

Joint Task Force on Children's Justice/Child Sexual Abuse VIRTUAL MEETING

December 8, 2022 - 10:00 AM

Attendees

Alexander, Denise
Bottoms, Delaine
Boyd, Ellen
Cobb, Dana
Cooper, Tim
Ebert, Jon
Etheridge, Stephanie
Farrar, Lynne
Graham, Ryan
Hanna, Mira
Hoser, Michele
Hargrow, Craig
Harper, Dawn
Hart-Curry, Marjahna
Johnson, Anthony
Maifair, Sammi

Murphy, William
Page, Jacque
Paisley, Lori
Palmer, Mary
Perales, Marymer
Perry, Leslie
Snodgrass, Carla
Stallworth, Virginia
Woerner, Stephen
Worsham, Billy
Wyatt, Verna
UT Staff
Chansuthus, Daryl
Frierson, Stephanie
Hadjiharalambous, Sissie
Lawal, Toni

Regrets

Allen, Sandra
Bevans, Rebecca
Davis, Kristen
Franklin, Rebecca
Gentry, Annette
Karnes, Lanis
Knowles, Catherine
Koslick, Amy
McGee, Melissa
Seeman, Larry
Smith, Rae Anne
Sinback, Kathy
Talley, Jackie
Wade, Pat
Wilkerson, Jason
Woerner, Stephen

Welcome

President Lynne Farrar welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Update on the 2023 Child Sexual Abuse State Plan Report

President Farrar reported on the meeting she and CRP coordinator Toni Lawal had with DCS Office of Child Safety (OCS) deputy commissioner Carla Aaron on October 21 to review the draft 2023 Child Sexual Abuse State Plan Report. The report is due to the governor and general assembly by January 31.

Approval of the Minutes from September 15, 2022

President Farrar asked if any members had corrections or comments for the JTF September 15, 2022 meeting minutes. None voiced. Farrar then made a motion to approve the minutes. Member Dana Cobb made a motion to approve the minutes and member Billy Worsham seconded the motion.

2023 JTF Meeting Date

2023 meeting dates are: **March 16 (in person); June 15 (virtual); September 14 (in person); and November 30 (virtual).**

DCS Updates

DCS CPS Assessments and Non-custodial Services director, Marjahna Hart, provided the following updates:

- **Relative Caregiver Program (RCP).** Hart-Curry reported that the RCP program has been around since 2020. The program started out in 16 counties, and is now in all 95 counties. The program assists and supports informal placements where the child is cared for by

grandparents, aunts, uncles and/or other extended family members. To help alleviate some of the financial straining on relative caregivers, beginning in January 2023, certain relative caregivers will be eligible for reimbursement payments to support the cost of raising an additional child. Those who are eligible will receive 50% of the foster care daily boarding rate that foster parents receive if certain conditions are met. Hart-Curry also mentioned some of the eligibility requirements - for example, the child must not be in state custody, caregiver must be at least 21 and the parent of the child cannot be in the home of the caregiver. Hart-Curry also reported on the providers, noting that three of them are new (Child Help, UT SWORPS, and Wo/Men's Resource Assistance Program). The eight providers and the regions they will render services to are as followed:

1. **Center for Family Development** - South Central
 2. **Child Help** - East, Smoky, and Knox
 3. **Family and Children Services** - Davidson
 4. **Southeast Development District** - Tennessee Valley Area
 5. **Upper Cumberland Development District** - Upper Cumberland
 6. **UTHSCS** - Shelby
 7. **UT SWORPS** - Northeast
 8. **Wo/Men's Resource Assistance Program (WRAP)** - Northwest and Southwest
- **OCS Preservice.** Hart-Curry reported that OCS staff are working with a workgroup to help with recruitment and retention of staff. This training is expected to begin in March 2023.

Committee Chairs' Report Out

The Committees' meeting discussions were as follows:

- **CPIT.** Chair Dawn Harper provided the following notes to the JTF coordinator regarding the Committee's discussion.
 - **District Attorneys Membership.** Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Jennifer Stribling received her appointment letter from Commissioner Quin. The recruitment of other ADAs were discussed. Member Virginia Stallworth agreed to confirm those who are most interested in Memphis. Member Stephen Woerner mentioned a new ADA in Chattanooga who moved to the state from Texas with 10 years of experience in prosecuting child abuse cases. Harper reminded the group that the DCS commissioner appoints members and expressions of interest are not necessarily appointments.
 - **CPIT Best Practice Manual.** The manual is completed and ready for distribution to the CPIT community.
 - **Visiting CPIT Case Reviews.** The purpose of visiting CPIT case reviews is to gather information about new ideas and best practices. The Committee will only visit if the CPIT Coordinator and others approve and will not serve as a monitor. It is not a requirement of Committee members, but would be helpful for gathering ideas and sharing information.
 - **Drug Exposure Classifications.** These type of cases classifications vary between CPITs, especially Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). There is discomfort in the classifications of THC exposure as unfounded in almost all instances, but determining what features are helpful in identifying the greater risk is hard. THC seems to be clogging up CPIT case reviews. Harper agreed to send the Committee the Attorney General's ruling on prenatal drug use.

Action Steps:

1. Seek a standard for review, for example other children, prior history, other concerns for abuse or neglect, other drug use in the home. Member Dr. Perales will ask the drug teams in Knoxville.
2. Increase the Committee's understanding of drug exposure. Members Stallworth and Delaine Bottoms agreed to obtain West TN data and Dr. Perales will obtain data from Knox and Blount County - seeking numbers of Drug Exposed (intrauterine), and children who have ingested drugs then those solely THC, CPIT outcome and reasons.
3. The Committee discussed the lack of indicators for physical exams for any kind of abuse, especially physical or sexual. The Committee would like to continue looking into this.
4. Including human trafficking non-governmental agency representatives in CPIT as included in recent statute. A suggestion was made to invite Kate Greer, DCS director of the trafficking unit to speak to the Committee at the March 16, 2023 meeting.

In addition, the Committee discussed 2023 Legislative & Public Policy Priorities:

- Funding increase for Forensic Interviewers and adding additional Forensic Interview Contracts to DCS budget
 - Forensic Interview Clean-up
 - Ending the statute of limitations on civil liability for sex offenders - modeled after federal law sponsored by Senator Blackburn
 - Allowing CCTV testimony for child sex abuse victims - similarly to the trafficking bill passed last year - up to age 18
 - Removing THC alone as a cause for a drug-exposed severe abuse referrals. Working with DCS and DA Conference on implementation of policy as it currently exists, collecting data about impact of issue on CPIT
 - Either adding an ADA or requiring every Judicial District to designate at least one ADA as specifically tasked with working Child Abuse cases
 - Working towards better continuity of data regarding prosecution of child abuse cases, and better feedback to CPIT of case plead outs and closures
 - Increased resources for CAC provided mental health services
 - Increased training for law enforcement and district attorneys around child abuse investigation and prosecution
 - Increased training for DCS workers on the needs for medical exams - work with DCS on policies regarding referrals for medical exams
- **Court Improvement.** Member Stephanie Etheridge provided the following notes to the JTF coordinator regarding the Committee's discussion.
 - **Court Booklet Update.** The Metro Arts Commission has experienced staff turnover and therefore has been unable to work on the illustrations for the children's booklet. Etheridge contacted Kelly Gray at Davidson County Juvenile Court, and Gray's GANG court program is willing and excited to assist the Committee with the illustrations. The Committee will review the illustrations prior to the JTF March 16 meeting. The AOC has created a QR for the book and it will be available to all courts across the state.
 - **Conference Topics for Upcoming Judges' Conference.** Etheridge agreed to talk with the TCJFCJ Executive Committee about including a session about the Relative

- Caregiver Program (RCP) at their August conference. Member Sammi Maifair agreed to provide a one-page description and eligibility of the RCP to Etheridge. Etheridge will ensure the judges receive a copy of it at the February Conference. In addition, Lynne Farrar had an opportunity to meet with new judges at the Judicial Academy. Six judges expressed an interest in starting a CASA program in their jurisdiction. Farrar followed up with the judges and a letter of support is needed from each judge. Etheridge agreed to follow up as well.
- **Guidelines and Considerations to Assist Courts in Determining Appropriate Commitment Status for Children:** The Committee discussed creating bench cards to assist the courts in determining the appropriate custodial track - dependency/neglect vs. juvenile justice and dual track youth. The Committee discussed challenges (placement and services) when a youth is charged with a serious offense, is determined not to be competent, and therefore comes into DCS custody as a D/N child. The Committee also discussed researching available resources in-state and actions taken by other states in addressing similar needs - for example, looking at TDMHSAS, TennCare, DOH and DIDD for in state actions, and Maifair reported that NJ recently went through their version of Brian A lawsuit and as a part of their post-settlement, NJ restructured their state child welfare agency. Maifair also noted that NJ SOCAT equivalent to TN is now under their state child welfare agency. Maifair also noted that NJ implemented amazing efforts for addressing staff turnover and that TN should consider their model.
 - **Safe Baby Court (SBC) Update.** Currently there are 14 SBC jurisdictions and 21 judges that are eager to implement a SBC in their court. The Statewide SBC Leadership Team provides ongoing trainings on the Best Practice Standards, implementation trainings, and follow-up trainings in new and existing sites.
 - **Pro-Se D/N Petition Update.** Maifair and Etheridge agreed to review the current draft. The petition will be finalized and ready to present to the Committee at the March meeting. Etheridge is working with other AOC staff to translate the petition into multiple languages.
 - **Developing Non-Custodial/Kinship Placement Trainings.** Maifair agreed to follow up with DCS staff regarding trainings for non-custodial kinship caregivers and relay to DCS staff that the Court Improvement Committee is willing to assist.

In addition, the Committee discussed the need for strong supports for foster parents (e.g., recruiting, retaining, equipping, and long-term supports) and obtaining an update from Member Rae Anne Smith regarding the revisions to the “Social Workers as Witnesses at Court” curriculum.

- **Outreach and Awareness.** Member Dana Cobb who presided over the Committee meeting in the absence of Chair Sandra Allen reported the Committee reviewed each of the action steps for their goal to *“educate and inform the public, childcare providers, schools, child welfare professional groups, law enforcement, health care organizations, and other groups about child welfare related resources and training opportunities.”*

The Committee’s next steps are as followed:

- Invite DCS communication staff person and TCCY Jonquil Newland to a meeting prior to the March 16 full task force meeting for assistance with promoting child abuse awareness/prevention activities. Also, it was noted that Newland oversee Kid Central and host a podcast called, “Roots and Wings“ which highlight a new subject or topic that impacts children and families across Tennessee.
- Create a form to capture who, where, and what child information is being disseminated.
- Follow up with Rebecca Bevans, DCS OCS director of training about the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention workgroup plans to conduct another survey of the school child abuse coordinators.

In addition, Member Lori Paisley, who serves on the TSSAA’s Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, reported that during this group meeting in October, she talked to them about the importance of having some knowledge of child abuse laws and prevention. Paisley went on to state she provided them with some child welfare information and resources, and encouraged them to share it with their members: **Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting Law, Warning Signs of Child Abuse, Child Abuse Reporting Steps for Teachers, DCS FAQ and Training Information, and Human Trafficking Resources and Training**. Also, Member Ellen Boyd reported that DHS decided not to keep nor revise the Keeping Kids Safe curriculum. Boyd also added that the Erin’s Law Guide is now on DHS website, which allows child care providers with more options to choose for their professional development trainings.

- **Treatment Committee:** Chair Jon Ebert provided the following notes to the JTF coordinator regarding the Committee’s discussion.

Strategic Planning Objective 1: Continue to build on the work done related to therapeutic practices for youth who have experienced CSE. Chair Ebert reported that Jacque Page provided an overview of her review of CSE and boys - Publication. Also, Page reviewed her notes and highlights for summary sheets, and recommended the Committee create a standard design to the summary sheets to then keep reader orientation <https://ecpat.org/global-boys-initiative/>

Action Steps:

1. Committee members will review the document and develop a similar document of key findings to develop a summary sheet.
2. Larry Seeman will start to work on treatment considerations.

Adjournment

President Lynne Farrar made closing remarks, and announced that the next meeting date: **in person on Thursday, March 16 at UT Nashville campus.**