report has been released](#)
- Overview of complaint data
 - Report covers June 2021 – Sept 30 2022
 - Reviewed 264 complaints
 - 65% (171) were moved from intake to preliminary assessment
 - 13% (35) became investigations
 - 87 of 120 local departments were subject to complaints
 - Mostly in western and piedmont regions
 - 35 of the 264 complaints were opened as formal investigation
 - 77% related to Child Protective Services (CPS)
 - 54% related to foster care
 - 14% related to adoption
 - 25% related to foster care diversion/alternative living arrangements
- OCO may investigate child fatality cases that occurred or are alleged to have occurred due to child abuse or neglect in specific situations (details in report).
 - Received notices for 36 child fatalities
 - 7 were for children less than one month old
 - 18 were between the ages one month to one year
 - 7 were between the ages of 1 year to 5 years
 - 4 were aged 10 years or older
 - Most common suspected cause of death: unsafe sleep practices (17) who were all under 5 years old
 - Most common reason for families' involvement with CPS prior to death was neglect/inadequate supervision due to substance abuse and substance-exposed infants at birth
- Trends/Recurring Issues
 - Workforce challenges are affecting every locality
 - Foster care diversion/alternative living arrangements (ALA)
 - In all ALA cases reviewed, parental substance abuse was a primary reason for the local department's involvement with the family
 - Foster care service planning

- Visitation – wasn't timely, parents unable to have a sense of normalcy during visit
- Other policy/practice concerns
 - Foster parent/ Licensed Professional Counselor Associate relationships
 - Family finding and relative engagement
 - Trauma-informed practices
 - Parental substance abuse
- Next steps: develop policies and procedures for fatality investigations, improve timeliness in processing complaints, improve communications with agencies and partner agencies, continue to connect children and families to supportive services
- There was discussion about potential reasons for a higher number of cases in the southwest region and also the commonalities between complaints that did not move forward

FACT Updates, Nicole Poulin, Executive Director

- Problematic Sexual Behavior Project will be releasing the guidance document by the end of the year. Hoping to partner with another agency next year to pilot some trainings.
 - The recommendations will focus on the need to increase capacity for social services to be able to handle these cases which aligns with other states that have done this work previously.
- Emergency Funds Project is expanding to include domestic violence and homelessness service organizations in addition to the trauma-informed community networks.
 - Skyward Fund is a similar project partnered with DJJ – looking to pilot in court service units.
- FACT Data Portal is back up (<https://www.fact.virginia.gov/dataportal/>).
- [LGBTQ+ Issue Brief](#) is released this week and will wrap up the series on Systems of Trauma.
- Four new Board of Trustee members have been appointed to FACT.
- The Board is still focusing on the sustainability plan to determine the best ways for FACT to move forward and make the best impact across Virginia. Some members of this committee have been contacted to provide input on how FACT can be most effective.
- Ad Hoc grants have increased from \$2000 to \$3000 to support trainings/conferences.

VDSS Updates on Child Fatality Program, Carley Lansden, Child Fatality Specialist

- Hired two new positions.
 - Brandi Peterson will be focusing on prevention work around safe sleep and to provide support to local/regional offices.
- Trends in fatalities are similar to the OCO report: unsafe sleep and parental substance use/substance exposed infant cases.
- There was discussion around what reasons families are giving for their current sleep practices and the systemic issues involved.

Committee Report Out

- Ali Faruk – Families Forward Virginia is organizing an in-person Child Abuse Prevention Day at the General Assembly on Thurs Feb 2nd from 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM at the YWCA of Richmond (6 N 5th Street, Richmond, VA 23219).
 - Register here:
<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=pUVBUD0xa028obSeEdtFUBJB3EFYDNpGp64STb18ApBUQUNOSkxJM0ISMUVTR0RSRjFEM0s5VEIQOC4u>

Next Steps, Ginny Powell

- € Next meeting will be March 1, 2023 10:30am-12:30pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:22 PM