

Children's Justice Taskforce Meeting December 6, 2007

Present:

June Turner, Chair, Nashville CAC
Pat Wade, Co Chair, TCCY
Cindy Perry, State Legislature
Stacy Miller, DCS General Counsel
Bonnie Hommrich, DCS/Deputy Commissioner
Jo Ann Gregory, Springfield Police Dept.
Servella Perry, DCS Community Partnerships
Glenn Carter, Austin Peay State University/TCCW
Jeanne Brooks, DCS Children's Trust Fund
Robert Mathews, DCS MRS Resource Linkage
Joe Saladino III, DCS Central Intake
Anne Fisher, Montgomery Co. CAC
Dana Cobb, TCCY
Linda Lloyd, DHS Child Care Services
Carla Aaron, DCS/Executive Director of Child Safety
Debra Valentine, DCS Inspector General
Frankie Cowan, DCS/CPS
Bridget Bandy, DCS/CPS
Pamela Dickey, Childhelp Advocacy Center
Eileen Beehan, Catholic Charities
Susan Barber, Department of Health
Cheryl Hultman, CASA
Toni Lawal, UT SWORPS

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Chair, June Turner. Turner recognized Bonnie Hommrich, DCS Deputy Commissioner and asked if she would like to address the committee. Hommrich stated she was present to support Servella Terry and offered to respond to questions and/or concerns from members. Terry announced she wants the proposed state advisory board to work and is working closely with Robert Mathews. Terry added that she also has engaged Cindy Perry about effective ways to make this project work.

Robert Mathews distributed a one-page handout describing the purpose and functions for the proposed state advisory board. The handout reflected 5 functions of a state advisory board.

1. To assist with MRS implementation by helping to identify gaps in services in your respective local communities.
2. To assist with identifying both formal and informal existing and non-existing services within your respective local communities.
3. To develop a plan of action to address the identified needs from local Community Advisory Boards (CABs).

4. To present recommendations of possible solutions to DCS and local community advisory boards on ways to address identified needs and gaps in services.
5. To partner with DCS and local community advisory boards in implementing the action plan.

Matthews stated he would provide an annual report to select committee board. Servella Terry pointed out that the proposed state advisory board would need to have representation from West, Middle and East Tennessee and that it needs to represent the culture/ethnicity and demographics of children and families within the community. Eileen Beehan responded to the handout and asked for clarification about this committee role in MRS and its three tracks [Investigative, Assessment, and Resource Linkage]. For example, Beehan wanted to know if DCS wanted this committee to address issues related to foster care. Also, Beehan asked if it was being proposed that this committee blend or support MRS legislation. Beehan also suggested deleting item # 2 and felt that the state advisory board should not be micromanaging the local community advisory boards and that statement # 2 should be the sole function of the local community advisory boards. Bonnie Hommrich stated she believes that MRS is inclusive of foster care and asked the committee if they really want to exclude that. Hommrich urged the committee to not be fragmented on matters concerning children and families.

Stacy Miller prefaced the CJTF executive committee meeting with Commissioner Miller on November 28 and shared that Cindy Perry suggested hosting a summit to hear from the local community advisory boards as to what's working and what's not working. Cindy Perry noted that it was imperative that DCS obtain community advisement and that Brian A has driven DCS on dependency related issues. Perry asserted that it was important to be effective partners with the community no matter what or who the target audience is and to be mindful of what works well in rural and urban areas vary. Perry stated the agenda for the summit is not about MRS but about hearing from the local community advisory boards share information such as "how do state agencies with child serving programs partner with the community" and "what do they [CABs] perceive are the issues, needs, strengths." Perry noted state legislation will not pass laws to meet each and every community needs and there has to be consistency throughout the state. Servella Terry asked if the proposed handout for a state advisory board required additional functions. Perry responded by noting that the idea of a summit evolved from the meeting with Commissioner Miller and that there is a need to come up with a workgroup to lead this effort. Perry added that there is a need to have a uniformed policy on safety.

Bonnie Hommrich suggested turning the "lead in statement" [referencing the handout describing functions for a state advisory board] to a "need statement" and during the summit meetings, local and state level workgroups can strategically plan how to come up with a state advisory board. Eileen Beehan noted there had already been discussion at the last community partners committee meeting about what the state advisory board should look like and further noted this committee [CJTF] already has core representation from various state agencies to serve. Beehan also noted that the community partner committee

suggested bringing key persons from Human Services with a strong TANF background and Education to serve on the state advisory board. Bonnie Hommrich suggested keeping the “need statement handout” to guide activities as the CJTF committee develop its key players.

June Turner also prefaced discussion from the meeting with Commissioner Miller about how some community advisory boards are working well and how this committee can learn from them to support those that are struggling.

Cindy Perry referenced previous community partners committee meetings and what led to discussion of the community partners committee serving as a state advisory board to the local community advisory boards. Perry stated during a previous community partners committee meeting [Oct. 8] Marjahna Hart and Robert Matthews reported that there had been internal meetings [DCS] about the community partners committee serving as a state advisory board. Perry then presented members with a flowchart that described how to facilitate the accomplishment of a state advisory board [see attachment] and also discussed MRS legislation. Perry asserted the importance of having core information about data e.g. DCS sharing information on number of referrals, etc.; emerging issues, projects/activities going on in the community that will support safety, and next steps. Perry noted this information could be compiled and forward to the state to identify and understand common threads. Perry asserted if CJTF is going to take on this role, it will require other committees and everybody support and knowledge to impart support and guidance to the local community advisory boards.

Susan Barber stated that the proposal on board seems to be two (2) different things – advisory to MRS and advisory to community advisory board. Cindy Perry stated she believes it is the latter but still a process in working. Servella Terry stated she and Perry have been discussing bringing in outside expert to assist in this area and has identified two (2) persons to support this effort.

Carla Aaron asked about how the process was envisioned and Cindy Perry responded they were thinking about how the information would come to DCS and then to Robert Matthews who will simulate the information and distribute it. Perry expressed how important it is to have clear and specific communication from the community advisory boards and referenced that this was observed in Bedford CAB minutes when describing a mental health services. Bonnie Hommrich stated it’s parallel work and the summit makes sense in order to have some consistency. Perry stated that a workgroup is needed. A motion was offered to come up with a workgroup for the proposed state advisory board project. It was second and a vote was passed to include all CJTFA committees to participate in the workgroup. Also, it was suggested to consult the committees’ chairs about identifying persons to serve on the workgroup.

June Turner asked if there were questions or concerns about what was being proposed.

Are we going to be a CJTF or state advisory board? Cindy Perry said no and this is an additional response to CJTF and thought we might need another committee for the state

advisory board focus. Perry stated the executive director of child safety must be involved and Carla Aaron stated she would convey that message to Commissioner Miller and Bonnie Hommrich and assured the group that support will be available. Perry also stated there is a need to have more support from UT as it relates to reports because this project will increase UT work role.

Servella Terry made a request to move forward with scheduling technical assistance to support the workgroup and Cindy Perry suggested expanding the workgroup first and then bring in the consultant. Terry agreed to coordinate the technical assistance request on or before December 20.

Dana Cobb shared how similar this workgroup focus is to Citizen's Review Panel (CRP) focus and expressed how important that the committee be consistent and stay focus on the stated initiative and goals in order to bring about positive outcomes. Pat Wade agreed and talked about integrating all these folks together because all have similar outcomes for children and that this sentiment was also expressed in a strategic planning meeting with DCS on yesterday and that DCS is trying to improve program outcomes by pooling resources from child welfare committees such as CJTF, CRPs and others.

June Turner reiterated what Commissioner Miller said about already having the right persons to serve on state advisory boards referring to this committee.

Joe Saladino shared data [see attachment] from Central Intake regarding calls to the hotline, the web-based non-emergency system, quality questions process, screen-out referrals, and that his unit will be part of the pre-service delivery training for new hires. Saladino also stated last fiscal year Central Intake Unit received 151,480 calls and that referents are giving their names because they are doing a better job at engaging the referent. There were concerns about screen-out referral and Saladino stated Yolanda Perkins is the point of contact on this matter and that there is a peer review process for screening out referrals. Stacy Miller stated those persons who have concerns about unassigned referrals should contact the Legislation Constituency Service, which is found on DCS website.

Next matter on the agenda was for members to update the membership organization form.

Committees report:

Community Partners: Eileen Beehan reported the workgroup plans to bring in the consultant in January or February 2008 and would like for the other committees chairs to submit names of persons to serve on the state advisory board workgroup to Toni Lawal of UT by December 14. In addition, the workgroup will identify persons in other roles who are not members of the taskforce such as someone from DHS welfare program and ask Commissioner Miller to send a letter to these persons requesting their support. This workgroup also noted that DCS needs to look at different committees, members, and panels to be integrated and encouraged their support to this focus.

It was also noted that Servella Terry has a list of 5 questions that she will provide to Toni Lawal regarding the technical assistance consultant role.

Court improvement: Stacy Miller reported on the training for the judges, and stated a proposal has been submitted to present at the August 2008 conference. The presentation will be on effective and appropriate ways to communicate with children in a courtroom setting. Ann Fisher who is a forensic interviewer will assist with this effort. At their next meeting, they plan to focus on developing training materials and believe that this type of education will enable the courts to better serve and protect children.

Treatment: Although this committee did not meet, Bridget Bandy reported they will be providing some criteria information on the adolescent sexual offenders document and they have met with Lane Simpson and Nancy Clark concerning this matter.

CPIT: Joe Saladino reported the application has been submitted for “Finding Words” curriculum and faculty has been identified to provide professional development to the trainers. Also, Saladino talked about CPIT and stated a report was recently promulgated describing “the concerns of engaging the effectiveness of CPIT” and that this workgroup will make the report available to the committee. Cindy Perry also reported that there is tracking information available concerning CAC multi-disciplinary functioning relative to CPIT.

June Turner urged the members to stay focus on the state plan and recognize members, Jo Ann Gregory and Ann Fisher who received awards at the Connecting for Children’s Justice Conference last month.

Next meeting is April 10, 2008.

Respectfully submitted by

Toni Lawal