

**Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes September 6th, 2024, 1PM-4PM**

**Families Forward. Room 216, 8100 Three Chopt Rd., Richmond, VA 23229**

**Participation**

**Committee Members Present:** Ginny Powell, Co-Chair, FACT Board Member; Jeanine Harper, Co-Chair, Greater Richmond SCAN; Ron Brown, Families Forward Virginia; Eric Reynolds, Office of the Children's Ombudsman; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University; Carol Wilson, Office of Children's Services; Melissa O'Neill, Department of Criminal Justice Services, CASA; Katharine Hunter, Department of Behavior Health and Developmental Services; Kristen Pritchard, Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (arrived at 1:10pm);

**Committee Members Participating Remotely:** Betty Wade Coyle, Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads (left at 3:30pm); Kirby Baughn, Department of Social Services

**Committee Members Absent:** Beverly Crowder, FACT Board Member; Anya Shaffer, Department of Criminal Justice Services; Abigail Wescott, FACT Board Member; Frank Somerville, JDR Judge (retired); Maria Altonen, Department of Health

**Other Attendees:** Laurie Crawford, VDSS; Rachel Miller, CRP Coordinator VDSS; Nicole Poulin, FACT; Taylor Hohle, FACT; Michelle L'Hommedieu, Assistant Attorney General; Krystal Peerman, GRSCAN Intern

**Meeting called to order by Ginny Powell at 1:05 PM**

A quorum was not present until 1:31 PM. All motions were passed unanimously unless otherwise noted.

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

- Annual report is coming soon – aiming for October 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Looking into child fatalities and what is happening prior to CPS involvement and the fatality – 54 notifications of fatalities were made in the previous fiscal year
    - Noticing trends in fatalities with unsafe sleep and substance exposed infant cases
    - There was discussion about multiple risk factors contributing to these cases as well as the identification, or lack of identification, of cases through the medical system.
- Current administration is working with National Governor's Association on maternal health - focusing on racial disparities, substance use, and mental health. Eric was asked to be a part of this group due to his work on child fatality and the importance of maternal health in those deaths.

**Once a quorum was physically present at 1:31pm, a motion for Kirby Baughn and Betty Wade Coyle to participate remotely was made by Eric Reynolds and seconded by Ron Brown.**

**Approval of Minutes, *Ginny Powell***

- **A motion to approve the minutes with a correction from the May 2024 Child Abuse & Neglect Advisory Committee meeting as amended was made by Jeanine Harper and seconded by Carol Wilson.**

**FACT Updates, *Nicole Poulin***

- The FACT Board has approved the following projects for State Fiscal Year 25
  - Continuation of the Direct (Emergency) Assistance Funds Project with a focus on sexual and

- domestic violence programs (20 awards), home visiting programs (20 awards), 2 Generation / Whole Family Community Action Pilot sites (6 awards), and continuation of the Skyward pilot program (1 site award) with the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- A new focus on child sexual abuse prevention with 10 awards for Child Advocacy Centers Prevention Programs and one contract for consulting services to develop a statewide plan for the prevention of child sexual abuse.
  - Continued collaboration with the VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities with a two-year award to expand the Leadership for Empowerment and Abuse Prevention (LEAP) program to Southwest (Roanoke) and Hampton Roads, in partnership with The Arc of Virginia. Both sites will employ part-time staff dedicated to the LEAP Project.
  - Ad Hoc awards have been expanded to include local activities in addition to statewide activities and will now allow for awards up to \$5,000 compared to only \$3,000 previously.
  - Continuing issue brief series on special populations – the next brief will be focused on abuse within assisted living facilities and nursing homes. The committee has been paused due to research work on other projects.
  - Staff are developing a report on child fatalities that will detail what other state review teams look like, as well as what is currently happening in Virginia in regard to fatalities and their review. A data sharing agreement was made with the Virginia Department of Health to review fatality data for 0–6-year-olds over the past few years. The plan is to overlay the total rates of death for children within that age range with those identified as being related to abuse and neglect by VDSS region.
  - Ron Brown mentioned a research group being formed by United Way focused on Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families. They are currently recruiting members of for that group. Ron will forward the information to Nicole to share.

#### **VDSS Updates and Discussion on Issues Outlined in the 2024 CAN CAPTA Report, VDSS Family Services Staff**

- As part of the 2024 CAPTA report, the Committee asked to review data on Family First and child fatality data from the Department of Social Services. A subcommittee will be developed to review this data and report out to the full CAN Advisory Committee. The subcommittee would likely meet for a few hours at a time with additional review work outside of meetings. If you are interested in being a part of the subcommittee, please reach out to the CAN Co-Chairs and/or Nicole Poulin.
- Child Death Investigations Update, *Carley Lansden*
  - Annual report – Fiscal Year 2023  
[https://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/reports/children/cps/all\\_other.cgi](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/reports/children/cps/all_other.cgi)
    - Local Departments of Social Services investigated 173 child deaths suspected of being cause by abuse or neglect – 38 investigations were founded and 107 were unfounded, as of the time of the report (June 2024) 26 investigations were still pending.
    - The Northern and Eastern regions investigated the most fatalities
    - Trends:
      - Most vulnerable population continues to be 0-3 years old
      - More male children than female children
      - Majority of caretakers were biological parents
      - Physical neglect tends to be the most common
      - Majority of families had prior CPS involvement
    - Historically the five regional review teams reviewed every child death that was investigated by Child Protective Services but will now only review cases that meet the following criteria (the same criteria for notification to the Office of the Children’s Ombudsman):
      - Current open DSS referral/case at the time of the fatality
      - Valid or invalid CPS report within last 12 months
      - Child died while in foster care (not from natural death and no complaint in foster home)

- Child died in foster care on a trial home placement
- Foster care case involving decedent or decedent's siblings was closed within the last 24 months
- A new section on patterns and trends has been added to the annual report
  - A substance use component was present in 36% of all investigations
  - 16% of families had documented incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV) prior to the child fatality
- There was discussion about the increase in cases who have had prior CPS involvement and what is being done to see how CPS response / safety plan could have been improved to prevent the fatality.
- There was discussion around the regional review changes and how they may impact the ability to compare new data to previous years.

### **Committee Member Updates**

- Laurie Crawford updated that the Office of Trauma & Resilience Policy within the Virginia Department of Social Services is working to build an evidence-based program for workforce support including a warmline staffed by former/retired employees. Funding for the project did not make it into the agency budget this year but there is general support within the Department. The VDSS youtube channel recently released a video on Healing Centered Organizations: <https://www.youtube.com/@virginiadss/>
- Jeanine Harper shared the Greater Richmond Trauma Informed Community Network (GRTICN) is starting a trauma-informed supervisor practice group, for those who have attended the Trauma Informed Supervision training, to create a space for dialogue about challenges and resources related to trauma informed supervision
- Kristen Pritchard provided an update that the Action Alliance has started a new initiative called the Emergence Project focused on workforce/advocate wellness at the individual, organizational, and community levels. <https://vsdvalliance.org/emergence/>
  - There was discussion around the commonality of agencies focusing on workforce trauma-informed practices.
- A new publication has been released from the U.S. Surgeon General on mental health and parenting - <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/parents/index.html>
- Melissa O'Neill shared that Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) had a legislative study assigned to look at the possibility of CASA programs being mandated in every judicial district. – The workgroup completed their study this summer and the report is being finalized. Additionally the CASA youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@virginiacasa1328> was shared.
- Katharine Hunter shared that the Virginia Mental Health Access Program (VMAP) has been expanded to perinatal moms. The expansion adds perinatal mental health professionals to the VMAP Line and includes additional perinatal mental health trainings.

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

- The next meeting will be held virtually on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 1:00 – 3:00 P.M.

**Meeting was adjourned at 3:34 PM**