

Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2023, 10AM-1PM

In-Person Meeting, Families Forward Virginia

8100 Three Chopt Rd., Richmond, VA

Participation

Committee Members Present:

Ginny Powell, Committee Co-Chair FACT Board Member; Kathleen Hollywood, VDSS; Abigail Wescott, FACT Board Member; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University; Maria Altonen, VDH; Ron Brown, Families Forward; Katharine Hunter, DBHDS; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; Jeanine Harper, Committee Co-Chair, GRSCAN; Eric Reynolds, OCO; Betsy Bell, DCJS

Remote Participating Committee Members: Carol Wilson, Office of Children's Services; Betty Wade Coyle, Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads (Retired); Kristen Pritchard, VSDVAA; Anya Shaffer, DCJS

Committee Members Absent: Ellen White, JDR Judge (retired); Beverly Crowder, FACT Board member

Other Attendees: Michelle L'Hommedieu, FACT Counsel, OAG; Nicole Poulin, FACT; Christy Clarke, VDSS; Taylor Hohle, FACT (virtual attendance); Eryn Clarke, VDSS (virtual attendance); Carley Lansden, VDSS (virtual attendance); Shannon Hartung, VDSS (virtual attendance); Kirby Baughn, VDSS

Meeting called to order by Ginny Powell at 10:02 AM

A quorum was present. All motions were passed unanimously unless otherwise noted.

Review of Remote Participation

- [Appendix A](#) of the FACT Bylaws covers remote participation of committee members. The process to request remote participation was reviewed and a summary is below.
 - Prior to the meeting, the requesting member must notify the co-chairs that they are unable to physically attend the meeting due to one of the following reasons:
 - A temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition
 - A family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care.
 - The member's residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location.
 - A personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter.
 - The co-chairs will notify the requesting member whether the request is approved or disapproved based on the policy.
 - Once a quorum is present at the physical meeting location, the committee will vote to determine if the co-chair's decision was aligned with the policy and that the voice of the remotely participating member can be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location. If multiple individuals are participating remotely, each individual's request must be detailed to the group; however, all can be approved in a singular motion.
- Carol Wilson, Kristen Pritchard, Betty Wade Coyle, Anya Shaffer, all requested to participate remotely for this meeting due to temporary or permanent medical condition.
- A motion was made by Ron Brown to allow remote participation for the requesting members. Eric Reynolds seconded.

Approval of Minutes, Ginny Powell

Stephenie Howard corrected the spelling of her name in the March 2023 minutes. A motion to approve the minutes from the March 2023 and May 2023 Child Abuse & Neglect Advisory Committee meetings was made by Ron Brown and seconded by Jeanine Harper.

Review of VDSS's Office of Trauma and Resilience Policy Workforce Development Activities, Laurie Crawford

- The goal is to have the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) become more aligned as a healing centered organization that supports its employees.
- Recruitment and Retention Workgroup – there is a high turnover rate among local DSS Family Services employees. There is no statewide response to support these LDSS workers through the vicarious trauma that they are experiencing in the field.
- In May and June, the Office of Trauma and Resilience Policy conducted 20 focus groups utilizing an outside facilitator who examined how much vicarious trauma they are experiencing, what their coping mechanisms are, whether it changed during the pandemic, and whether there were work initiatives that would help or currently are helping. The focus groups included separate opportunities for family services front line workers and supervisors, benefits workers and supervisors and regional practice consultants for family services and benefits.
 - This data is currently being analyzed and will be summarized in a report that will be shared with the committee in the future.
 - The next step is a quantitative survey that will be developed based on themes that come out of the focus groups.
 - Preliminary data from the focus groups indicate that employees are experiencing a lot of hardship without feeling supported.
 - There was mention of other states that are doing this work well, such as New Jersey who has a very low turnover rate. A student from UVA is completing her capstone project on researching other states who have state supervised, locally administered systems. Recommendations from this project will be completed in the Spring.
 - There has been some support for establishing a peer hotline for employees and to have support person available after critical incidents. Funding for such a hotline was in the proposed state budget but was not approved.
- There was discussion around partners and allies.
 - There was discussion around CPS workers being labeled as second responders rather than first responders which prevents access to services that are put in place already for law enforcement, firefighters, etc.
 - Some agencies are working on vicarious trauma within their locality, but it is the exception rather than common.
- There was discussion around agency policies that need to be examined in addition to support offered.
- There was discussion around employees being offered support by staff that isn't directly on their team to remove the perception of how the case was handled as part of their job performance.

Updates from the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO), Eric Reynolds

- New annual report for SFY23 data will be out by October 1st
 - Received 411 contacts in SFY23.
 - Common issues identified were inadequate services (lack of visits, workers not attentive to child or parents, lack of communication, etc.), documentation (lack of detail or no documentation at all), issues with CPS investigation procedure, and placement decisions.

- There was discussion about challenges presented in diversion/out of home placements cases, which was a common theme in last year's annual report. The OCO is looking into legislative options to address these diversion cases.

FACT Updates, Nicole Poulin

- The FACT Board recently conducted extensive sustainability planning process.
 - The Board came to conclusion that the best course of action is to move the administrative support away from VDSS to an independent state entity, similar to the Foundation for Healthy Youth. VDSS Commissioner Avula was in support; however, Secretary Littel was not supportive of the concept at this time. He suggested the Board partner with a university in some capacity. The next course of action is to work with the consultant who is providing suggestions on small legislative tweaks to the FACT statute that would allow more independence (such as developing a 501c3 and addressing possible options to streamline issues with state procurement processes).
- The next Board of Trustees meeting is September 27th.
- Projects the Board of Trustees allocated funding for in FY24:
 - [Problematic Sexual Behavior Project](#) – a guidance document was completed during Phase I; the Board has approved for Phase II to pilot the guidance and recommendations in a few localities. A potential Phase III could focus on evaluation.
 - [Emergency Funds Project](#) – expanded to include home visiting programs, Department of Juvenile Justice pilot sites, homeless and domestic violence services in rural areas of Virginia.
 - Leadership for Empowerment and Abuse Prevention (LEAP) Project– Working in partnership with Virginia Department of Health with the VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities to Certified Center for Abuse Prevention and Safety (C-CAPS) based on implementation of LEAP, an evidence-based sexual assault prevention for people with disabilities.
- New issue brief series on special populations – first brief will be coming out in October focused on people with disabilities.
- Co-chair Ginny Powell discussed a report given by Gena Boyle at the last FACT Board meeting regarding upcoming changes to the child welfare database systems within DSS. Due to the frequent requests for data that this committee makes, she is requesting that this committee be involved in the workgroup established to provide input on what variables will be collected by the new system.

Citizen Review Panel Discussion

- This committee is one of three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) that are required for federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funding. The co-chairs received a message from the Medical Examiner's Office that they can no longer function as a CRP due to new public meeting requirements and capacity.
 - There was discussion around the public meeting requirements and what is needed to enter a closed session. These requirements apply to the State Child Fatality Team regardless of if they continue as a CRP.
 - The State Child Fatality Review Team was established in Virginia law the Medical Examiner's Office. The CRP component is a requirement to receive CAPTA funding and since the state review was already established, the group served these two purposes.
- VDSS has a capacity planner helping to look at the outcomes of CRPs and to determine if the current model is effective. There is likely change coming to CRPs for Virginia but unsure what those changes look like right now.

VDSS Family Services Updates, Carley Landsen & Eyrn Clarke

- Child Fatality Update, *Carley Landsen*
 - [Highlights from report on child death for SFY 22](#) – [previous years reports can be found here](#)
 - 164 child deaths investigated by local agencies
 - 54 determined due to abuse or neglect
 - 35 of 54 of founded investigations involved physical neglect,
 - 16 of 54 involved physical abuse (bone fracture, gun violence, abusive head trauma, poisoning, etc.)
 - 37 of these cases had other children in the home. Twelve of those cases were able to develop a safety plan and keep the children in the home. 25 families also had safety plans but children were placed with relative or family friend and zero of these cases resulted in the siblings entering foster care.
 - 52% prior CPS involvement which is consistent with previous years.
 - 101 cases were unfounded
 - 75% involved a child under 1 year old and 60% of those cases were sleep related
 - Children ages 0-3 continue to be the most at risk (79% of founded investigations)
 - Eastern region investigated the most cases, followed by Piedmont, Northern, Central, and then Western.
 - Regional child fatality review teams recommendations
 - SYF21 Recommendations
 - Enhance public awareness campaigns while targeting underreached populations such as fathers, siblings, grandparents, and the recovery community.
 - Made infographics on safe sleep, water safety, and gun safety – another one is in development for vehicle death.
 - [Available online](#) – go to related links at the bottom.
 - Water related deaths were not brought up in the recommendations but the data showed an increase in these deaths so they created an additional infographic for it. There were five water related deaths in SFY 2021 and eleven in SFY 2022.
 - Improve local and state partnerships with community resources to streamline education efforts around child fatalities.
 - Strengthen law enforcement relationships with localities during investigations
 - Work is being done by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to create and implement a Child Death Investigative Protocol for Multi-Disciplinary Teams to implement a uniform response by CPS and law enforcement.
 - DCJS just started their trainings on the protocol for CPS workers, law enforcement, and Commonwealth Attorneys. The training is also co-led by members of all those groups.
 - VDSS has created an in-person two-day training on completing a child death investigation – to go through the protocol from the CPS perspective.
 - SFY22 Recommendations
 - Continue to enhance safe sleep practice public awareness campaign with focus on recovery community.
 - Continue to work on community partnerships to enhance education opportunities prior to CPS involvement.

- Provide more educational materials in multiple languages.
- Stephenie Howard discussed a recent study she conducted on doula services' impact on safe sleep. Focus group sessions were conducted, with predominantly Black doulas, to ask about educational practices on safe sleep practices. It was also found that doulas were finding their own education and training on topics so there is opportunity for more structured trainings.
- There was discussion about the trends in the factor of previous CPS involvement in fatality cases – more information on this can be found in the report.
 - The internal review team assesses for high risk, which includes previous CPS involvement, and if a case is determined high risk, then it is reviewed within 30 days to see if there was a missed opportunity for prevention and then provide feedback and technical assistance to the locality.
- FACT is hosting a panel discussion on the child fatality review processes on Tuesday September 12th 12-1:30pm. It is virtual and a recording will be on the website.
- Hotline Updates, *Eyrn Clarke*:

	May - July 2022	May - July 2023
Total number of calls	27401	31020
Average # of calls per week	1740	1834
Average wait time	18 minutes	4.6 minutes
Average # of abandoned calls per week	462 (on average, hanging up around 9 minutes)	283 (on average, hanging up at 5 minutes)
% of calls answered in 10 mins or less	68%	86%

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	State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022	SFY 2023	SFY 2024
# of Mandated Reporter Portal Reports	5397	9572	491 (and counting)

- Hiring update
 - In January 2023 there were 33 hotline specialists available to take 50,452 minutes per week in calls.
 - Presently there are 45 specialists and growing, 64,453 minutes available per week to take calls.
 - Still have five vacancies (2 full time contractors and 3 part time employees) This would help the team gain 5,805 minutes per week (over 70,000 available minutes total per week).
 - Current need: 9,742 minutes/week (6 full time employees) to ensure proper coverage for localities who have staffing issues or who forward calls on holidays.
- Training and retention update:
 - Developing training curriculum
 - Revamping the training curriculum to include better practices on how to improve adult learning.
 - Working on a train-the-trainer session for the supervisory team to help them gain more tools in training and adult education.
 - Improving onboarding process.
 - Spending more time with new employees to ensure they know how to use the technology and feel comfortable with their tasks.

Committee Report Out:

- [American Professional Society on the Abuse of Child](#) and [National Institute of Justice](#) provide trainings and resources online related to child abuse and neglect.

Next Steps, Ginny Powell

- ⌘ Next meeting is November 16th 2-4pm, virtually
- ⌘ A representative from the Secretary of Health and Human Service's Office has expressed interest in having a member of the administration attend a CAN Committee meeting in the future to thank everyone for the work they do after seeing the PowerPoint slides prepared for the hotline update presentation. Nicole will provide details on that when they are made available.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:49 PM