

Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes March 10th, 2026, 10:30AM-3PM

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), 5600 Cox Road, Glen Allen, Virginia

Participation:

Committee Members Present: Jeanine Harper, Co- Chair, Greater Richmond SCAN; Ron Brown, Families Forward Virginia; Carol Wilson, Office of Children's Services; Eric Reynolds, Office of the Children's Ombudsman; Anya Shaffer, Department of Criminal Justice Services; Melissa O'Neill, Department of Criminal Justice Services, CASA; Laurie Crawford, VDSS; Stephenie Howard, Norfolk State University; Theresa Orr, Police Department (retired); Katharine Hunter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services; Ian Danielsen, FACT Board Member; Maria Altonen, Virginia Department of Health (arrived 10:58am)

Committee Members Participating Remotely: Betty Wade Coyle, Prevent Child Abuse Hampton Roads; Season Roberts, Co-Chair, FACT Board Member; Jennifer Gillyard, Previous FACT Board Member

Committee Members Absent: Frank Somerville, JDR Judge (retired); Keisha Bagby-Bailey, VDSS

Other Attendees: Nicole Poulin, FACT; Rachel Miller, CRP Coordinator; Brandi Peterson, VDSS; Taylor Hohle, FACT (remote); Michelle L'Hommedieu, FACT Counsel (remote)

Meeting called to order by Jeanine Harper at 10:43 AM

All motions were passed unanimously unless otherwise noted.

A motion for Betty Wade Coyle, Season Roberts, and Jennifer Gillard to participate remotely due to being over 60 miles away from the meeting location was made by Melissa O'Neill and seconded by Anya Shaffer.

Approval of Minutes, *Jeanine Harper*

- **A motion to approve the minutes from the December 2025 Child Abuse & Neglect Advisory Committee meeting was made by Ron Brown and seconded by Ian Danielsen.**

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

- General Assembly updates –
 - SB 206 HB 73 are heading to the Governor. These were recommendations from the Virginia Commission on Youth based on their study findings which found that most cases for relief of care were relatives who were no longer able to take care of the children. Current law only authorizes the parents of a child to file a petition for relief of care and custody. If you file a petition for relief of care and custody, then you must cooperate with VDSS on services to keep the family together if possible.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB73>

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- <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB206>
- HB 76 was left in the Appropriations Committee, likely due to the cost. This would have established a supply of luggage for foster children.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB76>
- HB 191 is awaiting Governor action. This bill prohibits children who have been trafficked from being charged with for prostitution..
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB191>
- SB 133, HB 652, HB 283, HB 942 involved parental substance use.
 - HB 283 - passed, clarifies that the use of Medicated Assisted Treatment as prescribed is not solely a reason to suspect abuse or neglect.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB283>
 - HB 942 - passed, adds that no person shall be denied custody or visitation based on possession or consumption of legally authorized substances.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB942>
 - SB 133 and HB 652 – passed, these will create a workgroup to evaluate response to parental prenatal and postnatal substance use.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB133>
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB652>
- HB485 was continued to next year. This would have established a permanent Children’s Cabinet. The First Gentleman will potentially take on a role like previously established temporary cabinets.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB485>
- HB 632 and SB 305 are awaiting Governor action. These create barrier crime waivers, similar to those on a federal level, for foster care and kinship placements.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB632>
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB305>
- HB 1327 is heading to the Governor. This would change the definition of fictive kin to include natural supports of the child that had an established relationship with the family prior to entering the child welfare system.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB1327>
- There are multiple bills related to the Safe Kids, Strong Families recommendations, which include state oversight of local agencies, quicker response time for children under three years old, and centralized intake. These bills are going into conference to reconcile differences between the bills.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB640>
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB1490>
- SB 125 and SB 485 were OCO bills – SB 485 would have extended oversight to foster youth then committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice. This was continued to 2027. SB 125 would allow the OCO to publish investigative reports on the website and to access reports and histories that are court ordered for children in foster care. Passed House and Senate.
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB485>
 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/SB125>

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FACT Updates, Nicole Poulin & Taylor Hohle

- Letter sent from FACT endorsing the Children's Cabinet and CAC funding.
- FACT is now serving as coordinating entity for first state section of Association of Professionals Solving the Abuse of Children (APSAC). The section meets monthly.
 - The FACT Board approved funding for CAN Committee members to join FACT's organizational membership of APSAC. Executive Director Poulin will be sending out more information in the next few weeks.
- Problematic Sexual Behavior train-the-trainer model for Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) pilot was completed in January.
 - There was discussion around the lack of support and oversight for MDTs.

Discussion of 2026 CAPTA Report, Jeanine Harper & Season Roberts

- The CAN Committee serves as one of three Citizen Review Panels that are required by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funding, to examine VDSS policies related to child welfare. Annually, the Committee is required to develop a report outlining findings and recommendations to improve the child welfare system.
- The co-chairs would like the Committee to consider continuing to focus on the same areas as last year's report.
 - **Data collection** related to outcomes remains an area in need of improvement. Oasis, the current child welfare information system (CWIS) is out of date, and VDSS has been working for several years to procure a new system.
 - At the last meeting the Committee voted to send a letter to the new VDSS Commissioner to request that VDSS prioritize purchasing a new system and for the Committee Co-chairs to be involved in outcome measure development. Now that Commissioner Storen has been appointed, the letter will be sent.
 - As part of the ongoing focus on data collection, the Committee would like to receive updates at every meeting on the progress being made on the development and implementation of a new data collection system.
 - **Workforce capacity and retention** remain critical and on-going issues

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across localities. These issues were also identified in the Safe Kids, Strong Families report and the report from the Virginia Children's Partnership.

- In the VDSS response letter last year, the department outlined efforts to work with an outside contractor, Evident Change, and a newly established Workload Design Committee to research and develop a new report on workforce practice and processes.
- As part of this ongoing focus, the Committee would like to receive updates on the work with Evident Change and any additional efforts underway to address the issue of workforce development, including the implementation of the training academy.
- **Child fatalities** were a large focus of the Committee last year, resulting in two reports. As identified in those reports, there are still significant issues related to prevention, response, and data collection of these cases.
 - As part of this ongoing focus, the Committee would like to continue examining child fatalities through updates provided by VDSS on the processes and findings of the regional case reviews and any other efforts being made to address issues related to case response.
 - Additionally, the Committee would like to reconvene the previous workgroup to meet a minimum of quarterly, over the next year, to review a sample of cases not currently being reviewed by the Office of the Children's Ombudsman or the regional case reviews. To continue monitoring trends and providing reports outlining information, the Committee will request that notices of child deaths provided by VDSS and continued Oasis access be shared with FACT staff.
 - There was discussion on also receiving data from the Virginia Department of Health to look at all child deaths, including those not investigated by Child Protective Services.
- **A motion to approve the 2026 Child Abuse and Neglect Advisory Committee CAPTA Report priority areas (data collection, workforce capacity and retention, and child fatalities) was made by Eric Reynolds and seconded by Carol Wilson.**

VDSS Updates and Discussion on Issues Outlined in the 2025 CAN CAPTA Report, *Brandi Peterson, Child Fatality Prevention Initiative Coordinator*

- In January 2024, VDSS restructured the regional child fatality review teams to be coordinated by state level staff and limited the criteria for reviews. This was an effort to create a centralized, consistent process across review teams and to

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increase the depth of reviews and recommendations.

- Now that the state oversees the review teams, Regional Practice Consultants have had more time to provide technical assistance, case reviews, and data reports.
- There is now mandatory annual training that emphasizes the community responsibility in the prevention of child fatalities and includes information on self-care.
- Recommendations from the teams have been more robust including target areas and specific steps to address the issues. Some teams have created workgroups to work on legislation or other areas of prevention.

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

- In calendar year 2025, turnover rates have increased for benefits workers and Family Service Specialists.
- More updates will be provided at the next meeting on a pilot program.

Next Steps, *Jeanine Harper*

- The next meeting will be held virtually on June 15th, 2026 10am-12pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:37 PM.