


**JOINT TASK FORCE ON CHILDREN'S
JUSTICE & CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**
REFRESHER

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The Joint Task Force (JTF) orientation presentation will cover the following:

- ❖ The Mission and Charge
 - ❖ JTF Establishment
 - ❖ JTF Federal and State Mandates
 - ❖ Our Accomplishments
 - ❖ JTF Meetings and Attendance Policy
 - ❖ List of Committees
 - ❖ Where minutes are found, including JTF work products and resources
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JTF MISSION

The Joint Task Force (JTF) is a multidisciplinary group of professionals and advocates focused on the welfare of children reported to have been abused or neglected.



JTF CHARGE

The JTF is charged with identifying existing problems and recommending solutions to DCS regarding the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect.



JTF ESTABLISHMENT

In 1985, the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation bringing together professionals from social work, law enforcement, the criminal court system and mental health to combat the problem of child sexual abuse. This comprehensive law also created the Child Sexual Abuse Task Force to assist with the implementation of Public Chapter 478 and to evaluate the results of this implementation, producing a State Plan that encompasses, detection, intervention, prevention and the treatment of child sexual abuse (T.C.A. 37-1-603).



JTF ESTABLISHMENT

In 1993, membership of this group was expanded to include individuals with experience in civil court, defense of the accused, CASA and parent groups.



JTF FEDERAL MANDATES

The JTF has federal and state mandates and reporting requirements. The federal guidelines are:

- Section 107(a) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (P.L. 111-320) (the Act) authorizes grants to States for the purpose of assisting States in developing, establishing and operating programs designed to improve: (1) the assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, including cases of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and the child's family;

JTF FEDERAL MANDATES

(2) the assessment and investigation of cases of suspected child abuse-related fatalities and suspected child neglect-related fatalities;

(3) the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation; and (4) the assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect.

JTF FEDERAL MANDATES


- Through the CJA grant, DCS is required to establish a task force to implement recommendations in the following categories: (A) investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as interstate, federal, state, and state-tribal, in a manner which reduces the additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family and which also ensures procedural fairness to the accused;

JTF FEDERAL MANDATES

- (B) Experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused; and (C) Reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children from abuse, particularly sexual abuse and exploitation, while ensuring fairness to all affected persons.
- The JTF will make these recommendations after making an assessment of the state's systems of the above listed categories every three (3) years.

FEDERAL REQUIRED MEMBERSHIP

Federally required membership categories:

- law enforcement
 - civil court judge
 - criminal court judge
 - defense attorney
 - prosecuting attorney
 - child advocate (attorney for children)
 - Court Appointed Special Advocate/volunteer guardian ad litem
 - health professional
 - mental health professional
 - child protective service agency
 - individual experienced in working with children with disabilities
 - parent and representative of parent group
 - adult former victim of child abuse and/or neglect
 - individuals experienced in working with homeless children and youths.
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JTF STATE MANDATES

The state guidelines are:

- Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-603 established a task force to develop a plan of action for “better coordination and integration of the goals, activities, and funding of DCS pertaining to the detection, intervention, prevention, and treatment of child sexual abuse in order to maximize staff and resources, including the effective utilization of licensure personnel in determining whether children are properly cared for and protected by the child care agencies licensed by the department of children's services or human services”.

JTF STATE MANDATES

- Additionally, the plan is required to include ways to inform and instruct appropriate school personnel and children in all school districts, local law enforcement, and the general public in the detection, intervention, prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse and in the proper action that should be taken in a suspected case of child sexual abuse.
- The JTF is required to submit this plan every two (2) years to the members of the general assembly and the governi




STATE REQUIRED MEMBERSHIP


State required members include at least one (1) representative from each of the following categories:

- Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Children's Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Department of Human Services,
- Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
- Tennessee Bureau of Investigation
- A child abuse agency
- A treatment resource,
- A local child service agency
- District Attorneys General Conference
- Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
- Local law enforcement.


DOE ROLE IN RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE

- Law mandates that DOE participate in developing the state plan;
 - Law states that DOE, the State Board of Education will work together to inform school personnel on issues related to child abuse and
 - Develop curriculum materials on detection, intervention, prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse (TCA 37-1-603 (b) (2) and (3)).
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DOH ROLE IN RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE

- Participates on Task Force and in plan development.
 - Provides Healthy Start services and other child development services.
 - Research the health effects of child abuse/neglect on children's health and well-being over the span of victim's life.
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DHS ROLE IN RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE

- Participates on the Task Force and in plan development.
 - Coordination of investigations in child care centers.
 - Develop ways to inform and instruct personnel in child care agencies on issue of child abuse and neglect.
 - Enforces compliance with standards for child abuse and neglect training for child care staff.
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DMHSAS ROLE IN RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE

- Participates on the Task Force and in plan development.
 - Coordination of investigations in child care centers.
 - Develop ways to inform and instruct personnel in child care agencies on issue of child abuse and neglect.
 - Enforces compliance with standards for child abuse and neglect training for child care staff.
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LAW ENFORCEMENT ROLE

- Informs and instructs appropriate local law enforcement personnel in the detection of child sexual abuse and in the proper actions that should be taken in a suspected case of child sexual abuse.
- Ensure in-service training of law enforcement specialists in the investigation of child sexual abuse.




AMONG OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The JTF has improved the child protection system by:

- supporting the implementation of the multidisciplinary Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT) model, which is the core legal framework of Tennessee's Child Protective Services (CPS) program;
- ensuring that CPS, law enforcement, education, mental health, legal and judicial professionals understand the dynamics of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse;
- developing curriculum in partnership with the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlandds to provide child welfare and social service professionals with practical tips for testifying in court;
- supporting the enactment a law allowing the admission of video forensic interviews of children into evidence, to reduce possible exposure of additional trauma to children;

AMONG OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- promoting awareness and knowledge of child sexual abuse and mandatory child abuse reporting laws;
 - developing guidelines for considerations in the reunification of sexually adolescent youth with the families where the victims or other vulnerable children reside;
 - developing and providing tools and training to support the assessment and appropriate treatment for children who have suffered trauma from sexual abuse; and
 - developing guidelines and resources for child sexual abuse prevention for schools as well as childcare providers/educators across the state to provide age-appropriate instruction to students on personal body safety and how to report sexual abuse.
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MEETINGS

The JTF meets at least four (4) times each year, once each calendar-year quarter, and holds additional meetings as needed to support the work of the JTF.

The JTF meeting calendar for the upcoming year is developed at or before the last meeting of the preceding year.



MEMBERS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Members are expected to attend a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the regularly scheduled JTF meetings each calendar year to retain their membership. Members who are unable to attend a meeting are asked to notify the JTF Coordinator.

If a member is not able to attend a meeting, the member may send a representative or proxy to attend the meeting on his/her behalf. Members who send a proxy or invite a visitor to lend expertise to a meeting are asked to notify the JTF Coordinator before the n



COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEES RESPONSIBILITIES

The JTF has four (4) committees. The current committees are:

Child Protective Investigation Team (CPIT) – This committee focuses on issues related to multi-disciplinary investigative teams and promotes training of all professionals involved in the investigation of severe child abuse and neglect cases, including those warranting criminal prosecutions. This committee also supports initiatives surrounding child abuse investigations, confidentiality, and improving the child protective system.



COMMITTEES

Court Improvement – This committee focuses on projects designed to improve judicial and administrative proceedings that involve allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.



COMMITTEES

Outreach and Awareness– This committee promotes professionalism and competency through initiatives that support issues of education pertaining to public child welfare. This committee also identifies resources and activities that will advance the development of training needs of children and families, mandated reporters and the general public related to child abuse and neglect and severe child abuse.



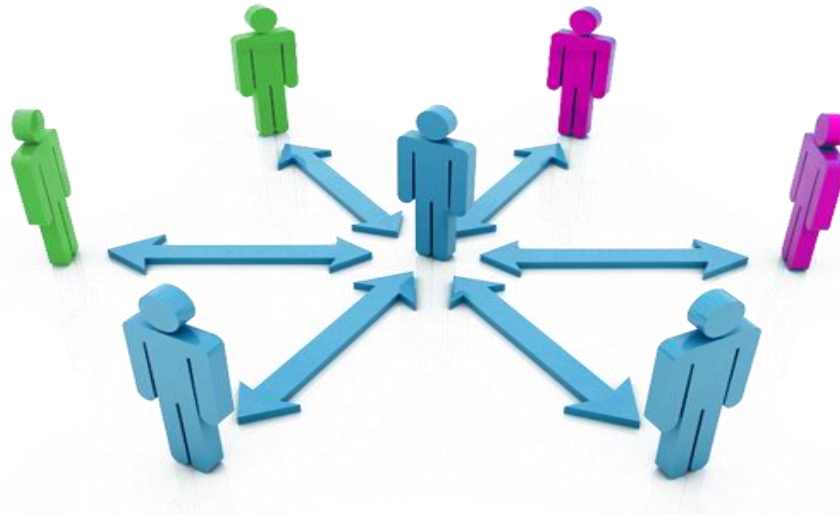
COMMITTEES

Treatment – This committee focuses on medical and mental health needs of children and youth such as the implications for vulnerable and low income families to access treatment. This committee has implemented strategies to prevent and identify mental health problems and has developed and identified resources to assist child welfare professionals and service providers with decision-making.



COMMITTEES

Each committee is responsible for developing recommendations associated with their subject area and completing action steps to ensure the committee's goals are met. Immediately prior to the regular election of officers and committee chairs, members will choose the committee on which they would like to serve for the following 2 years.



JTF MEMBERSHIP, MEETING MINUTES AND WORK PRODUCTS

Membership, FAQ, minutes, and work products for the JTF can be found on UT SWORPS website at <https://children.sworpswebapp.sworps.utk.edu/>



DCS AND UT SWORPS CONTRACT AGREEMENT

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS), the grant recipient of Children's Justice Act (CJA) funds, provides support to the JTF through a DCS Liaison and a JTF Coordinator. The DCS Liaison works with the Coordinator and the JTF members to ensure grant compliance is met.

DCS has allocated grant funds to the University of Tennessee, College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (UT SWORPS) for the JTF Coordinator position. The JTF Coordinator provides administrative and logistical support to the JTF.

This project is funded through an agreement with the state of Tennessee.

