

Children's Justice Task Force Meeting

Location: 193 Polk Avenue, Suite F – Nashville, TN

Date: April 10, 2008

Present:

June Turner, Chair
Pat Wade, Vice Chair
William Paul Phillips, Secretary
Cindy Perry
Linda O'Neal
Carla Aaron
Dr. Larry Seeman
Sandra Allen
Dana Cobb
Linda Lloyd
Bridget Bandy
Kitty Oliver
Anne Fisher
Nicole Cobb
John Haynes
Elvira Newcomb
Dr. Lisa Piercey
Carla Snodgrass
Eileen Beehan
Delaine Bottoms
Wanda Mott
Stacy Miller
Nancy Williams
Lori Spencer
Karen Alexander
Dawn Harper
Jeannie Brooks
Jo Ann Gregory
Joe Saladino
Nicole Cobb
Sasha Fallon
James Thompson
Rae Anne Seay
Sevara Sawyers
Dana Eskridge
Tammy Feldman
Rory Alley
Toni Lawal

Affiliation

Nashville Children's Alliance
TN Commission on Children & Youth
District Atty. General Office
Select Committee on Children & Youth
TN Commission on Children & Youth
Department of Children's Services
Volunteer Behavioral Health
LeBonheur Center for Children & Parents
TN Commission on Children & Youth
Department of Human Services
Department of Children's Services
Department of Children's Services
Montgomery Co. CAC
Department of Education
Cumberland Sheriff Dept.
Admin. Office of the Courts
Jackson Clinic/Vanderbilt
Prevent Child Abuse TN
Catholic Charities
Carl Perkins Exchange Club
Department of Children's Services
Department of Children's Services
Memphis Children's Alliance
Legal Aid of East TN.
Department of Children's Services
Nashville Children's Alliance
Department of Children's Services
Springfield Police Dept.
Department of Children's Services
Department of Education
TN Center for Child Welfare
District Atty. General Office
Legal Aid Society
Department of Children's Services
Department of Children's Services
Department of Children's Services
University of TN
University of TN

Chair, June Turner called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. The meeting began with introductions of new members, Dr. Lisa Piercey, Elva Newcomb, and John Haynes. Also, the new members provided a brief background of their work history pertaining to children and youth.

1st item – Reporting on Community Advisory Boards (CABs), Multiple Response System (MRS), and CPIT training

Carla Aaron provided an update on MRS and distributed a spreadsheet describing how the implementation is going in the regions. Carla stated eight (8) regions have implemented MRS with four (4) remaining and at different stages of the pre-implementation phase. Carla shared that Davidson County has piloted MRS in one zip code area on April 1 and plan to transition the other zip codes soon. Carla noted that some of the regions are experiencing problems/difficulty with MRS Assessment track particularly shifting from an Investigative mindset of CPS to Assessment (CPS) as it relates to working with law enforcement and communication. Cindy Perry reminded members that MRS legislation allows Assessment referrals to be switched to Investigative track should the worker discover during her/his assessment that the referral meets the Investigative track. Carla went on to report that Mid-Cumberland is rolling out MRS in clusters and hope to be completed by December 2007; East region is halfway out and the other half [East] is doing it county by county; and Shelby County is looking at rolling out MRS this summer. Carla remarked that Shelby County felt they required more technical assistance on MRS and noted that those regions that identified their resource linkage person first had a smoother roll out.

Carla also noted that the Assessment caseloads are increasing and feels that workers might not be aware that cases requiring long-term services can be transferred to a Family Service Worker (FSW).

In addition to updating members on the status of the twelve (12) regions with regards to MRS implementation, Carla Aaron thanked the Task Force for their support of the local Community Advisory Boards (CABS) and then shared the results of the conference call meeting on April 7 with Susan Notkin (Director of the Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare of New York) who is working with DCS to be better responsive to the community. Carla stated that Ms. Notkin plans to come to Tennessee within the next few months to meet with the community advisory board facilitators. She further stated DCS envision doing three (3) summits with community advisory boards and key stakeholders to develop some strategies to engage community advisory board. Susan Notkin will facilitate this process and work with the Task Force Community Partners Committee to develop this activity. Carla also noted that Ms. Notkin advise them [DCS] to not try to “fix it all” and supports working with data. Carla yielded to Cindy Perry and Pat Wade to expound on the conference call with Ms. Notkin. Pat stated she thought the information was very helpful and a productive meeting. Pat also commented that the information shared by Ms. Notkin was designed to empower the community advisory boards and impart clear roles/responsibilities of the Children’s Justice Task Force. Rory Alley noted that rough draft of the minutes [conference call meeting with Susan Notkin] was available and distributed to those persons requesting a copy.

Anne Fisher asked Carla how does MRS affect Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and Carla stated it would not impact them [SIU] due to SIU work strictly being an investigative function. Anne also asked Carla if she would expound on some of the communication problems with MRS Investigative and Assessment tracks. Carla stated the communication problems tend to lie in the role of law enforcement and shared the following example. For instance, if DCS receives a referral of minor physical abuse, most likely the referral would meet the criteria of the Assessment track however, the problem occurs when the referent also notifies law enforcement of the maltreatment. Law enforcement accepts the report and contacts DCS to investigate. This results in miscommunication between DCS and law enforcement because the minor physical abuse referral does not constitute at the time of receipt a referral to law enforcement. Kitty Oliver stated they found it helpful in their region [Northwest] to meet with law enforcement and communicate the various categories of child abuse/neglect under MRS Investigative and Assessment tracks.

Nicole Cobb shared that Davidson and Sumner County schools are experiencing similar communication concerns with the referral process and that Davidson County has introduced a policy [2409] on reporting child abuse that requires Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools [MNPS] teachers and staff to immediately report suspected child abuse/neglect to DCS, Law Enforcement (i.e. school resource officer, police) and Assistant Superintendent of Student Services at MNPS. Nicole asked how can we advocate reporting abuse/neglect when you have individuals and organizations afraid to report “because it [reporting process] has become a huge mess” and added that at one point the community thought they were building bridges but now communication has suffered. Carla Aaron suggested DCS and school systems meet to discuss the concerns.

John Haynes, a law enforcement officer who works for the Cumberland Sheriff Department stated that he has a great relationship with DCS and went on to say that both law enforcement and DCS staff have access to each other numbers and work closely as a team.

Jo Ann Gregory stated she thought the domestic violence rule might be affecting the communication because what is considered inappropriate discipline to most, under the domestic violence rule, alleged perpetrators in these type of cases can be charged with domestic assault.

Nicole Cobb stated she would like DCS to come in and do an assessment and assist schools with determining when and under what circumstances to contact law enforcement. Nicole also stated she would like this body [task force members] to make expert recommendations on this matter. Cindy Perry asked if this was a local school board problem and requested clarification from Nicole about why MNPS needed to put this policy in place. Nicole stated she is looking at it from an ethical issue

Linda O’Neal suggested developing some parameters regarding this matter should the concern come up again from other school districts. Linda went on to say this is an

opportunity to provide guidance for the other 92 counties rather than reinventing the wheel every time a problem comes up.

Before moving on with the Resource Linkage presentation, William Paul Phillips asked Carla Aaron to share her background with DCS. Carla shared that she has 23 years of experience, which includes working in sexual abuse unit, Team Coordinator, Director of Communication, Special Investigations Unit, and Regional Administrator all in Davidson County. She also shared that she has a passion for CPS work and that her current position allows her an opportunity to elevate CPS.

Resource Linkage Coordinators Sevara Sawyer and Dana Eskeridge provided a brief presentation on how Resource Linkage operates and is working in Davidson County. They distributed several handouts (i.e. MRS power point presentation, Resource Directory) and expounded on the power point handout (see attachment). The presentation included the various divisions of DCS and their functions/roles (i.e. adoption, foster care support foster parents and children). Toni Lawal asked if an electronic copy of the resource directory was available and was informed they [Eskeridge and Sawyer] were in the process of updating the current directory and plan to have the second print online

Nancy Williams inquired about an electronic copy of a document printed by DCS on what is a case manager and thought it was an invaluable tool to share with the Task Force members. Stacy Miller said it is the Client's Rep handbook and is posted on DCS website.

Carla Aaron also provided an update on CPIT work products. Carla stated she has been meeting with Bonnie Beneke, June Turner, Cindy Perry, Pam Dickey and others to look to the Children's Alliance Centers to build teams and conduct investigations across the state. Carla also stated that the CPIT Committee is planning to develop a curriculum with basic investigative information and that Dawn Harper of Nashville CAC will assist Bonnie with the audience for this project. Sasha Fallon shared that there has been discussion about having a statewide training on how to present a CPIT case and ways to capture it (i.e. video, mock interview) to share with the CACs.

Carla Aaron also distributed a draft document describing the working agreement between TDCS and CJTF describing both parties' roles/responsibilities. The working agreement also request that CJTF gather information about each agency (see attachments). Upon receipt of the final document, copies will be distributed to members of the task force.

Last on the reporting by DCS dealt with streamlining the various committees that supports DCS work. Stacy Miller and Carla Aaron stated that DCS was looking at ways to streamline the various committees and would be referencing legislation to ensure compliance with statutes. Some of the questions posed were: Do we need all of these committees? Is there an overlap? Is there a way to merge it? Stacy will be looking at the statutes. Some of the various committees mentioned were: Family Resource Centers, CART, CPIT, Children Service Advisory Council, State MRS CABs, Local MRS CABs,

CJTF/Sexual Abuse, Citizen Review Panels, Child Fatality Review Team, Child Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee, and Relative Caregiver Board. Jeanne Brooks mentioned several other committees and agreed to furnish that information to Stacy.

2nd item -legislative updates provided by Linda O’Neal and Cindy Perry

Below are some of the House bills (HB) mentioned:

- HB 2469 authorizing certain child abuse and child sexual abuse information contained in reports filed with DCS to be released to members of the general assembly for certain purposes; permits all but personal identifying information in such reports to be disclosed for valid legislative purposes.
- HB 2471 authorizing special education services association to develop and provide training on the appropriate use of restraints and seclusion on special education students was passed on 4/9/08.
- HB 3162 allows persons who are the subject of a DCS report or their parents or guardians [non-offending] to obtain copies of records if DCS has edited the records to protect the identity of the reporter and any other person whose life or safety may be endangered by the disclosure.
- HB 3937 abolishes juvenile records task force after it submits its final findings and recommendations to general assembly and governor, not later than May 1, 2008. (Cindy and Linda stated this legislation was formed out of legislation a year ago as a result of TBI releasing juveniles records and fingerprints and that this legislation prevents local law enforcement from providing information to TBI until the case has been adjudicated and limits fingerprint sharing information to serious offenses.)

Please reference the attachments for further information on the various house bills and other legislative information.

3rd agenda item – Committees’ Updates

CPIT - Bonnie Beneke, Chair

Joe Saladino reported for this committee and related that child interviewing training is offered to CPS workers eight (8) times per year and is coordinated by Bridget Bandy. Bridget notifies the Regional Administrators of TDCS of the training and encourages community agencies serving children to be involved too. Joe stated that Tennessee Center for Child Welfare (TCCW) is interested in collaborating with Bridget in an effort to create uniformity in training needs for TDCS workers. When asked who was conducted the child interviewing training, Joe responded, Dr. Fullerton.

Joe also reported that the CPIT committee is offering training on assessing validity in sexual abuse cases and wants to get that knowledge and exposure to TDCS workers via video and/or mock presentation.

Joe commented on the CPIT survey from 2006 asking if there were any surveys done between 1999 and 2006. He went on to say the committee wants to continue to assess patterns and trends; obtain helpful data and are planning to conduct another survey this fall.

This committee would like to hold their next meeting on May 10 at 9:00 am.

Court Improvement – Stacy Miller, Chair

Stacy reported the committee is on the judges' conference agenda (August 2008) and that Anne Fisher will be the speaker.

This committee would like to hold their next meeting either the first or third week of June 2008.

Community Partners – Cindy Perry, Chair

Carla Snodgrass reported that this committee is looking at the work that Susan Notkin has to offer pertaining to what makes effective community partners. Carla also stated Cindy Perry will develop a summarized version of the conference call meeting minutes with Susan Notkin and share the information with CJTF members. Carla also noted that the committee wants to have another conference call with DCS to identify timelines for implementation of the summits and to be part of the planning process.

In addition, Carla stated the committee was concerned by the comments Nicole shared regarding MNPS and Sumner County school district and plan to meet with school counselors to further assess the problem

Next meeting: TBA later

Treatment – Dr. Larry Seeman, Chair

Bridget Bandy reported that the committee recently held a conference call (April 4) for further discussion on the "Considerations" and have identified additional persons/audiences at DCS and the community to share their work product with.

Training & Education – Verna Wyatt, Chair

Rory Alley reported that the signs and symptoms document on child abuse/neglect will be send out electronically for more feedback. He noted that some persons like the picture on the document while others thought it was inappropriate. Rory stated some members prefer visuals and also suggested using a picture of a telephone to represent the hotline number. Stacy Miller said people are more responsive to persons and that a family portrait would be appropriate.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni Lawal