

Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

February 25th, 2025, 1PM-4PM

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

Participation:

Committee Members Present: Ginny Powell, Co-Chair, 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; Katharine Hunter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; Kristen Pritchard, Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance; Melissa O'Neill, Department of Criminal Justice Services, CASA; Jeanine Harper, Co- Chair, Greater Richmond SCAN (arrived 1:10pm); Kirby Baughn, Department of Social Services (arrived 1:19pm)

Committee Members Participating Remotely: Betty Wade Coyle, Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University

Committee Members Absent: Abigail Wescott, FACT Board Member; Maria Altonen, Department of Health

Other Attendees: Nicole Poulin, FACT; Taylor Hohle, FACT (virtually); Michelle L'Hommedieu, Assistant Attorney General; Laurie Crawford, VDSS; Rachel Miller, CRP Coordinator VDSS; Eryn Clarke, VDSS (virtually – arrived at 2pm, left at 2:35pm)

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

All motions were passed unanimously unless otherwise noted.

A motion for Betty Wade Coyle, Maria Altonen and Stephenie Howard to participate remotely was made by Ron Brown and seconded by Frank Somerville.

Approval of Minutes, *Ginny Powell*

- A correction was made to Katherine Hunter's title in the participation section.
- **A motion to approve the minutes from the December 2024 Child Abuse & Neglect Advisory Committee meeting as amended was made by Ron Brown and seconded by Anya Shafer.**

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

- Legislative Updates
 - Based on regional listening sessions and a recent study on increased custody petitions across the state, The Commission on Youth put together recommendations including some legislative proposals.
 - HB 1733 - An amendment was proposed to the relief of custody petition statute, currently requires a "preponderance of the evidence" and the amendment would raise to "clear and convincing evidence". The amendment did not make it through the General Assembly and was instead amended to have another workgroup convened by the OCO to assess the issue.
 - Individuals who file for relief of custody should be referred to social services to assess for services that can be accessed prior to filing the petition with the court. Based on the listening sessions, it was determined that this is not happening in all localities. Fairfax DSS has embedded two workers in the court

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system to handle these cases which has helped decrease the number of unnecessary petitions. The increase in petitions have mostly been in southwest Virginia.

- HB 1733 would require DSS to create a standard study similar to a social history used by the Department of Juvenile Justice to determine what services have already been accessed prior and what services could be provided to potentially prevent the relief of custody petition.
- SB 801 – recommended by the Office of Children’s Services. There was a workgroup put together regarding policies and procedures for Child in Need of Services (CHINS) cases going through the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) and whether those children are eligible for Children Services Act (CSA) funds. The bill clarifies that any child determined to be in need of services, by the court or by the FAPT, are eligible for CSA funded services.
- SB 1406 - Amendment to the OCO statute – Previously it was only required to inform foster parents of the OCO. This amendment would clarify that the OCO can communicate with children in foster care and requires local Departments of Social Services to inform foster children, ages 12 and up, that they can contact the OCO. Amendment passed the General Assembly without opposition.
- HB 2457 – Directs Social Services to require local departments to apply for federal benefits for foster youth.
 - A similar bill (SB 818) was passed for VDSS to look at policies and ensure that children’s benefits, such as social security or disability, are protected. This was recommended in the OCO annual report.
- HB2613 – This bill would amend the definition of abused and neglected child to say that parental use of substances (alcohol and marijuana specifically) does not constitute abuse and neglect unless there is other evidence of abuse and neglect in the case. This bill came up last year and was vetoed by the Governor and likely will be again this year.
- Budget items in the General Assembly version that the OCO is urging the Governor to consider:
 - Funding for Child Advocacy Centers and Community Action Agencies.
- There have been issues identified around validation of referrals and investigations for Child Protective Services, including for child fatality and near-fatality cases.
- Working with Department of Criminal Justice Services on projects to assist communities with mental and behavioral health issues through Courts Services Units, Community Services Boards, and social services.
- Continuing to work with Virginia Department of Health on state plan work for Substance Exposed Infants. The workgroups have had robust discussions and there may be future legislation coming out of the workgroup that would further clarify responsibilities of the medical community, community services boards, and local departments of social services in these cases.
- Continuing work with DSS on parental child safety program and getting feedback on what improvements are necessary.

FACT Updates, Nicole Poulin

- Grants Committee Updates - FACT had a recent increase in income and is assessing options for larger grant opportunities which would be subject to the VDSS procurement process. A survey was sent out for community organization input on funding needs.
- Problematic Sexual Behavior Project - In June, Justice 3D, FACT contractor, started developing

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train-the-training for multidisciplinary teams to address these cases. They are hoping to schedule the first training in December.

- Child fatalities –
 - Report – Initially the report was solely focused on review team processes but has expanded to include investigations. The report will now look at child fatalities from initial response through investigation to final case review (or lack of review).
 - Subcommittee to review of OASIS cases on child fatalities – A future meeting will be scheduled for the subcommittee to discuss the spreadsheet of cases and processes for reviewing them. If you are interested in joining the subcommittee, please reach out to Nicole or Taylor.
- State Plan on Child Sexual Abuse – FACT hired a consultant to develop a preliminary framework on addressing child sexual abuse in Virginia. FACT is working with Child Advocacy Centers in the future on child sexual abuse cases and hoping to utilize this plan in that work.
 - There was discussion about the creation of a Virginia chapter of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC).
 - Michelle provided edits to include the website addresses in parenthesis after the hyperlink and mentioning the Child Abuse & Neglect Committee on the cover page
 - **A motion was made by Ron Brown to adopt the state plan as amended. The motion was seconded by Betty Wade Coyle**
- FACT has hired two consultants to help with communications and social media with the intention to increase awareness of FACT and our work.

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

- Workforce Development, Kirby Baughn
 - Based on recommendations from the 2022 Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG) report, staff are meeting with stakeholders next week for a workload study:
<https://www.osig.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/office-of-the-state-inspector-general/pdf/performance-audits/OSIG-CPS-Audit-Report-Final.pdf>
 - This would include a workload analysis for child protective services and in-home services staff. More updates can be provided at the next meeting.
- Hotline Updates, Eryn Clarke
 - Staffing update
 - 11 full time employees, 23 contractors, nine wage employees, and five vacancies (all wage positions, should be posted in the next week or two). Recently hired five contractors for after hours.
 - 2024 Call Data (January – December)

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- 159,877 inbound & outbound calls
- 49,210 Child Protective Services reports
- 13,393 Adult Protective Services reports
- 16,472 Mandated Reporter Portal referrals processed

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Discussion of 2025 CAN CAPTA Report, Ginny Powell & Jeanine Harper

- The Co-Chairs recommend keeping the same focus areas as last year's report: workforce development and the hotline, Family First implementation, and child death and review. Changes would be made in the framing based on information that has been shared over the last year.
- **A motion was made by Eric Reynolds to accept the three areas for the 2025 CAPTA report (workforce and hotline, Family First implementation, and child death investigations and reviews). Ron Brown seconded.**

Update from the Office of Trauma and Resilience Policy (OTRP) VDSS Workforce Development Activities, Laurie Crawford

- Previously, the OTRP held focus groups in 2023 and conducted a survey in early 2024 focused on workforce development. Additionally in 2024, a literature review was conducted on other states practices. Based on this information, recommendations were made:
 - Pilot Community Resilience Model for a year - Stacie and Laurie recently completed a 40-hour train-the-trainer on the model
 - Warmline for staff conducted by part-time retired DSS workers
 - Funding for these projects was not included in the General Assembly budget, so the OTRP is looking for other ways to continue the pilot work and focus on budget proposals for next year.

Committee Member Updates

- Action Alliance will be hosting their Spring Training Retreat, the Power of We, May 20th-22nd
- April 6th-12th is Victims' Rights Week - this year is the 30th anniversary of Virginia Crime Victims Bill of Rights. More information will be available soon on the Department of Criminal Justice Services website.
- The Annual Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Conference is being held April 28th and 29th <https://www.vdsspreventionconference.com/>
- The 6th annual Resilience Week will be held May 1st-7th <https://grscan.com/resilience-week-virginia>

Next Steps, Ginny Powell

- The next meeting will be held virtually on June 12th, 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:23 PM