

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

**September 3rd, 2025, 10AM-1PM**

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

### **Participation:**

**Committee Members Present:** Jeanine Harper, Co- Chair, Greater Richmond SCAN; Ginny Powell, Previous FACT Board Member; Ron Brown, Families Forward Virginia; Carol Wilson, Office of Children's Services; Eric Reynolds, Office of the Children's Ombudsman; Frank Somerville, JDR Judge (retired); Anya Shaffer, Department of Criminal Justice Services; Melissa O'Neill, Department of Criminal Justice Services, CASA; Maria Altonen, Virginia Department of Health

**Committee Members Participating Remotely:** Betty Wade Coyle, Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University (left at 12:00PM); Season Roberts, Co-Chair, FACT Board Member; Jennifer Gillard, Previous FACT Board Member; Cayla Kirby, VDSS

**Committee Members Absent:** Kristen Pritchard, Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance; Ian Danielsen, Longwood University; Katharine Hunter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

**Other Attendees:** Nicole Poulin, FACT; Rachel Miller, CRP Coordinator; Taylor Hohle, FACT (remote); Laurie Crawford, VDSS (remote); Nikki Cox, VDSS (remote)

### **Meeting called to order by Season Roberts at 10:08 AM**

All motions were passed unanimously unless otherwise noted.

**A motion for Betty Wade Coyle, Season Roberts, Jennifer Gillard, Cayla Kirby and Stephenie Howard to participate remotely was made by Ginny Powell and seconded by Ron Brown.**

### **Approval of Minutes, *Season Roberts***

- **A motion to approve the minutes from the June 2025 Child Abuse & Neglect Advisory Committee meeting was made by Ginny Powell and seconded by Melissa O'Neill.**

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

- The annual report will be published by October 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Recommendations will include improvements in the workforce, bolstering Child Protective Services responses especially for the youngest children, increasing state-level oversight, improving legal representation, and establishing a children's cabinet.
- There was discussion around cannabis use continually coming up in child fatality cases and potential responses and educational opportunities.
  - Members discussed the potential to send an advisory letter drawing attention to the issue once the OCO report has been released and additional research has been done.

### **FACT Updates, *Nicole Poulin & Taylor Hohle***

- Problematic Sexual Behavior Project – the train-the-trainer curriculum on how to respond to these cases is being developed and will be piloted with select Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) in early 2026.

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- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan – nine Child Advocacy Centers have been awarded \$10,000 to support prevention efforts in line with the state plan that was released earlier this year.
- Child fatalities – The report on systemic responses (investigations and reviews) to child fatalities was released at the end of June. <https://www.fact.virginia.gov/child-fatalities/>
  - Child fatality review workgroup – The workgroup has been reviewing select child fatality cases from Fiscal Year 2023 across the five Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) regions. Reviews will be finished later this month and a final report will be published with themes and findings.
  - Betty Wade provided a webinar recording link that discussed unsafe sleep and community responses:  
<https://event.on24.com/wcc/r/4990192/CA18F49014BA841C37ACC48C08AD8D56?ms=1756404168004&partnerref=emailShareFromReg>
  - The VDSS report on Child Maltreatment Death Investigations for State Fiscal Year 2024 has been released:  
[http://dss.virginia.gov/files/about/reports/children/cps/all\\_other/2025/ChildMaltreatmentDeathInv\\_SF2024\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://dss.virginia.gov/files/about/reports/children/cps/all_other/2025/ChildMaltreatmentDeathInv_SF2024_Report_FINAL.pdf)

### **VDSS Updates and Discussion on Issues Outlined in the 2025 CAN CAPTA Report, Nikki Cox, Division of Family Services**

- Safe Kids, Strong Families Updates
  - The Safe Kids, Strong Families initiative has included working with a contractor to review the current child welfare system and provide recommendations for improvements. The contractors finished their recommendations last week. The initiative's steering committee has made some suggestions and priorities around six pillars:
    - Strengthening workforce – VDSS would take a more active role in the recruitment pipeline to assist and support local agencies. Establishing competitive compensation for Family Services Specialists to reduce turnover.
    - Child Protective Services – The creation of a centralized intake and validity system to assist in unified screening decisions. Updating the current response time guidance to include children under 3 years old requiring a response within 24 hours. Currently this is only for children under 2 years old.
    - Modernization of oversight and infrastructure – The contractors reviewed the right other states that operate a state-supervised, locally-administered system like Virginia. Recommendations will include introducing a statewide accountability framework through legislation. Additionally, much-needed updates to data systems, including Oasis. The Request for Proposals to update Oasis will hopefully be out by the end of the year.
    - Permanency of youth – Working to reduce congregate care for high acuity youth and finding safe and appropriate placements.
    - Behavioral health and child welfare – Ensuring that children in foster care are

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receiving proper services and an additional focus on substance use in parents.

- Community pathways – Expanding prevention services in each locality and finding additional ways to bring in more federal Title IV-E funding for these services.

### **Update from the Office of Trauma and Resilience Policy (OTRP) at VDSS. Laurie Crawford**

- OTRP is working on the Strengthening the Workforce pillar of Safe Kids, Strong Families to include previous proposals around a peer support line for workers, critical incidence response, and community resilience training.
- Cost of Family Services turnover report has been published:  
[https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/otrp/intro\\_page/workforce\\_trauma/Cost\\_of\\_Child\\_Welfare\\_Turnover\\_Report.pdf](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/otrp/intro_page/workforce_trauma/Cost_of_Child_Welfare_Turnover_Report.pdf)
  - 40% of entry-level Family Services Specialists (FSS 1) leave their jobs annually. The average tenure is eleven months.
  - \$11.1 million/year is spent on salary and benefits for FFS 1 employees who leave within one-year. An additional \$717,000/year is spent on required training for FFS 1 staff alone. In comparison, the OTRP proposal would cost around \$600,000/year.
- The Virginia Helping Everyone Access Linked Systems (HEALS) Website has been updated to share resources, toolkits, and training – <https://virginiaheals.com/>
- Partnering with Local Training and Development to provide one session a month of the Community Resilience Model for local DSS employees. Sessions filled up very quickly with a large waitlist showing a heavy interest in the topic/training within the local workforce.
  - Local Training and Development will be invited to the next meeting to discuss updates on the training academy.

### **Committee Member Updates**

- Greater Richmond Stop Child Abuse Now (GRSCAN) hosts virtual Mindful Mondays to promote resilience among the workforce - <https://my.onecause.com/event/organizations/sf-001C0000011GS93IAG/events/vevt:65a37514-e8b5-4f96-ab85-b7f07c8a217b/custom-page/cpage:7cf24b39-58b0-4fff-ac7d-09a49ccf6c9b>
- Families Forward coordinates the Circle of Parents support group program and has multiple groups across the Commonwealth, including some statewide virtual options.  
<https://www.familiesforwardva.org/circle-of-parents>

### **Next Steps, Season Roberts**

- The next meeting will be held virtually on December 3rd, 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

**Meeting was adjourned at 12:29 PM**