

# Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

November 16th, 2023, 2PM-4PM

Virtual Meeting

## Participation

### Committee Members Present:

Ginny Powell, Committee Co-Chair FACT Board; Abigail Wescott, FACT Board Member; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University; Katharine Hunter, DBHDS; Melissa O'Neill, CASA-DCJS; Jeanine Harper, Committee Co-Chair, GRSCAN; Eric Reynolds, OCO; Betsy Bell, DCJS; Carol Wilson, Office of Children's Services; Betty Wade Coyle, Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads (Retired); Kristen Pritchard, VSDVAA; Anya Shaffer, DCJS; Ellen White, JDR Judge (retired); Beverly Crowder, FACT Board

**Committee Members Absent:** Ron Brown, Families Forward; Maria Altonen, VDH; Kathleen Hollywood, VDSS

**Other Attendees:** Michelle L'Hommedieu, FACT Counsel, OAG; Nicole Poulin, FACT; Taylor Hohle, FACT; Laurie Crawford, VDSS; Craig Patterson, VDSS (representing Kirby Baughn); Laurel Aparicio, Families Forward; Nikole Cox, VDSS; Tammika Fedrick, VDSS; Traci Jones, VDSS

### Meeting called to order by Ginny Powell at 2:05 PM

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

### TANF Funding Update, *Laurel Aparicio*

- Laurel provided an update on the home visiting financial crisis. An overview of her presentation can be found [here](#).
- There was discussion around multiple family and children funding sources experiencing cuts such as childcare, the end of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and major cuts to VOCA.
- There was a motion for the CAN Committee to submit a letter of support to the Governor for general funds to replace the loss in TANF funding for home visiting.
  - Yes: Ginny Powell, Jeanine Harper, Betty Wade Coyle, Stephenie Howard, Kristen Pritchard, Beverly Crowder
  - The following committee members abstained from the vote due to affiliation with state agency: Abigail Wescott, Ellen White, Craig Patterson, Melissa O'Neill, Anya Shaffer, Katharine Hunter, Eric Reynolds, Betsy Bell, and Carol Wilson.

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

- Annual report will be published soon. Some preliminary findings are below:
  - 165% increase in reports made - this is expected as the public gains more awareness of the office
  - 446 complaints total - 77% moved forward to the investigation stage.
  - Common issues identified were inadequate services (lack of visits, workers not attentive to child or parents, lack of internal or external communication, etc.), documentation (lack of detail or documentation at all), foster parent expectations, improper screening out of CPS reports by local departments, issues with CPS investigation procedure, and placement decisions.
  - Received 50 notifications of child fatalities that were suspected of abuse/neglect and the family had prior involvement with CPS. This is up from 31 cases reported last year.
    - Substance-exposed infants (typically 3-5 months old) and parental substance use were common themes in the fatalities.

**FACT Updates, Nicole Poulin**

- The latest issue brief on [People with Disabilities](#) has been published. This is part of a new series on Special Populations.
- [Problematic Sexual Behavior Project](#) - recommendations were made previously during Phase I and the Board has approved for Phase II to pilot the recommendations in a few localities. The funding request for the project is currently working its way through procurement.
- Currently working on a letter to support budget amendments to increase funding for the VDSS workforce.

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

- Data findings from the 20 workforce focus groups will be released in mid-December. A preview of the finding can be found [here](#).
- A quantitative survey to supplement the focus group data will be sent out in January. These data findings will hopefully be available at the end of January.

**VDSS Family Services Workforce Update, Nikole Cox**

- Virginia currently has a 15% vacancy rate for family services staff.
- Funding for additional positions was not approved during the 2023 General Assembly session.
- Some identified areas for improvement: resources for developing a central training academy model; increasing recruitment of staff through expansion of the college stipend program; implementation of a peer support helpline for workers to process cases with an experienced worker.

● **VDSS CRP & CAPTA Update, Tammika Fedrick & Craig Patterson**

- Working with the Capacity Building Center for States for peer-to-peer support. Meeting with different states to gather information about their Citizen Review Panels (CRP)
- The OCO has expressed interest in managing the Virginia CRP as it is restructured.
- Craig provided an update on VDSS Family Services Prevention Interventions. The [slides can be found here](#).

● **Next Steps, Ginny Powell**

- € Next meeting is March 8th 1-4pm, in person

**Meeting was adjourned at 3:59 PM**